



Review Essay

A Discussion of Nagasawa Sōhei's

Hayachine take kagura: Mai no shōchō to shakaiteki jissen



Nagasawa Sōhei 長澤壯平, *Hayachine take kagura: Mai no shōchō to shakaiteki jissen* 早池峰岳神楽—舞の象徴と社会的実践 (Hayachine take kagura: The symbolism of the dance and its social realization)

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IN 1976, the Agency for Cultural Affairs designated Hayachine *kagura* 早池峰神楽 in Ōhasama chō, Hanamaki city, Iwate prefecture a “nationally designated important intangible folk cultural property” (*jūyō mukei minzoku bunka zai* 重要無形民俗文化財). As evidence of its deemed importance, before and since its designation, the *kagura* has captured the attention of various scholars, both Japanese and foreign alike (HONDA 1942, SUGAWARA 1969, MORIGUCHI 1971, KANDA 1984, AVERBUCH 1995). *Hayachine take kagura: Mai no shōchō to shakaiteki jissen* by Nagasawa Sōhei is the latest major contribution to this body of scholarship.

Since the designation, Hayachine *kagura* has become the common term although two *kagura* types are combined within this designation, *take kagura* 岳神楽 and *ōtsugunai kagura* 大償神楽. Both *kagura* share points in common although, as Nagasawa points out, the historical backgrounds to each that determine the nature of the *kagura* differ, and thus separate treatment

is warranted. In an extended preface to the publication, Nagasawa provides an outline of academic approaches to the folk performing arts, a statement and explanation of his own research aims, background geographical and historical detail and, finally, performance details of the dances and props. With respect to academic approaches, Nagasawa summarizes that folkloric approaches to the Japanese folk performing arts altered considerably around the early 1990s when, up to this period, the major preoccupation of scholars was to see the performing arts as windows on the past and, because of their historical importance, preservation and recording was the major concern. What was valued most, as Hashimoto Hiroyuki 橋本裕之 critically commented, was an over preoccupation with the “original, old, simple, and traditional.” However, the Japanese performing arts are ongoing practices, continuing in twenty-first century social environments vastly different to the social circumstances from which they originally emerged. Consequently, recent scholarship, spearheaded by the criticisms of Hashimoto, have geared research to examining the folk performing arts in modern social settings where, for example, previous concerns with ritual have been superseded by contemporary concerns with tourist promotion. The “Festival Law” of 1992, where tourism is a major component, is a blatant manifestation of these altered social conditions. Nagasawa refers to current folkloric research as being primarily concerned with “behind the scenes” activities from which current performance is realized. Suggesting that this focus has itself been over-emphasized, Nagasawa has set out to redress the balance acknowledging that, although the Japanese folk performing arts are realized in modern social contexts, actual performance practice can and still does embody expressions of past thought/ritual systems which still have relevance today and therefore should not be overlooked. This complicated mixture of “present” and “past” has determined the structure of his research which is both evident in the title, “symbolism of the dance” and “social realization,” and in the division of this publication into two parts, the first dealing with the former and the second, with the latter. As an inspirational starting point, Nagasawa is guided by Irit Averbuch’s observations or experience of the “force” embodied in the realization of the dance. Nagasawa explains that this “force” can evoke meaning and artistic quality in the dance performance where “meaning” and “artistic quality” are also mutually influential so that, through artistic “force,” meaning is evoked, and the evocation of meaning in turn gives added strength to the artistic “force.” The elucidation of the forces of artistry and meaning/symbolism in the dance is the aim of the first part of the book. The aim of the second part is to clarify how, through people’s actions, experiences and feelings, the force and meaning of the *kagura* determines social functions.

