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## The Arts of the *Gannin*

### Abstract

Popular religion in Tokugawa Japan (1603–1868) was supported by the efforts of many mendicant monk-like figures who provided the populace with prayers, invocations, and talismans, as well as with dancing, music, and recitation. One of the best known types of such monk-performers was the *gannin bōzu*, who was affiliated, at least nominally, with the Kurama temple near Kyoto. *Gannin* arts, remnants of which can still be found throughout Japan, were highly heterogeneous: some were associated with Buddhism; others with Shinto; yet others were entirely secular in nature. This study outlines the features of the main *gannin* arts and practices, comparing what Tokugawa-period eyewitnesses saw with the official listings the *gannin* gave of their own activities.

**Keywords:** *gannin bōzu*—performing arts—popular religion—Tokugawa period

**T**OKUGAWA JAPAN (1603–1868), for all its obvious and grievous shortcomings, never suffered a dearth of popular street entertainers. Artists of the thoroughfares furnished both urban and rural inhabitants with song and dance that contributed greatly to the quality of life. Street performers often maintained ties—sometimes clear, sometimes ambiguous—to Buddhist, Shinto, or other religious institutions. These bonds provided significant benefits to performers, not just because a powerful temple or shrine could bestow political support when a petition was being filed or a lawsuit tendered, but also because performers were less likely to be sent away empty-handed if donors feared that excessive parsimony might anger the gods. In addition, religious affiliation meant that a door-to-door performer could not easily be arrested and demoted to *hinin* (非人, literally “non-human”) status for engaging in practices that such outcastes often considered their own monopoly.

The religious performers known as *gannin bōzu* 願人坊主—more compactly, *gannin bō*, or even just *gannin*—figured prominently in popular inventories of Tokugawa-period street entertainers.<sup>1</sup> Until the late nineteenth century, these shadowy characters, whose name can be translated either as “petitioned monks” or “petitioning monks,” circulated throughout all Japan, disseminating a large number of sacred and quasi-religious practices as well as many genres of popular song and dance. Even today, variants of arts once associated with *gannin*—the song “Ise ondo” 伊勢音頭, the “Sumiyoshi dance” (*Sumiyoshi odori* 住吉踊り), and narratives such as *chobokure* ちょぼくれ and *chongare* ちょんがれ—can still be witnessed in rural Japan, though they are faced with imminent extinction. In this study I offer an examination of the best-known *gannin* arts and practices, based largely on reports of Tokugawa-period eyewitnesses. My purpose is twofold: to provide a kind of historical ethnography tracing the roots of genres still sometimes discovered in fieldwork; and to show how traditional street performers assembled a fluid, historically variable repertoire of arts and practices that mirrors changes in attitudes and tastes from the seventeenth to the nineteenth cen-

tury.

#### THE GANNIN ORGANIZATION

Whether the term *gannin* originally referred to monks who petitioned the authorities (unsuccessfully) to found a temple in the city of Edo, to the citizenry's habit of petitioning *gannin* to engage in proxy pilgrimages, or to the *gannin*'s offer to petition the gods for a sponsor, nobody knows for sure. What is certain is that *gannin* were active at least from the 1650s both in western (Kyoto-Osaka) and eastern (Edo) Japan. For most of the Tokugawa period, they maintained their headquarters at two buildings within the Kurama temple complex (Kurama-dera 鞍馬寺), a powerful Tendai-sect institution in the province of Yamashiro near Kyoto, which enshrined a famous image of the god Bishamonten (Skt., Vaiśravaṇa). *Gannin* who resided in far-away Edo—after the seventeenth century, the majority—received their marching orders from the Kurama only indirectly, through the intermediary of the Tōeizan 東叡山 (also, Kan'eiji 寛永寺), the most influential Tendai-sect temple in the capital. By the 1680s, the beginnings of a *gannin* hierarchy become visible: at top stood the Kurama officials; slightly lower, two Edo *foregashira* (触頭 “proclamation chiefs”) oversaw the *gannin* in the capital; still lower-ranking *kumigashira* (組頭 “group heads”) governed the *gannin* of Osaka and other areas. Beneath these bosses, a pyramid of minor *gannin* functionaries strove to maintain law and order among the rank and file.

#### GANNIN ACTIVITIES: OFFICIAL AND REAL

A relatively early description of *gannin* arts and practices can be found in a 1672/11/27 memorandum penned by an Osaka *gannin* head:

The main practice of Kurama *gannin* is to distribute talismans of the Kurama temple around New Year's. Throughout the year, parishioners ask the *gannin* to perform sunrise or moonrise vigils and services [*himachi* 日待 and *tsuki-machi* 月待] and prayers. *Gannin* also strike hand gongs [*kane* 鉦], and make proxy pilgrimages to various temples and shrines; from the fourth to the sixth months they go on proxy pilgrimages to the Sumiyoshi shrine, and perform the “Sumiyoshi dance” in exchange for donations; during the seventh month they make food offerings to hungry spirits in purgatory [*sega-ki* 施餓鬼] and engage in Buddhist alms-collecting [?];<sup>2</sup> they carry small gongs [*tataki-gane* たたき鉦] that they strike while intoning invocations to the Amida Buddha [*nenbutsu* 念佛], for which they receive alms; they obtain donations for reading sutras or copying words found in sutras; they also go around begging with a bowl

[*hachi-hiraḱi* 鉢ひらき]. Groups larger than four or five *gannin* are prohibited from loitering and making the rounds begging.

(HASHIKAWA 1926, 220)<sup>3</sup>

This record emphasizes that seventeenth-century Osaka-based *gannin* engaged chiefly in religious pursuits. Whether or not this was so, in the centuries to come, *gannin* performances turned into a complex amalgam of the sacred and the secular, with the latter gradually gaining the upper hand. Several times throughout the Tokugawa period, *gannin* leaders attempted to bolster their legitimacy by manufacturing ostensibly authoritative listings of the arts they claimed as their own. A typical roster, dated 1813/9, is given below (*Chishi oshirabe ni tsuḱi kaḱiage-chō*).<sup>4</sup>

1. Tendai-sect prayers and incantations [*ḱigan kaḱi* 祈願加持]; distributing talismans [*fuda, mamori* 札, 守] and secret charms [*hiḱu* 秘符]
2. Pilgrimages for petitions and thanksgiving [*gan-musubi* 願結; *gan-hodoḱi* 願解]; proxy pilgrimages [*dai-mairi* or *daisan* 代参] to Bishamonten
3. Daily dancing [*hi-odori* 日踊; in some sources: *hi-yomi* 日誦, “calendars,” perhaps the distribution of amulets of the twelve horary signs], as godly entertainment [*hōraḱu* 法樂]
4. Drawing of lots [*miḱuji* 御鬮], fortune telling [*haḱke* 八卦], prognostication [*bokuzei* 卜筮]
5. Reading sutras [*dokyō* 読経] and engaging in [spiritual] training [*shugyō* 修行]
6. Explaining sutras [*shokyō ḱōdan* 諸経口談]
7. Hearth exorcisms and worship of the god Kōjin [*ḱama-jime ḱōjin kanjō* 釜ノ荒神勧請]<sup>5</sup>
8. Great prayers to Buddha [*dai nenbutsu* 大念仏] and [spiritual] training [*shugyō* 修行]
9. Ablutions [*suigyō* 水行]
10. Exhibiting figures of Buddha [for dousing with water] [*kanbutsu-e* 灌仏会]
11. Exhibits of En’ō [閻王; also Enma-ō 閻魔王, Skt., Yamarāja, the god-king of the underworld]
12. *Awashima hōraḱu* [淡島法樂] begging [while displaying the god Awashima Daimyōjin]

13. Offerings for appeasing hungry spirits [*segaki* 施餓鬼]
14. [Collecting alms for?] erecting statues of Buddha [*butsuzō kōnyū* 仏像建立]
15. Begging to provide funds for sacred decorative staffs [*bonten* 梵天] for the god Fudō at Ōyama [大山不動]
16. Soliciting contributions [*okage-kubari kanjin* 御影配勸進] for Bishamonten and the eight guardian Bodhisattvas [Monju, Kanzeon, Miroku, etc.]

This tabulation was most likely based both on fact and oral legends. Everything in it, except for the third, fourth, seventh, and twelfth arts, is easily linked to Buddhism, indicating perhaps that the *gannin* wished to play down their links to Shinto arts or to secular genres. Not even the “Sumiyoshi dance,” the semi-sacred Shinto-based art for which *gannin* were better known than for anything else, is identified. Though this roster tells us how the *gannin* wished to be seen by others, for a more realistic picture of *gannin* practices, we must turn to other sources, in particular Tokugawa-period eyewitness descriptions.

#### BUDDHIST ARTS AND PRACTICES

##### *Cold-water ablutions and gannin garb*

Perhaps the best-known *gannin* ritual was the ninth listed in the table above: mid-winter ablutions (*suigyō* or *kangori* 寒垢離). The *gannin* possessed no monopoly over this practice, which was no doubt copied from the rituals of other types of monks, *yamabushi*, or ascetics. Cold-water ablutions “cleansed” the bather both physically and spiritually, in accordance with the nearly universal, but on that account no less curious, myth that withstanding pain and discomfort, self-induced or otherwise, indicates something other about the practitioner besides the ability to endure pain and discomfort. To the denizen of Edo, ablutions signified purity of spirit, fortitude, even a degree of transcendence over the physical realm.<sup>6</sup> Not all observers were so charitable in their views, however, as some quipped that cold-water ablutions in the middle of summer were nothing short of absurd (SHIBAMURA 1974, 16; HAMAMATSU 1928, 3: 438).

Whatever else frigid suffering may have symbolized, it served to draw a line between the average commoner and the *gannin*. The ability to withstand the shock of dousing oneself with icy water or diving into a freezing river during the thirty coldest days of winter was not a talent shared by everyone, so the faint-hearted commissioned the *gannin* to endure the ordeal in their stead. In this case, the act was known as *dai-gori* 代垢離, or proxy ablution

(KITAMURA 1974, 2:37).<sup>7</sup> Nervous merchants in disaster-prone urban areas had good reason to commission *dai-gori*, for while braving the wintry waters, *gannin* fervently prayed for their benefactor's premises to be spared from the fires that so often swept the city (*Ukiyo no arisama*, p. 774). On the last day of their observances, *gannin* passed from door to door, receiving donations from the citizenry (*Kōfu fūzoku-shi*, p. 21).<sup>8</sup> Fire-prevention rituals were also enacted before doorsteps, by groups of some half dozen bucket-wielding *gannin* who arrived virtually *au naturel* and splashed edifices in return for a donation (*Meiwa-shi*, p. 8).<sup>9</sup>

The *gannin*'s minimal attire must have boasted a long tradition; nineteenth-century observers noted that even on old *sugoroku* 双六 game boards *gannin* are depicted wearing nothing but a headband and a sacred straw rope (*shimenawa* 注連縄) around their waists (KITAMURA 1974, 2:637). During the "Tenpō Reforms" of the early 1840s, *gannin* garb, or, more precisely, the lack of it, even became a target of wrath of Puritan-minded *bakufu* officials. Edo city administrators whined that *gannin* had recently eschewed their proper sacerdotal robes (*san'e* 三衣) in favor of scanty, indecent loincloths and illegal face coverings. To make matters worse, Edo *gannin* were not above begging in a lascivious manner, embarrassing both chaste maidens and staid moralists. In Osaka, too, self-appointed upholders of public decency were appalled by *gannin* parading around town in little more than their birthday suits. *Gannin* in both cities were ordered to cease and desist from such unbecoming practices, but such laws proved ineffective in the long run (*Ukiyo no arisama*, pp. 773–74).

Though *gannin* earned notoriety for their negligible apparel, they did not always limit themselves to the flimsiest of outfits. When they wished, they donned the Buddhist stoles, Shinto costumes, and other ecclesiastical raiments deemed appropriate by government officials. In Edo, one seventeenth-century shop even specialized in the *gannin*'s sartorial needs. On the first block of Bakuro-chō stood a paint-wares wholesaler named Takashimaya Kichibee.

Every day, Takashimaya used to supply *gannin bōzu* with the articles required for their job: Buddhist surplices and clothing, old Buddha figurines, hand gongs, sedge hats, tung oil [for making raincoats], cotton and other types of cloth, hemp kimono, belts, undertrousers, and whatever else. These he loaned to the *gannin* for a fee.

(*Edo masago rokujutchō*, p. 156)

For reasons unknown, Kichibee later began to dislike this line of work, though the increase in the Edo *gannin* population can only have made his

enterprise more profitable. Nevertheless, he handed over his business to someone else, who promptly converted it into a pawnshop and money exchange; by the time of the third-generation owner, the Takashimaya again reverted to a paint-ware shop, but no more is heard about lending clothes to *gannin*, who by this time had anyhow moved away from Bakuro-chō to nearby Hashimoto-chō.

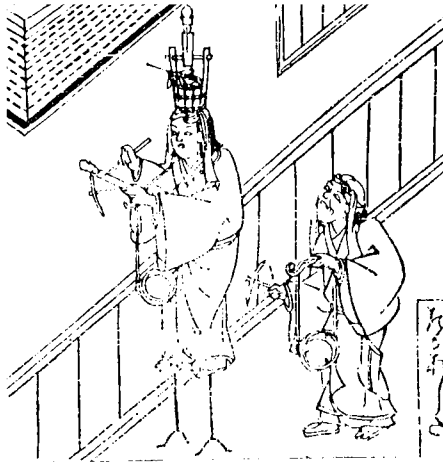


ILLUSTRATION 1. *Taka-ashida*. From *Jinrin kinmōzui*, p. 278.

If normal *gannin* attire provoked odd glances from the citizenry, the outlandish footwear associated with the *gannin* practice known as *taka-ashida* (高履) can only have occasioned stares. *Taka-ashida* referred to the stilt-like clogs worn by a type of *gannin* who sauntered around town while balancing on his head a small wooden bucket filled with water and green branches (see Illustration 1).<sup>10</sup> Banging on a gong, often suspended from the neck by a cord, the *taka-ashida* sang what one observer unsympathetically characterized as “an incomprehensible song.” If a bystander gave the *taka-ashida* a coin, the latter produced a thin piece of wood onto which some Buddhist symbols were scribbled. Water from the bucket was then sprinkled either onto the wood or the person (which it remains unclear) with a branch of star anise (*Jinrin kinmōzui*, p. 278).<sup>11</sup> Such mendicants, mentioned in Edo laws from as early as 1672 (*Shōhō jiroku*, vol. 1, p. 166 [no. 496]), were also noticed by Engelbert KAEMPFER, who passed through Fushimi in 1691 and encountered “various strangely clad beggars: some dressed up in mad costumes, some walking on iron stilts, and others with deep buckets on their heads with green trees. Still others were singing, whistling, playing the flute, or striking chimes” (1999, 318). Stilt-like pattens, mentioned as early as the eleventh century in connection with *dengaku* arts, had religious significance in other cases as well, perhaps because they elevated the wearer a few inches above the dust and grime of the world.<sup>12</sup> *Kōya gyōnin* 高野行人, a type of pilgrim-beggar who even sported the *taka-ashida*’s bucket-like headgear, also sometimes wore tall clogs (see Illustration 2)<sup>13</sup> (KITAMURA 1974, 2:619).

*Buddhist images and holy displays*

According to records probably dating from 1744, *gannin* were normally prohibited from begging while carrying around images of Buddhas or saints. Exceptions were made for only three days: the Buddha's birthday; and the sixteenth day of the first and seventh month, when a small figure of Enma-ō, the god-king of the underworld, was taken around town for exhibit (*Shisō zasshiki*, [fascicle 3], p. 72; MORIYAMA 1979, 254).

The Buddha's birthday, falling on the eighth day of the fourth month of the lunar calendar, was celebrated throughout Japan in a practice known as *kanbutsu-e* ("Buddha ablutions"). At temples in Edo and elsewhere, the commoner public was allowed to ladle hydrangea tea or water over an image of the infant Buddha (SAITŌ 1970, 2: 9). *Kanbutsu-e* is listed as the tenth practice in the *gannin*'s roster of arts, though it was rarely recorded by eyewitnesses as a *gannin* activity. Perhaps *gannin* provided small, portable sanctuaries for those who wished to celebrate this ritual close to home.

The Buddha's nativity was also honored by the *gannin* in a practice called "the birth of Sakyamuni" (*oshaka tanjō* 御釈迦誕生, or *oshaka nyorai tanjō* 御釈迦如来誕生). Already in a booklet published in 1691, one can find *gannin* commemorating this day by walking around Edo with small displays of the deity (*Tsukinami no asobi*, pp. 334–35).<sup>14</sup> The roof of these diminutive sanctuaries was decorated with colored paper; the Buddha was merely an "Asakusa doll," presumably a cheap figurine of clay or wood (see Illustration 3). Another description of *oshaka tanjō* documents the presence of a small tub filled with tea—presumably hydrangea tea—in the midst of which was placed an image of the nascent Buddha. Once again a roof was fashioned from colored paper; this was then adorned with deutzia blossoms. *Gannin* hauled this exhibit from door to door while collecting donations from the citizenry and even from members of the warrior class (MORIYAMA 1979, 254).

Exhibits of Enma-ō, the eleventh practice in the *gannin*'s list, is described by Saitō Gesshin, a keen observer of late Tokugawa-period practices, as having nearly died out by the last half of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup>



ILLUSTRATION 2. *Kōya gyōnin*.  
From SEGAWA 1980, 256.



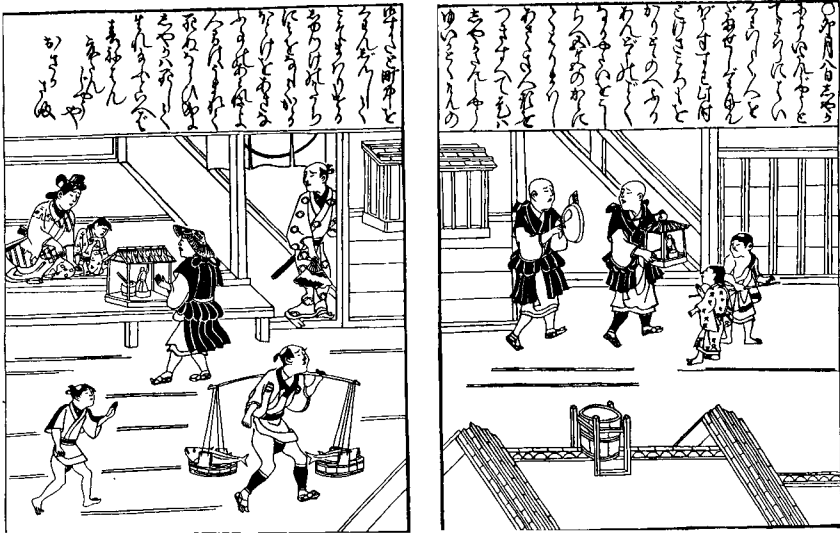


ILLUSTRATION 3. *Oshaka nyorai tanjō*, from *Tsukinami no asobi* (1969), pp. 334–35. By Hishikawa Moronobu. The text notes that the robes worn by these *gannin bōzu* are borrowed.

SAITŌ writes that in earlier years, during the seventh month, “beggars sound *nyōhachi* [鑢鉢, a type of Buddhist cymbal] and carry around an image of Enma-ō or Datsueba 奪衣婆.”<sup>16</sup> Such beggars, he informs us, might also brandish a long wooden sword associated with the Ōyama Sekison 大山石尊, a god enshrined at the top of Mt. Ōyama (present-day Isehara City in Kanagawa Prefecture) (1981, 237). Pilgrimages to this site were highly popular among the Edo citizenry since the capital’s earliest years and were often so extravagant that laws were issued to rein in the enthusiasm of the faithful.<sup>17</sup> Pilgrims were allowed to enter the Ōyama temple-shrine compound from 6/28 until 7/17, with most people arriving during the last three days, traditionally the peak of the mid-summer *bon* season. Besides praying to Sekison, the devout also worshiped the god Fudō Myōō (Skt., Acala), enshrined at the mountain’s Taisanji temple 大山寺. Before departing on their pilgrimage, participants usually undertook ablutions at a spot near the Ryōgoku bridge in Edo. Further ablutions below the waterfall at the base of Ōyama must have provided a refreshing shower during this sweltering season, though no doubt few would have cared to admit as much. Pilgrims frequently brought along a wooden sword as an offering to the gods; in return they took home a sword somebody else had contributed. This old sword then served as a talisman for the upcoming year.

The practice of “offering *bonten* [sacred staffs] to the god Fudō at Ōyama” numbers as the fifteenth occupation listed by the *gannin*, but this

laconic description disguises, probably consciously, the real nature of the *gannin*'s relationship to Ōyama. *Gannin*, perhaps taking a hint from professional Ōyama recruiters (*oshi* 御師) or *yamabushi*, appear to have acted as representatives of the gods enshrined at the mountain, advertising in Edo the miraculous efficacy of Ōyama numina. According to one saturnine writer from the late eighteenth century, "corrupt priests known as *gannin* incessantly generate new-fangled ideas. They move about town carrying various odd objects, supposedly offerings for Ōyama Sekison. They make a living by carrying these around and collecting alms...or by plying the streets shaking a bell (*suzu* 鈴) and offering so-called 'proxy pilgrimages'" (NEGISHI 1991, 1:318–19). Another somewhat later description notes that *gannin* proxy pilgrimages to Ōyama began with preparations during the fourth or fifth month, starting with the manufacture of various types of ornamental objects, probably of a sacred nature. *Gannin* strutted around town in sizable groups, brandishing these props while calling out to the citizenry in the hopes that some would fund a trip to the mountain. By the late Tokugawa period, however, this practice had largely died out (*Meiwa-shi*, p. 8).

For practicing *segaki*, the thirteenth practice in the *gannin*'s list, food offerings were made to hungry spirits in purgatory (see Illustration 4). *Segaki* priests are mentioned in an Edo law of 1649 (*Shōhō jiroku*, vol. 1, p. 12, no. 37), but like *kanbutsu-e*, this rite was also frequently performed by commoners at Buddhist temples. A report from 1691 describes the *gannin* version of it as follows:

From *urabon* in the seventh month, *gannin bōzu* from all areas perform *segaki* begging. They strike cymbals [*hachi*] together and beat on gongs [*dora*] while bearing a litter decorated with paper streamers. On this litter they present food offerings, which they carry around town while reading sutras and begging. Everyone saddened by the death of a parent or a loved one gives them something, thinking it an offering to the Buddha. (*Tsukinami no asobi*, pp. 342–43)<sup>18</sup>

*Gannin segaki* relied heavily on the religious atmosphere of the *bon* season, when spirits of the departed returned temporarily to their abodes in this world. The dead were on everybody's mind; a small contribution to the *gannin* helped assuage one's grief or insecurity.

In addition to the activities described above, individual *gannin* devised their own versions of Buddhist practices, including the recitation of Japanese Buddhist hymns (*wasan* 和讃), the chanting of litanies, prayers, or invocations on the streets (*kado nenbutsu* 門念仏), and the burning of incense (MITAMURA 1958, 274). Little is known of these *gannin* customs, which may

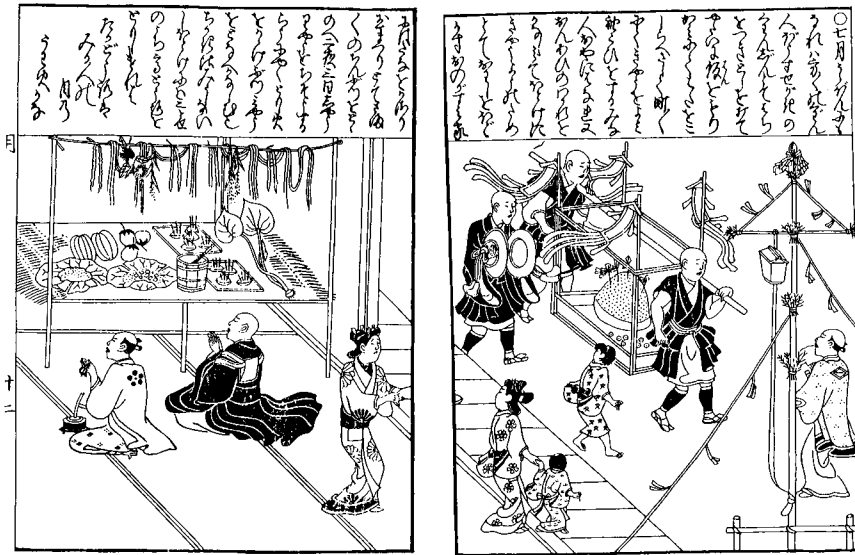


Illustration 4. *Segaki* from *Tsukinami no asobi* (1691), pp. 342–43.

have fall into the third category spelled out in the *gannin*'s roster of arts. Recalling his childhood years in the 1740s, MORIYAMA Takamori describes one such self-styled *gannin bōzu*, a fiftyish, bearded man, who beat on a large metal bowl while shouting “*oshaka wai!*” (or “*oshaka koi!*”). Though this was an unambiguously Buddhist cry, Moriyama recalled that this upright gentleman, who lived in the Shiba Mishima-chō area, was in fact a Shintoist, who also recited the “Nakatomi exorcism” (*Nakatomi no harai* 中臣の祓) as he ambled around the Atago-shita area (1979, 254).<sup>19</sup> Edo and other urban centers must have been full of such enigmatic religious personages, often labeled *gannin* by the populace for want of a better name.