In order to achieve the first aim, dance analysis is imperative and for this, Nagasawa is inspired by the dance analyses of Inoue Takahiro in his work *Shimotsuki kagura no shukusaijaku* (INOUE 2004). Video analyses form the basis of Nagasawa’s examination and here he admits that there are human limitations in selecting what movements are deemed important and what are not. As an expectation of

what the analysis and, from this, what the dance symbolism might convey, Nagasawa provides a valuable summary of the various religious and ritual influences which have prevailed on *take kagura*. He divides these influences into four main periods. The first of these sees the influence of *yamabushi* 山伏 (mountain ascetics) and the worship of variously named *gongen* 権現 (manifestations of the Buddha in alternative guises—in *take kagura*, a lion) at Tanaka shrine, a precursor to the present Hayachine shrine where *take kagura* is performed today. The second sees the establishment of Myōsen temple 妙泉寺 and the affiliation of the shrine to the temple, though, during the Edo period, in particular during the Kyōhō era (1716–1736), the shrine and the *kagura* were influenced by Yoshida Shinto 吉田神道. This influence meant a process of “Shintoization” where *yamabushi* elements such as, for example, the reading of *saimon* 祭文 (narrative prayers) ceased and were replaced by Yoshida Shinto-style *norito* 祝詞 prayers and purification rituals. The third period is the religious reforms of the Meiji period, the separation of Shinto from Buddhism at Myōsen temple, and the temple priests subsequently becoming shrine priests of a newly named Hayachine shrine. The fourth period sees the *kagura* becoming the object of academic attention from the 1930s on, and the *kagura* extending beyond the sphere of local performances. Nagasawa refers to this as the “modernization” of the *kagura*. Of the four periods given, Nagasawa sees the second period, the period where both elements of *yamabushi* and Yoshida Shinto inspired influences prevailed, as being the most important in terms of evaluating the meaning of the *kagura* as it is performed today. Having provided the historical background, attention is then turned to the dance. Excluding the *gongen mai* 権現舞, six types or genres of dances are acknowledged: *shiki mai* 式舞 (ritual dance), *kami mai* 神舞 (dances of the gods), *ara mai* 荒舞 (wild dances), *onna mai* 女舞 (woman’s dance), *bushi mai* 武士舞 (warrior’s dance), and *kyōgen* 狂言. The ritual dances of *shiki mai* are, in fact, divided into two versions, *omote mai* 表舞 (surface dance) and *ura mai* 裏舞 (rear dance), and renditions can differ in their presentation. *Kami mai* refers to theatrical presentations of Japanese myth, *ara mai* suggests influences from *yamabushi* and *shugendō* 修験道 (the ritual practices of *yamabushi*), *onna mai* portrays Buddhist fables, *bushi mai* are elegant dances expressing valor, and *kyōgen* provides the comic relief. For his analysis of the symbolism of the dance, Nagasawa focuses solely on one ritual, the *omote mai* version of *shiki mai*, and these analyses make up the first part of the book which is entitled “The meaning and force of the dance.”

Six dances are included in *shiki mai*. These are *Tori mai* 鳥舞 (bird dance), *Okina mai* 翁舞, *Sanbasō mai* 三番叟舞, *Hachiman mai* 八幡舞, *Yama no kamimai* 山的神舞, and *Iwato biraki mai* 岩戸開き舞. Each forms a single chapter and in these, Nagasawa provides detailed written descriptions of the dance movements and small blocks of photographs so that the movements can be visually checked. This is then followed by analyses or interpretations of the movements and what they symbolize.

The first piece, *Tori mai*, symbolizes “creation,” “birth,” and “beginnings.” Significantly, it is a paired dance, danced by two men, and from this Nagasawa entitles the general structure as *tsui no kōzō* 対の構造 (structure of opposites). From this,

Nagasawa interprets expressions of dualities—male and female, and heaven and earth which are based on yin/yang concepts. The overall structure of the dance is also divided into two sections which are respectively referred to as *neri* ネリ and *kuzushi* クズシ and it is within these sections that the dance movements are analyzed. Dance movements such as *henbai* 反閉, the stamping of feet originating in *onmyōdō* 陰陽道 or yin/yang, to drive away evil spirits, are also included. Nagasawa explains that the dance is characterized by what he calls “step/graded repetitive structure” in which the “force” of the *torimono* 採物, the handheld object used in the dance to summon deities, is gradually strengthened. Through the *ōgi* 扇 dance (fan dance), the dancer becomes one with the spirit of the deity and this represents the presence and the force of the deity. Nagasawa then sees the repetition of the dance, again a duality, as representing the *kongō kai* 金剛界 (diamond world) and *taizō kai* 胎藏界 (womb world), the cosmic world of the Buddha in the former, and the manifestation of the Buddha in the natural world for the latter. Both are often represented and visually understood in mandala form.