#### ECLECTIC AND NON-BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS ARTS AND PRACTICES

Throughout the Tokugawa period, the *gannin* considered themselves devotees of the Buddha, logically enough for a group that based its legitimacy on a tenuous link to the Kurama temple. Nevertheless, eclecticism, a pervasive feature of Japanese religion in general, colored most *gannin* arts from the start. By the second half of the period, at the latest, most of the best-known *gannin* practices featured conspicuous non-Buddhist elements drawn mostly from Shinto and folk-religious beliefs. Most commonly, eclectic arts were deemed efficacious in preventing disease or misfortune.

*Awashima hōraku*

Already during the seventeenth century, chroniclers were baffled over the sacred or secular nature of *gannin*-like figures who proceeded through town bearing small, portable shrines dedicated to the god Awashima Daimyōjin 淡島大明神 (see *Chirizuka monogatari* 塵塚物語 [A dustheap of tales, pub., 1689]) cited in ASAKURA 1992, 114–15). Awashima Daimyōjin, another name for the Shinto god Sukunabikona (or Sukunahikona) no kami 少彦名神, was believed to possess miraculous powers for healing women's diseases. The most important manifestation of this gynecological deity was enshrined at the Kada shrine (Kada Jinja 加太神社) in the province of Kii 紀伊, present-day Kada City in Wakayama Prefecture (*Jinrin kinmōzui*, 267; *Zoku Asukagawa*, 29). Like Ōyama Sekison, the god was the object of reverence by members of religious confraternities popular during the Tokugawa period. Awashima Daimyōjin was also believed to be related to gods of medicine such as Ōnamuchi no kami 大己貴神, enshrined at the Gojō Tenjin 五条天神 shrine in Kyoto, and Yuki Daimyōjin 由岐大明神, enshrined at the Yuki shrine within the Kurama temple complex (*Chirizuka monogatari*, cited in ASAKURA 1992, 114–15).<sup>20</sup> It was no doubt this last relation that inspired the Kurama *gannin* to claim “Awashima *hōraku*” (*hōraku* signifies pleasure derived from Buddhist activities) as an art of their own, the twelfth on their official list. Practitioners usually wielded a staff decorated with reddish-purple paper strips and topped off with a miniature shrine. While making the rounds, these beggars proudly announced the history and powers of Awashima Daimyōjin (see Illustrations 5 and 6).<sup>21</sup> Again, not everyone took their claims as fact: in 1690, one exasperated observer condemned the Awashima *hōraku*'s recitation as “nonsense from start to finish, which nobody corrects” (*Jinrin kinmōzui*, p. 267). A volume from 1724, which testifies that Awashima *hōraku* was common in Kyoto at this time, also chides such beggars for practicing a trade ill befitting men of a religious calling (*Fushin-gami* 不審紙 [Dubious paper, cited in ASAKURA 1992, 117).

During the latter half of the Tokugawa period, the practice of parading around with a shrine dedicated to Awashima Daimyōjin was gradually taken over by non-*gannin* figures.<sup>22</sup> Secular practitioners often made themselves more presentable by wearing stylish blue headcloths, dark *haori* jackets, and straw sandals. Shaking a *suzu* and chanting felicitous words, they worked the streets of the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters and the townsman areas (KIKUCHI 1965, 283).

*Proxy vigils on the kōshin day (kōshin no daimachi)*

The *kōshin* 庚申 day occurred every sixty days, when one of the five calendrical signs (that of *kanoe* 庚) coincided with a “day of the monkey” (申).



ILLUSTRATION 5. Awashima beggars,  
from *Jinrin kinmōzui*, p. 267.

ILLUSTRATION 6. Awashima beggar, from *Ehon otogi  
shina-kugami*, p. 766 (Osaka 1730). "Laundry lady! It's  
shameful to catch a woman's disease. Laundry lady!  
Pray to Awashima-sama!"

This occasion was celebrated in an all-night vigil by Buddhists, who worshiped the gods Taishakuten (帝釈天 Skt., Śakra devānām Indra) or Seimen Kongō 青面金剛, and by believers of Shinto, who worshiped Sarudahiko 猿田彦.<sup>23</sup> Popular wisdom dictated strict sexual abstinence, for any child conceived on a *kōshin* night was fated to be born a kleptomaniac. To make matters worse, according to ancient Taoist myth, falling asleep on this night allowed three insects residing in the body to report one's sins to the heavenly king, easily leading to an abbreviated existence. Not everyone took all of this seriously, of course, and *gannin* engaged in proxy vigils (代待 *daimachi*) for those who valued a good night's sleep over spurious entomology. Commissioning a *daimachi* was simple, for on appropriate days *gannin* moved through town singing "Ise ondo" and the like, reminding the public that funds contributed at this time would go toward the enactment of a protective vigil and to services and purification rituals the following day (*San'yō zakki*, 149).<sup>24</sup>

In Osaka, where everybody was familiar with the Seimen Kongō enshrined at the city's famous Tennōji 天王寺 (or Shitennōji 四天王寺) tem-

ple, *kōshin* vigils provided the *gannin* with a secure source of revenue.<sup>25</sup> *Gannin* in this city performed all-night vigils “on *kōshin* days, and on the seventeenth and twenty-third days of the third month” (*Jinrin chōhōki*, vol. 5, section 3). Osaka *kōshin machi* remained active well into the nineteenth century, though the *Morisada mankō* notes that by this time they appeared only a few days before every *kōshin* day, wearing woven hats, blue cotton outfits, and white coverings on their hands and legs. From their necks they suspended baskets into which they deposited proceeds



ILLUSTRATION 7. *Kōshin no daimachi*, from *Jinrin kinmōzui*, p. 265.

(usually rice) obtained from donors. As they walked around town, they struck gongs [銅鑼, *dora*] and called out the phrase “*kōshin* proxy vigils of the Shitennōji temple” (KITAGAWA 1992, 1:220, 222; see Illustration 7). When held by the citizenry, moonrise vigils and services—and on auspicious days during the first, fifth, or ninth months, sunrise services—furnished more of an excuse for nocturnal frolicking and drinking than religious austerities. Yet god-fearing believers must have been sufficiently solicitous about the divine consequences of gleeful behavior to allow *gannin* to market their services profitably. Most likely, the average commoner did not quite know what to believe: the *gannin*’s *daimachi* served as a kind of insurance, just in case there was something to it after all.

Makasho, waiwai tennō, ongyō

*Gannin* listed the distribution of Tendai-sect talismans or secret amulets as the very first of their practices; the 1672 document mentioned earlier also cites the disbursement of Kurama amulets as an important *gannin* practice. Since Japan was replete with temples and shrines issuing countless preventive amulets for every imaginable purpose, competition in the talisman business was fierce. Kurama *gannin* boasted that they presented one of their tal-

ismans annually to Edo castle, but the nature of the donation remains as obscure as the veracity of the assertion is dubious (“Chishi oshirabe ni tsuki kakiage-chō”). More typically, *gannin* distributed amulets and talismans to somewhat less exalted personages, namely, children. From the mid-eighteenth century, purveyors of such wares were known in Edo as *makasho* まかしよ (“distribute them!”) (KITAGAWA 1992, 1:220), *waiwai tennō* わいわい天王 (“raucous heavenly kings”), or *ongyō* 御行 (“holy practitioners”). Differences between the three appear negligible, but eyewitnesses often did discriminate.

Originally, *makasho*, *waiwai tennō*, and *ongyō* may have had little to do with *gannin*. According to the volume *Sora oboe* 空おぼへ (Fake knowledge), the original Edo *makasho* were associated with the city’s Kanda shrine. Every year, during the fifth month, these “distributors” made the rounds to parishioners’ homes, where they delivered disease-preventing amulets of the god Gozu Tennō (牛頭天王). These red paper talismans, measuring about 4.5 cm. by 0.9 cm., featured black characters printed with woodblocks (cited in ASAKURA 1992, 137).<sup>26</sup>

In later years, the *makasho*, *ongyō*, and *waiwai tennō* merged with the *gannin* in the public consciousness, since all of these types conducted proxy pilgrimages and handed out amulets or talismans (TAKIZAWA 1911, 195–96; *Edo fūzoku sōmakuri*; *Zōku Asukagawa*, p. 40; SEGAWA 1980, 251–52). Even the outfits worn and the gods invoked were largely shared. KITAGAWA Morisada records in the late nineteenth century that the *makasho* donned white cotton attire, leggings, and headcloths; on their backs they carried a three-colored monkey-like figure made of cloth (*kukurizaru* クハリ猿).<sup>27</sup> He believed that the *makasho* chanted the sutra of Seimen Kongō (1992, 1:221), who, as mentioned earlier, often appeared in the form of a monkey and was identical to the disease-preventing god that Buddhists (and *gannin* proxies) worshiped in their *kōshin* vigils. Such a stuffed monkey also rode piggy-back on some Handa Inari beggars (*Yo no sugata*, p. 40), who many believed were fallen *gannin* (see below). In his description of the *waiwai tennō*, KITAGAWA notes that these “raucous kings” hid behind a mask of the god Sarudahiko, again pointing to a relation to the Shinto elements of *kōshin* vigils. In addition, they might don an old, black, crested *haori* jacket, *hakama* trousers, and even two shabby swords, as they took to the streets to distribute their small paper amulets of Gozu Tennō while calling out “*waiwai tennō* enjoy making noise!” (1992, 1:213–14) (see Illustrations 8 and 9).

*Ongyō*, perhaps merely *gannin* by another name, concentrated their activities on the thirty days of midwinter; though in later years they also appeared during the tenth month. The talismans they distributed were kept in a box suspended from the neck; these were emblazoned with the words “Ōyama Fudō Myōō,” indicating a relationship to the Ōyama religion.



ILLUSTRATION 8. *Makasho*, from *Kyojitsu baka-monogatari* 虚実馬鹿話 (Stupid tales, true and false), pub. 1771 (reprinted in ASAKURA 1992, 135).

ILLUSTRATION 9. *Waiwai tennō*, from *Ehon hana no en* 絵本花の縁 (Picture-book of floral relations) (reprinted in ASAKURA 1992, 136).

*Ongyō* shook a *suzu* to attract attention of bystanders—particularly children—to whom they handed out small monochrome prints of animals. A donation of a few coins yielded more attractive polychrome pictures, often of the Tenman Tenjin shrine in Osaka (*Yo no sugata*, pp. 39–40).

*Makasho*, *waiwai tennō*, and *ongyō* began to disappear at the end of the eighteenth century, perhaps in part because of a lawsuit filed against them by indignant townspeople tired of the unruly behavior on the part of such performers.<sup>28</sup> Thereafter, these types of mendicants were said to have become Handa Inari beggars and Sumiyoshi dancers (TAKIZAWA 1911, 196; KITAMURA 1974, 2:638). Yet even after they had vanished from street corners and alleyways, their presence remained firmly etched into the public imagination. As late as 1820/9, *makasho* even became the subject of a dance piece seen on the stage of the Nakamura-za kabuki theater. Here they appeared in a *nagauta* composition aptly entitled *Makasho* (more fully: *Kangyō yuki no sugatami* 寒行雪の姿見 [A mirror of snowy winter austerities]), as part of a “quick-change” dance in seven parts (*shichi henge* 七変化), in which the star actor Bandō Mitsugorō III 板東三津五郎 danced the *makasho* role appropriately dressed in a white cotton outfit.

#### *Handa Inari* 半田稲荷

The most important shrine of Inari, a vulpine deity with wondrous powers to heal, stood at Inariyama in Fushimi-ku in Kyoto. Many more Inari shrines dotted the landscape of eastern Japan. In fact, Edo was so cluttered with Inari shrines, that a popular saying counted them as one of the city’s



three most conspicuous features, along with Ise-based merchants and canine feces.<sup>29</sup> The Inari faith inspired passionate devotion from the commoners of the Tokugawa period, who enjoyed making pilgrimages to such shrines as the “Tarō Inari” 太郎稲荷 at the Tachibana family’s “lower residence” at Asakusa (a shrine said to have mysterious capacities to make the blind see and the crippled walk; see *Edo fūzoku sōmakuri*, p. 17), or the Handa Inari at Kasai in Higashi-Kanamachi.

Already in the early eighteenth century, one curious *gannin*-like figure, known as the “*konkon* priest” (referring to the *konkon* bark of a fox), danced in the streets of Edo while reciting the names of various Inari gods enshrined here and there (SEGAWA 1980, 241). During the 1830s and 1840s, another itinerant, active in Kyoto, Osaka, and Edo, made a living lining up on door-sills several dozen small earthenware figurines (*ichimon ningyō*, 一文人形) that he literally had up his sleeve. He then uttered auspicious optative phrases peppered with comic verbiage indicating that inhabitants would be protected by the Inari at Fushimi. Finally, he listed the names of various Inari throughout the land (KITAGAWA 1992, 1:239; *Wasure nokori*, p. 124).

The Handa Inari shrine at Kanamachi was renowned for spawning *gannin*-like mendicants, who from the mid-1810s came to be known as “Inari ascetics” (*Inari gyōnin* 稲荷行人) or, more simply, “Handa Inari” (*Edo fūzoku sōmakuri*, p. 47; SAITŌ 1981, 237; KITAGAWA 1992, 1:221; *STR*, *ge*). These men, reputed to be none other than the *gannin* of Hashimoto-chō (the quarter of Edo where most *gannin* of the day lived), usually appeared in a red cotton outfit and a headcloth, wielding a red banner reading “The Handa Inari Daimyōjin of Kasai Kanamachi.” When townspeople offered coins, the performers danced, shook a *suzu*, and chanted felicitous formulas explaining that Handa Inari lightened smallpox and measles. At the end of a performance, each child in the audience received a miniature figurine, and the performers were sent on their way (*Edo fūzoku sōmakuri*, p. 47; *Wasure nokori*, p. 144; *Yo no sugata*, p. 40).<sup>30</sup> Some Handa Inari performers apparently also used a contraption in which an artificial fox head with an extendible neck was attached to a board. The performer grasped a pole that went through the back of the board, and pushed it forward to cause the fox head to protrude in the direction of onlookers, presumably children (see Illustration 10). Like *makasho*, Handa Inari performers made their way into kabuki and *nagauta* (*Handa Inari*, first staged at the Edo Nakamura-za in 1813/3). Even on the stage of the biggest theaters of Edo the populace might be treated to the call “measles will lighten, smallpox will lighten! Pray to the Handa Inari at Kanamachi in Kasai!” (*Handa Inari*, p. 64).

## Suta-suta bōzu

The mendicants known as *suta-suta bōzu* すすた坊主 (“shuffling monks”) were linked so closely to the *gannin* as to defy tidy separation. Like the *makasho*, they may have emerged independently. According to the late Tokugawa-period encyclopedist Kitamura Nobuyo, who cites earlier eighteenth-century sources, the *suta-suta bōzu* were once associated with the practice of *seimonbarai* 誓文払, a ritual of the twentieth day of the tenth month, in which Kyoto merchants and prostitutes went to the nearby Kanjaden 官者展 shrine to be absolved of their sins, in particular the lies they had told for business purposes. KITAMURA believed that *gannin* had once engaged in proxy pilgrimages to such shrines, but that in time the *suta-suta bōzu* had taken over this practice. *Suta-suta bōzu*, he notes, “are *gannin bōzu*, wearing only a headband, and a sacred straw rope around their waists. In their hands they hold an open fan and a *shakujō* [錫杖 a short priest’s staff with a sistrum-like tip]” (1974, 2:638). The sacred rope indicates ties to Shinto; the presence of the fan and the sistrum suggests that *suta-suta bōzu* performed dances or recitation.

Edo *suta-suta bōzu* appeared from the second and third decades of the eighteenth century (see RYŪTEI 1975, 404). Somewhat later, *suta-suta bōzu* are described as “calling out words such as *sutasuta yōyō*, on my shaved pate I’ve got a big headband. Last night I squandered three-hundred coppers, that’s why I’m naked and on a pilgrimage today” (*Zoku Asukagawa*, p. 29), demonstrating that *suta-suta bōzu* provided sarcastic or humorous banter to please the public. This text also adds credence to Kitamura’s claim that the *suta-suta bōzu* hired themselves out for proxy pilgrimages. TAKIZAWA Bakin, recalling Edo *suta-suta bōzu* from the 1760s and 1770s, identifies them point-blank as “the *gannin* at Hashimoto-chō,” and notes that they appeared “completely naked [i.e., wearing only a loincloth], with only a straw cord as a headband. In one hand they hold white Shinto paper strips; in the other, a fan. They cry, ‘When the *suta-suta bōzu* come around, it’s a good year for the world, *shite yare dokkoisho*, the world is a good place.’ While singing, they



ILLUSTRATION 10. Kasai Kanamachi *Handa Inari*, from ITO Seiu 1967, 243. A similar illustration can be found in *Fūzoku gahō*, vol. 45, between pp. 12 and 13.

dance and run around” (1911, 194).<sup>31</sup> KITAGAWA Morisada adds that

[o]n days with cold winds, naked beggar-priests appear wearing cord headbands, and wrapping a sacred Shinto rope around their waists. In their hands they hold a split bamboo four to six inches in length, across the top of which they insert a skewer with five or seven coins on it. They shake this while dancing and singing “When the *sutasuta sutasuta bōzu* come, with their seven-fold, nine-fold rope around their waists, and their heads tightly wrapped....” (1992, 1:239)

Kitamura’s, Takizawa’s, and Kitagawa’s descriptions all show that the *suta-suta bōzu* either were *gannin*, or else held much in common with the *gannin*. Yet by the nineteenth century *suta-suta bōzu* had all but disappeared from Edo, whereas *gannin* still remained active (TAKIZAWA 1975, 392; *Nochi wa mukashi monogatari*, 325; RYŪTEI 1975, 404). The term “*suta-suta bōzu*” in Edo may thus have referred primarily to the practices of certain *gannin*, rather than to the affiliation of the practitioners.

In the Kyoto and Osaka areas, *suta-suta bōzu* survived at least until the mid-nineteenth century (KITAGAWA 1992, 1:239; 4:162); in rural areas, where local dialects labeled them *suttara-bō* or *suttaka-bō* (*Riyōshū*, p. 533; ITŌ 1966, 44, 52), their activities could be witnessed far longer. In early twentieth-century Tokushima Prefecture, for example, a scantily clad *suttara-bō* still made the rounds begging during the first month of the lunar year, while chanting the following lines:

<p><i>Suttara-bō ga kuru toki wa,</i>  <i>yo no naka yōte, yo ga yōte,</i>  <i>o-ie ga hanjō, mura hanjō,</i>  <i>atama ni kakataru shimenawa</i>  <i>wa</i>  <i>ichi-go-san kai, go-go-san kai</i>  <i>itosan bonsan hōso hashika ga</i>  <i>okaruina, okaruina</i></p>	<p>When the <i>suttara-bō</i> comes around,  everything is fine, the world is a good place,  families prosper, villages prosper.  The sacred rope headband he wears,  [wrapped?] one, three, and five times,  or five, five, and three times,  makes smallpox and measles, for both  girls and monks,  lighten up, lighten up.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(<i>Riyōshū</i>, p. 553)</p>
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Besides this man’s *gannin*-like appearance and the fact that he came around in wintertime, the magical efficacy claimed for his activities links him closely to the *gannin* tradition, in particular the “Handa Inari” *gannin*.



ILLUSTRATION 11. *Suta-suta bōzu*. From HAMAMATSU 1928, 5:434 (from the cover of Donryū's *Ahodara-kyō*).



ILLUSTRATION 12. *Suta-suta bōzu*. From SEGAWA 1980, 251.



ILLUSTRATION 13. Rural *suta-suta bōzu* or pseudo-*gannin* (note the long hair) from *Kane no waraji* 金草鞋 (Golden sandals), vol. 3 (published in Edo ca. 1814; author's collection).

*The “Sumiyoshi dance”*

During the latter half of the Tokugawa period, the “Sumiyoshi dance” almost always meant *gannin*. As we have seen earlier, links between the *gannin* and this dance may be dated at least to 1672, when this genre was already mentioned as a Kurama *gannin* art. The genesis of the “Sumiyoshi dance,” however, remains obscure. Perhaps the dance originated as part of a planting ritual performed at the great Sumiyoshi shrine in Osaka.<sup>32</sup> This rite may then have been taken to the streets by monk-like figures who danced out their religious sentiments. Similar trends can be found throughout Japan: dances such as the *Kashima odori* and *Ise odori* were also once associated with major Shinto shrines before being turned into street arts useful for collecting alms.

Worship at the Sumiyoshi shrine was, among other things, believed to forestall misfortune at sea. An undated source, perhaps from the early nineteenth century, suggests that the “Sumiyoshi dance” was related to this creed.

In Naniwa [Osaka] there are people known as *Sumiyoshi odori*. From the first day of the third month to the last day of the sixth month they go around the city dancing and singing songs. Some claim that at the great Sumiyoshi shrine a god of boats [*funagami* 船神] is enshrined; before going on ocean voyages, a dance is danced and songs are sung. That is why the song [of the *Sumiyoshi odori*] goes [i.e., ends with] “boatman, farewell, farewell.” The “Sumiyoshi dance” is performed by *gannin bōzu*. (*Nanki bunko kyūzō ‘Kouta uchikiki,’* p. 203)<sup>33</sup>

Although the “Sumiyoshi dance” referred unambiguously to the famous Osaka shrine from which it took its name, dancers did not necessarily maintain ties to this institution. The previously cited document from 1672 claims that Osaka *gannin* engaged in proxy pilgrimages to the Sumiyoshi shrine, but a record from 1713 notes that the dancers emerged not from the shrine itself, but rather from Nagachō-makihonbō, a well-known Osaka slum, probably home to many *gannin* or other sorts of “lowly fellows” often mentioned by eyewitnesses (*Kokkei zōdan*, vol. 1, p. 442).<sup>34</sup> By the late seventeenth century, Sumiyoshi dancers—probably *gannin*, if not necessarily labeled as such—had become a familiar sight around Osaka. Eyewitnesses record their appearance as follows:

In Sesshū [i.e., the Osaka area] during this [sixth] month, groups of four to six Sumiyoshi beggar monks [乞食法師, *kojiki hōshi*] wear wide hats with red silk draped from the brim. From the waist down

they wear red skirts; in their hands they hold fans. One person in their midst supports a large parasol, below which [the others] sing and dance. They walk around town, collecting rice and coins. This is the so-called “Sumiyoshi dance.” (*Hinami kiji*, p. 75)

Sumiyoshi dancers: lowly fellows [*gebon no mono* 下品の者] who arrive from the Sumiyoshi vicinity. From the brim of their sedge hats they drape red silk cloth to conceal their faces. They wear white outfits with red aprons, and hold fans. In their midst they plant an umbrella and dance. They end their performances with the words “How auspicious is the young pine at the riverbank of Sumiyoshi, *senzairaku manzairaku*.” That is why they are called “Sumiyoshi dancers.” (*Jinrin kinmōzui*, p. 285)<sup>35</sup>

Most portrayals of the dancers place much emphasis on the outfits worn, indicating that Sumiyoshi dancers remained highly conspicuous wherever they went (see Illustrations 14 and 15).<sup>36</sup> Dancers held a fan in one hand (a second fan was tucked into the belt, in back), and danced beneath a tall parasol, sometimes in two tiers, with Shinto cloth or paper strips (*hei-haku* 幣帛, *taiima* 大麻) attached to the tip of the pole that extended through the crown.<sup>37</sup> A width of cloth, or paper, or paper strips were draped around the rim of the canopy. Such an umbrella was also sometimes used by other *ganmin*-like performers, such as those who prayed for sunny weather (*ohiyori* 御日和). These latter figures usually arrived in groups of four or five during long spells of rain, outfitted with only a loincloth. One performer supported a parasol, which had strips of auspicious-looking paper tied to the rim; the others intoned a prayer for clear skies and begged for coins.<sup>38</sup> Similar parasols were also used on occasion by candy vendors and other secular figures, such as performers of



ILLUSTRATION 14. “Sumiyoshi dance.” From *Jinrin kinmōzui*, p. 285.

*sekkyō* 説経 narration.<sup>39</sup>

Rhythmic ac-companiment was produced by striking a folded fan against the handle of the parasol; a better sound could be obtained by substituting a piece of split bamboo as a beater (TAKIZAWA 1911, 197; KITAGAWA 1992, 1:220; *Yo no sugata*, p. 40). Edo *gannin* of the nineteenth century also kept time by sounding wooden clappers (*hyōshigi* 拍子木) (*Yo no sugata*, p. 40). Later yet, castanets (*yotsudake* 四つ竹) were commonly used as well (KIKUCHI 1965, 259).

Osaka *gannin* probably transmitted the “Sumiyoshi dance” to Edo. According to some reports, Edo *gannin* took up this genre in the Bunka period (1804–1818) (SAITŌ 1981, 237, 242); others claimed that the Edo “Sumiyoshi dance” only appeared a decade or so later, during the Bunsei period (1818–1830) (*Zoku Asukagawa*, p. 40). By 1842, even high-ranking *bakufu* officials knew that *gannin* in the city had often turned into Sumiyoshi dancers (*STR, ge*). In any case, much to the dismay of conservative observers, local *gannin* transformed the Kansai version of the “Sumiyoshi dance” into an ungodly, kabuki-influenced entertainment (SAITŌ 1981, 242; *Zoku Asukagawa*, p. 36; *Yo no sugata*, p. 40). Edo Sumiyoshi dancers at first dressed much like their Kyoto/Osaka counterparts, but by the 1850s KITAGAWA Morisada could lament that Edo performers were Sumiyoshi dancers “only in name: their clothing and movements are entirely secular” (1992, 1:221).<sup>40</sup> Such up-to-date *gannin* still set up a parasol with the cloth draped around the canopy, but tended to

act in the lascivious ways of courtesans, or imitate kabuki actors. These are not old styles of performing. The monks [i.e., performers] do not wear sedge hats; instead, many wear headcloths.... They do not dance circling the parasol. Instead, one performer stands behind the dancers, supporting the parasol, while the others dance in front. (KITAGAWA 1992, 1:221)<sup>41</sup>

Performers also altered traditional “Sumiyoshi dance” songs to suit Edo



ILLUSTRATION 15. “Sumiyoshi dance.”  
From *Ehon otogi shina-kagami*, p. 759  
(Osaka, 1730).

sensibilities. Instead of the tried-and-true “How auspicious is the young pine at the riverbank of Sumiyoshi,” *gannin* might substitute Kansai pilgrimage songs set to new melodies,<sup>42</sup> or sing the following ditty:

<i>Okī no kurai no ni</i>	It is still dark in the offing,
<i>shiraho ga miyuru</i>	but you can see white sails.
<i>are wa Kii no kuni</i>	That must be a tangerine boat
yare korya kore wa no sa	<i>yare korya kore wa no sa</i>
<i>miķan-bune</i>	from the province of Kii.

(*Kouta no chimata*, p. 431)

This lyric invokes a 1644 incident in which Kinokuniya Bunzaemon made a fortune by loading a ship with Kii tangerines and sailing it to Edo in the midst of a downpour and howling winds.<sup>43</sup> Such origins are probably mythical, but the song may well have found its way into the “Sumiyoshi dance” because of the faintly remembered connection with the protector-god of seafarers enshrined at the Sumiyoshi shrine.

During the nineteenth century “Ise ondo” became the song of choice for accompanying the “Sumiyoshi dance” (*Yo no sugata*, 40; KAJIMA 1922, 92; MITAMURA 1977, 207). Still today, this melody is labeled *gannin bushi* in some rural areas. The song had been a fashionable Edo strain from as early as the seventeenth century; it retained a measure of popularity in the pleasure quarters until the end of the Tokugawa period and beyond (TODA 1915, 241; KITAGAWA 1992, 3:268–69). Moreover, when a craze for mass abscondences to the Ise shrine swept Japan from 1829 to 1830, pilgrims intoned this song while trekking over mountains and through fields. During these *anni mirabiles*, dance fever suddenly infected the populace, as large crowds of dancers took to the streets, cavorting and gesturing to the sound of “Ise ondo” (see *Ukiyo no arisama*, pp. 113, 131). The dance, in the words of one eyewitness, closely resembled *gannin* choreography; it was accompanied by *shamisen*, drums, and small hand-gongs. Even an umbrella might be set up in “Sumiyoshi-dance” fashion (*Ukiyo no arisama*, p. 105). Besides “Ise ondo,” the song “Yātokose” (referring to a vocable at the start or end of what was often a traditional “Ise ondo” lyric) also served as a “Sumiyoshi dance” song (MITAMURA 1977, 206–8). Later yet, *gannin* also incorporated the song “Yakkosan” into their performances; thereafter a section of this tune turned into a variety hall favorite (KURATA 1989, 1013).<sup>44</sup>

During the nineteenth century, the “Sumiyoshi dance” became so popular that *gannin* staged it at small jerry-built theaters on the grounds of tem-



ples and shrines. In the Nagoya area, street performers, apparently *gannin*, had been performing the dance at least since 1811 (KÖRIKI 1962, 237). In the fall of 1826, six of them, together with *jōruri* and *shamisen* accompanists, displayed their art at a showhouse on the precincts of the Nagoya Seijuin temple 清寿院 (*Kouta no chimata*, p. 431; KODERA 1991, 59). This extravaganza was so wildly successful that the same troupe and others gave many encore performances at later dates (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. *Gannin* performances around Nagoya (1826–1833) \*\*

Date	Location	Genre	Performers
1826/8/6–12/2	Seijuin	Sumiyoshi dance	6 <i>gannin</i> ; 1 <i>jōruri</i> , 1 <i>shinnai</i> , 2 <i>shamisen</i>
1827/1/6–4/19	Seijuin	Sumiyoshi dance?	Same as above
1827/7/9–?	Seijuin	Sumiyoshi dance	8 performers ( <i>gannin</i> ?), highly successful
1827/7/13–?	Nanatsu-dera Daibutsu 七つ寺大仏	Sumiyoshi dance	7 performers ( <i>gannin</i> ?); flops; moves to Inuyama 犬山
1827/11/23–?	Seijuin	Sumiyoshi dance	8 performers “popularly known as <i>gannin</i> ”
1827/7/16–26	Seijuin	Sumiyoshi dance	troupe of a boss aged 15–16
1830/1/14–?	Seijuin	<i>monomane</i>	8 <i>gannin</i> performers; use old-fashioned kabuki actor’s hairstyle ( <i>itobin</i> ).
1833/4/26	Ōsu 大須	Sumiyoshi dance announced	9 <i>gannin</i> from Kanda in Edo advertised but fail to arrive.

Though Nagoya *gannin* often claimed to be presenting the “Sumiyoshi dance,” this label functioned as a thin cover for what was really a variety show, including bawdy popular songs and slapstick kabuki-like skits. The *Enkōan nikki*, for example, records that the 1826 performers exhibited “farces” (*odoke kyōgen* おどけ狂言), which may explain the presence of *jōruri* and *shinnai* reciters, hardly necessary for a proper rendition of the “Sumiyoshi dance” (KÖRIKI 1962, 275). Again in the show that ran from 1830/1/14, *gannin* presented theatricals (*monomane* 物真似); from 1830/3\*/28, at the Atsuta Kantokuji temple 熱田乾徳寺, a permit for performances of the “Sumiyoshi dance” was used by a troupe of a dozen actors (probably not *gannin*) to stage several *bona fide* kabuki plays, including the famous classic *Sugawara denju tenarai kagami* (菅原伝授手習鑑, “Sugawara and the secrets of calligraphy”) (KODERA 1991, 114–15). It must have been

easier to obtain permission for producing the quasi-religious “Sumiyoshi dance” at temple theaters than for staging burlesques or kabuki, genres associated with the carnal, hedonistic mood of the pleasure quarters, and subject to much bothersome governmental licensing and control.

The *gannin* “Sumiyoshi dance” fell on hard times after the 1840s, when the *bakufu* sought to suppress many types of “immoral” entertainment. Though it enjoyed a brief resurgence in popularity around 1849, by 1864 it had become, as one cheap Edo woodblock flyer had it, unbearably “old-fashioned” (*Fūzoku gahō*, vol. 45, p. 13). By this time, it had been largely replaced by *kappore*, a genre that apparently resulted when *gannin* arts were reshaped by male entertainers (*hōkan* 俳間) in the pleasure quarters (MITAMURA 1977, 211).

SECULAR GENRES: RIDDLE PRINTS, *CHOBOKURE*, *CHONGARE*, *AHODARA-KYŌ*  
That *gannin* had long dabbled in irreverent activities is suggested by a *gannin* document probably drafted in 1744, which explicitly prohibits medicine vending and most forms of lottery-ticket sales (*Shisō zasshiki* [fascicle 3], pp. 72–73).<sup>46</sup> By the nineteenth century, the *gannin*’s nonreligious activities, such as the announcement of upcoming *sumō* bouts (*Hōreki genrai-shū*, vol. 7 p. 375) or the performance of scandalously parodic narratives had become so typical that even the Confucianist MOTOORI Uchitō (1792–1855) took note. Motoori classified *gannin* as “monk-like beggars,” but remarked that they had wives and children. To earn more money than mere beggars, *gannin* produced and displayed various and sundry objects, often of a humorous nature, or staged mock “unveilings” of ostensibly sacrosanct objects (thereby copying and parodying the practices of temples). *Gannin* sang popular songs or *jōruri* and recited sarcastic sutra-like verses. Some played string or percussion instruments and of course danced the “Sumiyoshi dance” (1971, 500). No mention is made of any serious attempt at religiosity.

*Riddle Prints* (Kangaemono 考え物, Hanjimonon 判じ物)

One notable secular *gannin* activity, popular from as early as the early eighteenth century but omitted in Motoori’s account, was the production and distribution of riddle prints. According to a law from 1729/4/26:

We hear that *gannin*, for no good reason, publish riddle prints and distribute them throughout the townsman quarters. Later they return to collect payment; or else they exchange objects for these prints. This practice easily turns into gambling. *Gannin* [who distribute riddle prints] should be arrested and turned over to their head. Henceforth, this kind of activity is not permitted.... (*Ruishū sen’yō*, vol. 14 [*butsuji*])

仏事], cited in NAKAO 1992, 449)

After *gannin* distributed riddle prints, the public was given some time to ponder the solution. In time, the *gannin* returned, offering the correct answer for an appropriate fee. In some cases, prizes were awarded to the lucky few who could solve the puzzle without *gannin* assistance. The law banning this misfeasance must have remained ineffective: *bakufu* documents from 1842/10/26 and 1842/11 still mention the distribution of riddle prints as a typical *gannin* practice (see NAKAO 1992, 454–55, 464). As late as 1854, chroniclers continued to observe *gannin* arriving with riddle prints in hand (*Wasure noḱori*, p. 124).

KITAGAWA Morisada gives an example of a mid-nineteenth century *gannin* riddle print. On a slip of paper, one inch wide and some three or four inches long, the ideographs for “one priest” (僧一人) are printed at top; near the bottom, one finds a horizontal line, signifying “one” (一). The point was to try to connect the meaning of these two elements, using puns. The solution was highly contrived: the horizontal line represented an acolyte (referring to the number “one,” i.e., to start from the beginning), who needed perseverance (*shinbō* 辛抱, homophonous with “pole” 真棒) in order to become a *jūji* (住寺, head priest of a temple; homophonous with 十, the number ten). In other words, when a vertical pole (*shinbō*) was added to the given horizontal line (the number “one”), it became a *jūji* (十): one became ten; the acolyte turned into a head priest (1992, 1:220; 4:150). Similar brain teasers came in numberless varieties.<sup>47</sup>

#### *Narrative Songs: Chobokure, Chongare*

From the late eighteenth century, eyewitnesses also begin to describe *gannin* as reciters of secular genres known as *chobokure* and *chongare*. These two types of narrative song were rooted in an older style known as *saimon* 祭文, a genre long practiced by *yamabushi* (“mountain ascetics”), who intoned vaguely Buddhist or Shinto verbiage in a low, strained voice while accompanying themselves by shaking a *shakujō* (*Jinrin kinmōzui*, p. 291). *Saimon* eventually gave birth to a form of secular narrative known as *uta-zaimon* 歌祭文, sung by *yamabushi*, street preachers, and secular popular singers. This “sung *saimon*,” which might be accompanied on *shamisen*, often listed well-loved spots in the city, famous people, or common occupations; some texts presented stirring tales of tragic love-suicides and daring vendettas.<sup>48</sup> *Chobokure*, some thought, was a version of rural *uta-zaimon*, specifically that performed by *yamabushi* from Jōshū 上州 (present-day Gunma Prefecture) (KITAMURA 1974, 2:749). *Chongare* seems to have arisen in Edo and only thereafter spread to the Kansai area (NAKAMURA 1983, 275–76, 283–86).

The first one hears of *chongare* and *chobokure* is in the 1765 volume

*Mizu no yukue* 水の往方 (The way of water) by Hezutsu Tōsaku 平秩東作 (1726–1789). The author recalls that around the Kyōhō period (1716–1736) a thirty-year-old monk, wearing a blue cotton kimono and wielding a short *shakujō*, came around reciting “*chongare chobokure*” and inserting “indecent words” between stanzas (NAKAMURA 1983, 274). This dating may be somewhat too early, but by 1759 rapid-fire *saimon* recitation heard in Edo was indeed known as *chobokure*, a term which, like *chongare*, appears to have derived from verbs signifying to talk cleverly, or nonsensically, at high speed (*chobokuru*, *chongaru*).<sup>49</sup> By 1763, *chongare* and *chobokure* had become sufficiently popular to be recited in the kabuki, where a play featuring a “*chongare* monk” (*chongare bōzu*), most likely indistinguishable from a *gannin bōzu*, chanted and danced for a delighted public (NAKAMURA 1983, 275–76, 283–86).

A description in the 1762 volume *Kyōkun sashidashi-guchi* 教訓差出口 (A spout of instruction) leaves no doubt that Edo *chongare* and *chobokure* were commonly recited by *gannin*. After some misanthropic reportage that “during the last year or two one hears something called *chobokure* and *chongare* done in a strained voice. Whatever it might claim to be, it is just meaningless gibberish,” the author proceeds to describe the performers. These, he asserts, live “in Edo to the south of Yanagibashi area” (almost certainly Hashimoto-chō). They appear either “in the buff, in winter,” or “wearing ecclesiastical garb, probably borrowed from a pawn shop,” as they beg before doorsteps. When they roam around town, they “display figures of Jizō or Fudō, recite Buddhist hymns to Jizō (*Jizō wasan* 地藏和讃), explain the birth of Buddha, exhibit figures of Enma-ō, vend fortunes, and provide cheap offerings to departed spirits (*segaki*), their practices changing with the seasons” (cited in NAKAMURA 1983, 277–78). As we have seen, these arts stood firmly in the *gannin* tradition, but according to a 1776 description, *chongare* monks of the day preferred a thoroughly progressive look: a short-cut jacket, a “Honda” hairdo, a bleached cotton headcloth, and even the latest “Kogiku” paper handkerchiefs (*Tōsei kōko kashiko* 当世爰かしこ [Fashions, here and there] cited in NAKAMURA 1983, 281). This portrayal of the secularized *gannin* may include some hyperbole, but the *chongare* monks of the day probably did flaunt a more modern style than their minimally cloaked forebears.

An example of *chongare* from this age is given in the volume *Genkyōku sui bentō*, a 1774 collection of verses popular in the Kansai area. The religious-sounding opening, and the final chuckle *nohoho* or *hohoho* are perhaps vestiges of *saimon* or *uta-zaimon*, but the rest is entirely new and altogether secular.

Kimyō chōrai dora ga nyōrai<sup>50</sup>

*Kimyō chōrai dora wa nyōrai*

<i>ōyare kami san, kiite mo kurenei</i>	Oh gods! Won't you hear my plea!
<i>dōraqu ootoho to yume ni mo shiraide</i>	I never dreamed he was a playboy,
<i>hatachi no orikara yome-iri itashite</i>	so at twenty-one I married him,
<i>kurō suru no mo kusare na en tote</i>	thought my suffering came from bad
	karma,
<i>akirame kurashite, yashoku no</i>	resigned myself and lived on. I had
<i>katamari</i>	a child,
<i>kozō ga dekita de, kawai mono dani</i>	a boy, so sweet, I thought
<i>sodatete miyō to omōta ma mo naku</i>	I'd raise him well, but soon enough,
<i>jūichi, jūni de tonari no omusu o</i>	at twelve or so, he starts to flirt
<i>chobokuri kaketa o choto mite</i>	with the girl next door, just for fun.
<i>kyōgaru</i>	
<i>ima no kodomo wa, yudan ga</i>	You've got to be careful with kids
<i>naranu wa,</i>	these days!
<i>ho ho ho ho</i>	Ha, ha, ha, ha....

(*Genkyoku sui bentō*, p. 234)

These *chongare* lyrics were accompanied on *shamisen* (in *san-sagari* tuning), indicating again that *gannin* arts were becoming more worldly, as a religious aura gave way to more melodious musical effect. Until the early twentieth century, however, *chobokure* continued to be accompanied mainly on the *shakujō*. Tokugawa-period illustrations usually depict *gannin* with the *shakujō* in the right hand and a fan in the left (see NAKAMURA 1983, 290). The *shakujō* was sometimes replaced by a sistrum made from a piece of split bamboo with several one-*mon* coins strung across the top from one tip to the other, the same instrument described by KITAGAWA as typical of *suta-suta bōzu* (see Illustrations 11, 12, 13) (1992, 1:239; NAKAMURA 1983, 279–80; MITAMURA 1977, 277).

By 1821 *chongare* had become so popular that a flyer from Osaka lists it as a “fad of the year” (HAMAMATSU 1928, 6:158). From 1835/7\*/15, for example, five *chongare* reciters at the Seijuin temple in Nagoya offered a series of performances of popular plots such as *Hirai Gonpachi* 平井権八, *Ise ondo*, and *Onna nusubito ukiyo-monogatari* 女盗人浮世物語 (“Floating-world tales of female thieves”) (KODERA 1991, 178). Nagoya *gannin* of this era also performed other long quasi-narrative secular genres such as “Musashino bushi,” which puns on the names of the stations of the Tōkaidō (*Kouta no chimata*, p. 431).<sup>51</sup>

Besides replicating well-known kabuki plots, *chobokure* style was put to use in political satire. A government reshuffle was lampooned in one well-known *chobokure* from 1833 (MATSURA 1981, 229–30); the arrival of the Americans in 1853, and the inadequacy of the *bakufu* response provided material for many more.<sup>52</sup> *Chobokure* chapbooks were sold either in small-scale bookshops, or on the streets by the performers themselves, who were then known as *yomiuri* (see GROEMER 1994). In some cases, lyrics were probably never performed at all; instead the booklets functioned as a form of newspaper or light reading. Sections of *chobokure* were incorporated into musical genres associated with the kabuki, such as *kiyomoto bushi* 清元節 (*Kairaiishi* 傀儡師 [The puppeteer], first performed at the Edo Ichimura-za in 1824) and *nagauta* (*Kisen* 喜撰, first performed at the Edo Nakamura-za in 1831; this work also included some of the “Sumiyoshi dance”), all “quick change” dances, in which one performer impersonated a series of contrasting characters, one of whom was a *gannin*-like figure performing snippets of *chobokure* recitation.

Today *chobokure* has almost no surviving practitioners. Yet *Naniwa bushi* (浪花節), a derivative that was once almost synonymous with *chobokure* (KITAMURA 1974, 2:749), continues to please a large number of Japanese listeners.

#### *Sutra Parodies: Ahodara-kyō*

By the early nineteenth century, the *gannin* had become so secularized that they could spoof the very genres that they had once claimed to practice in earnest. One popular parody was the fake sutra known as *Ahodara-kyō* (usually 阿房陀羅經, “The Fool’s Sutra”). Like *chongare* and *chobokure*, *Ahodara-kyō* traced its roots to the *yamabushi* tradition of *saimon*, which included sub-genres such as *kaï-saimon* 貝祭文 (conch-shell *saimon*) and *deroren saimon* でろれん祭文 (an onomatopoeic designation) featuring rapid-fire sutra-like phrases recited in a monotone style. This art must have been known to an ex-priest cum entertainer who called himself, in turn, Donryū 吞龍, Tenkō 天口, Tenryū 天柳, and Tenkōsai 天口斎, and who authored the first known *Ahodara-kyō*.<sup>53</sup> A contemporaneous document registers his achievements as follows:

1811/3 Donryū’s mock “unveiling of a holy object” (*odoke kaichō* おどけ開帳)

Donryū has great vocal ability; he once devised an original style for chanting hymns to Kannon (*Kannon no eika* 観音の詠歌), which he used to convert many people. During the Kyōwa period [1801–1804], when the Nan’endō 南圓堂 hall was being built at the Kōfukuji tem-

ple 興福寺 in Nara, he sang these hymns [before doorsteps?] at the houses of the Nara citizenry. Thereafter he founded a temple at Osaka Teramachi 寺町 and became the head priest. Since he was by nature a shameless degenerate, prone to dissipation, like-minded monks soon converged there too. Donryū changed his name to Tenkō and wrote the *Ahodara-kyō*, as well as a history satirizing himself. He was the first to stage a “comic unveiling,” which he did before the Taiyūji temple 太融寺 at Kitano [in Osaka]. This was repeated elsewhere later. During the Bunsei period [1818–1830] he set up a space for collecting alms at the Saihōji temple 西方寺 at Akatsuki-yama 暁山, where he preached. (HAMAMATSU 1928, 5:432–33)

Donryū also performed at show houses on temple and shrine grounds in Nagoya. In 1817 he recited his *Ahodara-kyō* there; from 1818/2 he appeared with another man in a show featuring “comic tales.” Admission was a mere eight coppers, but after performing one or two of his creations, he collected four more coppers from his captive audience (KODERA 1991, 8). Donryū’s famous “sutra” (the cover is reproduced in Illustration 11) remains more or less untranslatable (the indispensable Buddhist tone disappears), but its concerns and general tone may perhaps be discerned in the following rendition of the opening lines (see HAMAMATSU 1928, 5:433–37; MITAMURA 1977, 269–76).<sup>54</sup>

*Bussetsu ahodara-kyō, Baḡa na ḡuni doro-bōshi yaḡu*

*Jorō ḡaitai, ittai ḡōshoḡu, zentai nora, mina ḡore, yōshō ḡara, sodachi ga warui ḡara, shōben tarya, ḡawaisō ni, baba surya, itonbo ni, hana tarya, nezuriḡomi, tsumami-gui ya, ḡai gurai wa, nenjū nenbyaḡu, shōbai dōzen, sore ḡara dandan, ḡōji, ḡo-zuḡai zeni ya, hashita zeni wa, jōjū fudan, hiḡḡake choiḡake, ḡusunekomi, gohatto no anaichi, rokudo, bōhi-ḡi, baḡḡari shite, shimai nya, ḡenḡa ḡōron, ḡinjo chōnai, tomodachi ga, doyardoya dete use....*

“The Fool’s Sutra”: Buddhist truths explained by Rev. Crook, from the land of buffoons

You want a whore, you just want sex, you’re just a bum, it’s all like that, from when you’re small, not brought up right, you piss around, you poor little thing, you take a crap, just like a girl, a snot-nosed brat, you blame it on others, eat on the sly, you mess around, all the time, and all day long, like it’s your job, you want a lot, you spend your change, it’s all you got, again and again, you get stuck, you get caught, you have to steal, you make bad bets, and start to gamble, but it’s illegal,

you can't agree, you start a fight, and all the folks, right on your block, around your house, and all your friends, they're telling you, "get out of here!..." (HAMAMATSU 1928, 5:435–37; MITAMURA 1977, 270–71)

And so it goes, on and on, for five times this length. For better or worse, the *Ahodara-kyō* style quickly caught on, leading to the production of countless new variants. These creations then began to merge with *chobokure* to become the stock-in-trade of *gannin*, who diffused the genre to the countryside. Edo *Ahodara-kyō* performers (sometimes labeled *obokure bōzu*) from this age are described by KITAGAWA Morisada:<sup>55</sup>

Their garb is not set, but is always of shabby cotton material. Some wear only an old priest's surplice [*wagesa* 輪袈裟]; others wear just plain attire. Some suspend a wooden slit gong from their waists, but others hold the instrument in their hands. They strike this; or they thread four or five coppers onto a piece of split bamboo, which they shake. They read comic narratives in the style of a sutra, e.g., "Even the holy Buddha strayed in the way of love. Before what gate of what house on which corner could he have stood? When that fickle priest with the bald pate came from the countryside, he was dressed in red, with a wide stole, etc. etc." (1992, 1:220)

The wooden slit-gong played by the classic *Ahodara-kyō* performer was normally used by Buddhist priests to keep time while reciting sutras. In urban areas, the *Ahodara-kyō* slit-gong began to be replaced by the *shamisen* sometime during the mid-nineteenth century, especially when verses were performed by non-*gannin*. Illustrations 16 to 18, taken from cover illustrations of *Ahodara-kyō* booklets, depict how the monkish appearance was gradually shed.

Newly-fashioned *Ahodara-kyō* texts featured kabuki-related plots, or poked fun at society and authority, irritating even the highest ranks of the *bakufu* administration who saw such *gannin* activities as unruly (see *STR*, *ge*). They may have had good cause for concern, for in 1842 a printed flyer offering a pasquinade of the *Ahodara-kyō*—in effect, a parody of a parody—vented its wrath at the onerous "Tenpō Reforms." This creation, written exclusively with Chinese characters, was, for reasons both political and artistic, certainly meant to be read at home, not performed on the streets.

*Ahokannan-kyō* (阿房艱難經)

*Tenpō nenjū, shoshiki takane, beikoku geraku, buke konkyū, jigoku tebi-ki, onna-kamiyui kibishii hatto, yose jōruri, kore mata kinzei, shōnai*





ILLUSTRATION 16. *Dōrakuji ahōdara-kyō* (vol. 1 of a 3-volume set). Published in Edo by Yoshidaya Kokichi (1850s?; author's collection). Note the slit-gong, shaved head, and slightly formal garb, worn together with a fashionable scarf.



ILLUSTRATION 17. *Dōrakuji ahōdara-kyō* (vol. 1 of a 2-volume set, bound together). Published in Edo by Yoshidaya Kokichi (1850s?; author's collection). The performer is a townsman, but is still using a double slit-gong.



ILLUSTRATION 18. *Dōrakuji ahōdara-kyō* (vol. 2 of a 2-volume set, bound together). Published in Edo by Yoshidaya Kokichi (1850s?; author's collection). The slit-gong has been abandoned in favor of *shamisen* in a performance by a townsman.

*kunigae, seken hyōban, kachū tōwaku, kingin ruri, iroiro wairo, kenmon ryūkō, shoke kenkin, meppō kaina, kinmon sakibako, kakugai shōshin, sore yue katte, shisso sekken, bakudai tsūyō, tōhyaku chōmoku zatsu, nise kingin, shōryaku rinshoku, shuju konzatsu, shichi kan sōba, sore kara kono kata, machikata baibai, tori-tsubushi yūzū sezu, nangi nanjū, misetachi bunsan okizari, tokoro-dokoro hikōshi, nyōbō dō shiyō kō shiyō, aa setsuna-kyō, anmarida, anmarida*

“A Fool’s Hardship Sutra”

During the Tenpō years, expenses skyrocket, rice prices crash, samurai suffer, all goes to hell, women’s hairdressers are banned, even variety-hall *jōruri* is banned, fiefs are reshuffled, everyone’s talking, retainers are puzzled, bribes are rampant, gold, silver, and gems, pay-offs everywhere, buying off others, what a mess, gold-embossed carrying cases, exceptional promotions, rampant selfishness, demands of frugality and austerity, everything’s in hock, old and new coins all mixed up, counterfeit gold and silver, mean and stingy, everything’s in disorder, outrageous exchange rates, commoners go bankrupt, no loans available, hardship and problems, shops shut down, stores break up, people desert, move around here and there, wives don’t know what to do, ah what miserable times, it’s too much, it’s too much! (*Tengen hikki*, p. 198)

Not all political critique voiced in *Ahodara-kyō* and *chobokure* was so sound. Scorn could be aimed at entirely undeserving targets, adding rhetorical force to chauvinist and racist attitudes. Some ten years after Japan had won a war against China, for example, one misguided patriot published a tendentious volume of “modern *Ahodara-kyō*” in which he announces that unlike Japan, “China has no real imperial lineage. From the start, barbarians and savages just waited for an opportunity to commit treason and grab power, making themselves emperor: Qin, Han, Tang, Sung, Yuan, Ming, one and all, nothing but disorder and chaos” (*Hai kara ahodara*, pp. 24–25). This tiresome litany continues with arguments that China would have grabbed Korea had not Japan thankfully intervened in a righteous war that established peace and guaranteed Korea’s independence. The best that can be said about such texts is that none entered street performers’ standard repertory.

THE END OF *GANNIN* ARTS

For the first few years during the Meiji upheaval, *gannin* continued to work the

streets as usual, though under increasing pressure to cease and desist. With the economy in shambles, *gannin* could no longer count on street performances as a reliable source of income. In desperation, some probably turned to the poorhouse at Takanawa, which had been founded in 1869.<sup>56</sup> On 1 July 1873 the Tokyo City government reported that poor priestly-looking beggars who lived at Asakusa Dōmae, Shiba Shin'ami, and elsewhere, were still lining the roads at sites such as Asakusa Kinryūzan and collecting donations. City officials promptly ordered them to stop behaving in such a shameless manner; henceforth they were to be treated no different from other, nonreligious beggars (*Shiryō-shū: Meiji shōki hisabetsu buraku*, pp. 404–5). A few weeks later, on 23 August 1873, the government took the final, decisive step, abolishing the *gannin* organization and the label *gannin*, and ordering all *gannin* to enter their names into commoner registries (*Shiryō-shū: Meiji shōki hisabetsu buraku*, p. 416).

Conditions hardly improved as the years went on. In 1881/1, after a large part of the Kanda area was destroyed by a fire, politicians discussed what to do with Hashimoto-chō, described as “the dirtiest [area] in the city, especially the back streets” (*Tōkyō jūgo-ku rinji kaigi jiroku*, p. 17). In this ward, they noted, “four or five families, many of them ex-*gannin* with no fixed occupation, live together in one house” (*Tōkyō jūgo-ku rinji kaigi jiroku*, p. 17). According to city officials,

Kanda Hashimoto-chō has long been filled with the poor, who live in flophouses run by hostlers. Shabby hovels are rented to the indigent for a paltry sum. Those who live here make it a habit to beg daily at various places. This is a neighborhood for people who are unregistered and have no stable occupation.

(*Tōkyō jūgo-ku rinji kaigi jiroku*, p. 15)

Conditions at Shiba Shin'ami-chō, once the next most populous *gannin* neighborhood of Edo, were no better. An 1886 report in the *Chōya shinbun* 朝野新聞, one of the more forward-looking newspapers of the day, notes that

since olden days, the poor people of this area did not maintain regular occupations. This was a colony of so-called *gannin bōzu*, whose occupation was to stand before houses and beg for coins. This custom has still not disappeared. Despite the elaborate laws that are on the books, these people continue to beg for coins while standing before doorways, selling matches, bamboo scrapers, or scrubbing brushes. Some unabashedly appear at the Honganji temple or at the Kannon temple at Asakusa and petition visitors; or else they wait for the police

to leave, and use the chance to beg at houses for one or two coppers. A husband might lead around his blind wife with her child on her back. He plays a worn-out *shamisen* while she sings the tale of the double love-suicide of Suzuki Mondo and his mistress. Or else, the wife strums clumsily on the *shamisen* while the husband taps on a wooden slit-gong and recites a sutra-like parody of a profligate priest.  
(Reprinted in *Sabetsu no shosō*, 329)

As late as 1920, Shiba Shin'ami-chō continued to function as a center of beggars and impoverished street performers. Some 500 houses sheltered over 3000 people, many of whom still performed traditional *gannin* arts (GONDA 1971, 319). But as the twentieth century went into its third and fourth decades, such genres no longer earned the support of the citizenry. With all official protection gone, their arts outdated and unpopular, and the country in an increasingly militaristic mood, the ex-*gannin* drifted into extinction.

Yet *gannin* arts continued to live on, albeit in radically altered form: the “Sumiyoshi dance” provided the basis for *ḡappore*; *chobokure*, *chongare*, and the *Ahodara-kyō* contributed to the development of *Naniwa bushi*; in rural areas, songs closely related to *gannin* performances continued to be performed as dances for Shinto gods at local shrines or as accompaniment to the *bon* dance (NHK 1992b, 72).<sup>57</sup> In Fukui Prefecture, for example, “*gannin* dances,” including “Ise ondo” and the “Sumiyoshi dance,” were until recently offered to the deities at religious festivals (NHK 1992a, 241). No systematic attempt at collecting such songs has yet been made, but it would certainly be worthwhile to do so while it is still possible. Such a study would probably reveal that the effect of the *gannin* was felt in almost all areas of the land, to an extent far exceeding what is usually assumed.

#### NOTES

1. I have outlined the history and social organization of the *gannin* in GROEMER 2000. The most important Japanese-language studies of the *gannin* are SUZUKI 1994, YOSHIDA 1994, NAKAO 1992, 441–79, and TAKAYANAGI 1981, 1982. Nakao and Yoshida, in particular, cite many important unpublished documents. Useful discussions of *gannin* performing arts include NISHIITSUNOI 1975, MISUMI 1968, 126–35, and NAKAYAMA 1933.

2. Unclear. One character is missing between the words *butsu* (佛) and *ḡanjin* (勸進).

3. The document was written by one Nishinobō 西之坊, who resided at Nishi-Takatsu shinchi 4-chōme, in Osaka.

4. Slightly shorter listings from 1790 can be found in *Mikiki-gusa* (*zoḡu 2-shū no 10*, pp. 353–54; also cited in *Kōji ruien, seiji-bu*, vol. 3, pp. 958–59); MATSURA 1978, 322; and *Shisō zasshiḡi* (fascicle 3), pp. 69–70. In addition, *Nanki bunḡo kyūzō* ‘*Kouta uchikiḡi*,’ p. 203, lists

two arts not found elsewhere and whose nature I have not been able to ascertain: *kane no o* 鐘の緒 (perhaps vending straps for jingle bells or hand gongs?); and *nuibotoke* 縫仏 (embroidering images of the Buddha?). This document claims that along with Awashima and *kōshin* (see below), these two arts were not limited to any specific season.

5. *Kōjin* is the god of the hearth. Exorcism for purifying the hearth often took place at the end of each month and the end of the year. Such exorcists (*kama-jime*, better known as *kama-barai* 竈祓) are only rarely said to be *gannin*; most were female shamans. For a discussion see ASAKURA 1992, 101–6.

6. On cold-water ablutions of the Buddhist clergy see KIKUCHI 1965, 198–200. In the hopes their skills would thereby improve, Edo artisan apprentices also often made near-naked winter pilgrimages to nearby temples and shrines, dousing themselves with cold water before and after arriving. Some unlucky ones occasionally froze to death. See KAJIMA 1922, 154–55. Exhibits of the ability to withstand pain were commonly made by *yamabushi* and other priestly ascetics known as *udegō* 腕香 who burned incense on their arms or punctured themselves with swords to solicit donations.

7. KITAMURA 1974, 2:162, notes that “recently the *kangori* of beggar-priests means ‘*dai-gori*.’” By the nineteenth century, *gannin* were evidently unwilling to endure such discomfort unless somebody paid them to do so.

8. *Kōfu fūzoku-shi*, though written in 1792, recalls customs in Edo some sixty years earlier. *Gannin* winter nakedness is still reported customary in the 1850s. See *Wasure nokori*, p. 124.

9. The writer of *Meiwa-shi* notes that recently (ca. 1822) this ritual had become rare.

10. *Nanki bunko kyūzō* ‘*Kouta uchikiki*,’ p. 203, refers to the *gannin* practice of something called *tsuru no ashi* (鶴の足), literally “crane legs,” during the summer months. This art may well have been identical with *taqa-ashida*.

11. *Jinrin kinmōzui* was published in 1690, in the Kansai area. *Taqa-ashida* are also listed in *Jinrin chōhōki*, vol. 5, section 3 (Osaka 1696). For an illustration from Edo in 1798, where they are listed as appearing during the seventh month, see *Shiji no yukikui*, p. 395.

12. See *Rakuyō dengaku-ki*, p. 219.

13. See also the illustrations included in *Fūzoku gahō*, vols. 45, 48.

14. For another illustration (probably based on an unnamed nineteenth-century source) of *gannin* engaging in the *oshaka tanjō* rite, see ITO 1967, 243.

15. The practice is listed in *Zoku Asukagawa*, p. 25, as common from the 1740s to the 1810s.

16. Datsueba was the hag that confiscated the clothing of souls before they crossed the “river of three fords,” which flowed across the way to the underworld.

17. For a law from 1648/2/25 see *Shōhō jiroku*, vol. 1, p. 2 (no. 5).

18. *Nanki bunko kyūzō* ‘*Kouta uchikiki*,’ p. 203, notes that *gannin* performed *segaki* throughout the seventh month.

19. The version of this text given in *Nihon zuihitsu taisei*, third series, vol. 4, p. 257, gives “*oshaka wai!*” *Gannin* are elsewhere also reported as calling out “*oshaka oshaka*” (*Edo fūzoku sōmakuri*, p. 33).

20. The Awashima shrine, which supposedly came under the jurisdiction of the Sumiyoshi shrine, was also associated with Hari Sainyo 針才女, the wife of Gozu Tennō 牛頭天王, who, along with her husband, helped ward off disease. In any case, the association with a feminine form is common, though the writer of *Jinrin kinmōzui* remarks sarcastically that the god depicted at the shrine is actually male.

21. The outlines of the legend are recounted in *Zoku Asukagawa*, p. 29.

22. Nevertheless, some late Tokugawa-period sources continue to list “Awashima” as a *gannin* art. See, for example, *Nanki bunko kyūzō* ‘*Kouta uchikiki*,’ p. 203; and *Zoku*

*Asukagawa*, p. 29. The latter source adds that *gannin* who perform “Awashima” shake a *suzu*.

23. Taishakuten protected the Buddhist law; Seimen Kongō, the “pale *vajra*,” was often portrayed as a monkey, and was said to be helpful in warding off disease; Sarudahiko was believed to be a guardian spirit of the road.

24. The word *machi* 待 (to wait) implies a vigil, but it has long been conjectured that this term is actually an abbreviation of the word *matsuri* (rite). See *San'yō zakki*, pp. 148–49. *Tsuki-machi* and *himachi* were also often performed by *yamabushi* (see HARDACRE 1994, 148).

25. See *Jinrin kinmōzui*, p. 265. SAITŌ 1970, 1:46, records that on the first *kōshin* day of the year the Edo public, too, worshiped Seimen Kongō at certain temples and shrines throughout the city. In addition, parties were held and lucky roasted beans consumed; on this day, women stopped their needlework and did not apply tooth-blackening dye. No mention is made, however, of *gannin* or other figures engaging in proxy vigils. On *kōshin machi* in the Suruga province see ABE 1907, 1:288.

26. A similar description is given in SAITŌ 1970, 2:70. Here again one reads of links to the Kanda shrine, ties that seem to have disappeared from some time in the eighteenth century. KITAMURA 1974, 2:638 also mentions a Shinto priest who wore a Tengu (long-nosed goblin) mask, distributing talismans from the heavenly king (*tennō-sama*). A masked performer is depicted in Illustration 9.

27. Cotton is sewn up in cloth to form a shape somewhat resembling a monkey. This allows the bearer to be blessed by gods such as Hiyoshi Sannō or Awashima Daimyōjin.

28. A lawsuit against the *makasho* is mentioned in TAKIZAWA 1911, 196; Edo *gannin*, who were said to have been begging in extortionist manners, also appear to have lost a suit around 1807 (KOMIYAYAMA 1975, 102). Perhaps this was the identical suit.

29. On the Edo Inari religion see MIYATA 1973, 248–71.

30. KITAGAWA 1992, 1:221 calls these beggars “*Handa gyōnin*” and notes that they have “recently” (early 1850s?) become extinct.

31. Similar song texts are recorded in RYŪTEI 1975, 404 and KITAMURA 1974, 2:638. See also the text recited by *suttarabō*, given below.

32. NAKAYAMA 1933, 28–29 discusses possible origins, in particular the link to *dengaku* 田楽.

33. The *Nanki bunqo kyūzō* ‘*Kouta uchikiki*’ refers to a publication from the first decade of the nineteenth century, so cannot have been written before this date. It includes, however, numerous songs of much older vintage.

34. *Settsu meisho zue* (*jō*, p. 106), written in 1794, notes, however, that Sumiyoshi dancers (probably *gannin*), came from Sumiyoshi Village (near Osaka) and circulated throughout Kyoto and Osaka.

35. The same lyrics, without the last two words, are also recorded in SAITŌ 1981, 242; *Zoku Asukagawa*, p. 36; and KITAGAWA 1992, 1:220. A longer song that includes this phrase in the middle can be found in *Nanki bunqo kyūzō* ‘*Kouta uchikiki*,’ p. 203; an anonymous annotator to the *Kouta uchikiki* remarks that “in the city” the additional words at the end are not performed (*Kouta uchikiki*, p. 23). Songs or poems mentioning the pine at Sumiyoshi (in early days pronounced Suminoe) date back to the *Man'yōshū* (see, for example, poem 1159, p. 217). Later poets again took up the subject in the *Kokin wakashū* of 905 (see poem 906, p. 284), and the *Shin kokin wakashū* of 1205 (see poem 725, p. 163).

36. KITAGAWA 1992, 1:219–20, 222 and 4:195, 224, describes their outfit in great detail.

37. KITAGAWA 1992, 1:222. *Yo no sugata*, p. 40 (written 1833) speaks of a two-tiered version, probably from Edo during the nineteenth century. For more detail on the parasol see KITAGAWA 1992, 5:5. Some sources describe the parasol as blue. See *Zoku Asukagawa*, p. 36. Two-tiered parasols are illustrated in KIKUCHI 1965, 259, and MITAMURA 1977, 208; and in a

photograph from the early Meiji period in TAMAI 1992, 306.

38. KITAGAWA 1992, 1:220. *Edo fūzoku sōmakuri*, p. 33, also lists praying for fine weather as a *gannin* activity.

39. For an illustration of the latter see *Konoōkoro-gusa*, p. 82.

40. *Yo no sugata*, p. 40, notes that nineteenth-century Edo *gannin* Sumiyoshi dancers wore an unlined white cotton jacket; around their waists they wrapped something resembling a priest's robe. They covered their heads with black or blue headcloths.

41. *Yo no sugata*, p. 40, also notes that imitations of kabuki were commonplace by the nineteenth century.

42. For song texts and parodies see KITAGAWA 1992, 1:221; *Kouta no chimata*, p. 431; MITAMURA 1977, 211; FUJISAWA 1951, 142.

43. This song can already be found in *Ukare-gusa*, p. 351 (pub. Osaka, 1822), where it is entitled “Misaki-bushi” 三岬節.

44. HORIUCHI and MACHIDA 1931, 22 give a version of “Yakkosan” probably heard in Tokyo *yose* in the 1920s. A Toyama Prefecture version of “Yakkosan” is given in a tolerably accurate, albeit truncated transcription in NHK 1992a, 242. The song transcribed is accompanied only by hand claps on the first beat of each duple measure (not indicated in the score).

45. Based on KODERA 1991, 59, 67, 72–73, 79, 88, 108, 148–49.

46. The drawing of lots is listed in the *gannin*'s list of traditional arts, but the lots in question were most likely quasi-religious fortunes, prognosticating the future but offering no prize money. See *Shisō zasshiki* (fascicle 3), p. 73. Though alleged to be a rightful *gannin* pursuit, this activity must have conflicted with the monopoly claimed by yin-yang diviners.

47. For other examples see NISHIZAWA 1906, 486; and KAJIMA 1922, 98–99.

48. For good examples of *uta-zaimon* texts see *Sabishiki za no nagusami* [pub. 1676], pp. 136–37; and *Shinpen uta-zaimon-shū*.

49. An alternate explanation is offered by GORAI Shigeru, who suggests that the term *chobokure* derived from the *chobo-doko* (reciter's dais) in the kabuki theater, indicating that *chobokure* emerged when *saimon* was influenced by *jōruri* recitation (1972, 456). I have briefly discussed some genres of high-speed recitation in GROEMER 1999, 15.

50. The first two words are an archaic formula used when worshiping Buddha (婦命頂礼); this is followed by the word “gong” (銅鑼) and a slightly elongated *nyorai* (如来 Skt., *tathāgata*, “a person who has attained Buddhahood”). The formula is parodic and is found in other *chongare* texts as well.

51. A good selection of *chongare* texts can be found in GORAI, ed. 1972, pp. 481–502, 510–28, 538–47.

52. A sampling of *chobokure* texts can be found in *Fujiokaya nikki*, vol. 1, pp. 545–46 (1835); vol. 2, p. 92 (1837), p. 252 (1842); vol. 5, p. 521 (ca. 1853); vol. 10, pp. 229–30 (1862). For other *chongare* and *chobokure* see “Chongare chobokure ko-sasshi-shū”; and GORAI, ed. 1972, 481–28, 538–47.

53. For more on Donryū's efforts see NISHIZAWA 1906, 503.

54. For more published texts see MITAMURA 1926, 143–64; GORAI, ed. 1972, 528–30; MITAMURA 1977, 270–71, 274, 275–76; FUJISAWA 1951, 176–77, reproduces an 1871 parody entitled *Bōzu atama ahodara-kyō sucharaka pokupoku* 坊主頭あほだら経すちやらかほくほく.

55. Another detailed description can be found in KIKUCHI 1965, 253–54.

56. See the 1869/9/27 document cited in *Shiryō-shū: Meiji shōki hisabetsu buraku*, p. 79. *Gannin* were explicitly mentioned as potential admittees, provided they could tender an affidavit.

57. NHK 1992a, 240–42 presents four transcriptions of *gannen-bō* (sic) dance songs from Toyama Prefecture. Two are subtitled “Nagebushi” 投節 and appear melodically related (one

text is clearly “Ise ondo,” the other, employing a *ni-agari shamisen* tuning, is a *hōnen* 豊年 [“bountiful harvest”] song); one more, entitled “Yakkosan” 奴さん, is in two parts, only the second of which is transcribed in NHK 1992b, 242 (no. 300); and one labeled “Kodaijin” 小大臣 (*shamisen* accompaniment in *ni-agari* tuning), whose melody is probably a version of the Niigata Prefecture folk song *Shinpo kōdaiji*. For details on the Toyama versions of *gannin* arts see ITO 1966 and 1971.

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