The second dance is *Okina mai*, the dance of the old man represented by a white mask, which contrasts with the ensuing *Sanbasō mai*, an old man’s dance with a black mask. The identities of these old men are complicated as they have been appropriated by various religious and ritual movements. They are most familiarly known in the early seasonal performances of Noh drama, having been appropriated from the shrine and temple entertainments from the mid-Heian period (794–1185). As a character in *sarugaku nob* 猿楽能 in the Middle Ages, performances of Okina were of central importance, occurring in the Buddhist and shrine services of January, *shūshō-e* 修正会, and February, *shūni-e* 修二会 to bode felicitations. As a central, primordial figure in Noh drama, Nagasawa turns to Zeami’s 世阿弥 *Fūshikaden* 風姿花伝 in which there are descriptions of the Iwato story, the primordial dance of the goddess Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, and Zeami’s explanation of *sarugaku* as an entertainment serving to calm the ten thousand people fallen from the right path, so that the Buddha may nourish them. With the Iwato story (Shinto), and Buddhist explanations, Nagasawa explains that, as a central figure, Okina is consequently located in a mixed, dual religious world of Shinto and Buddhism. The Buddhist component is clarified in the *Fūshikaden* when Zeami describes Okina, along with Sanbasō and a third, Chichi no jō 父の尉 (now absent from Noh drama and also excluded in *take kagura*) as particular virtues or manifestations of Nyorai 如来 (Buddha). To reinforce the Buddhist connection, Nagasawa turns to a theoretical treatise on Noh drama, the *Meishukushū* 明宿集, penned by Noh dramatist Konparu Zenchiku 金春禪竹 (1405–1471). Here Okina becomes Dainichi nyorai 大日如来, the Great Sun Buddha which, in *mikkyō* 密教 Buddhism, is “All” that is in the universe. Okina thus takes on the mantle of supreme deity, an embodiment of a unity of deities and the Buddha. In a later, sixteenth century, further treatise on Noh, the *Hachijō kadensho* 八帖花伝書, the influence of Shinto thinking is evident when Okina takes on the supreme identity of the sun goddess Amaterasu. In Yoshida Shinto, which as noted previously directly influenced

activities at Myōsen temple, Okina is given the persona of the deity Ama no Koyane no Mikoto and this is his identity in *take kagura*. That said, the script used in Okina performances is replete with Buddhist references, yet again confirming the mix of the “native” (Shinto) and the foreign (Buddhism). A note in the text also explains that Okina represents the Heaven, and Sanbasō the earth, and this duality is further qualified by references taken from the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 where Okina represents purity and light and Sanbasō, contrastingly, heavy and impure. Nagasawa points out that this concept of pure and light and heavy and impure, quoted from the *Nihon shoki*, is in turn likely derived from the Chinese classic the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 dating to the second century BCE which deals with a blend of Daoist, Confucian, yin/yang and *wu xing* 五行 (Jp. *gogyō*, or the five ways) principles. In Daoist thinking, the two dimensions of light and pure, and impure are the *ki* (氣) which itself is the fundamental element in theories on the creation of the universe. Nagasawa believes that this concept has been retained in the *kagura* pieces today and that references to heaven, and the pure and light for Okina, and earth and the impure for Sanbasō are Daoist principles as referenced in the *Huainanzi*; and, the concept of *ki* is one part of an underlying principle in Japanese religious concepts dealing with the creation of the universe. Even with the Yoshida Shinto-influenced identification of Okina as Ama no Koyane no Mikoto, there is no contradiction in the virtue, for Ama no Koyane no Mikoto is one of the heavenly deities, and in this, the connection with heaven is retained. In *take kagura*, the words *chibaya furu* are written on the two wings of the helmet which Okina wears. This, Nagasawa explains, represents a spiritual or life force and this, in turn, suggests the power of a heavenly deity which Okina embodies. With this background explanation, analysis of the dance movements is given. Although details of Okina’s various identities and virtues are described, unsurprisingly, matching dance movements to the attributes outlined above is problematic.

An overall structure sees two sections again, the *neri* and the *kuzushi*. In the first, paraphrasing Nagasawa, circular movements of the fan in the dance evokes power and through repetition of the movements an “impression” of a force is obtained which can, perhaps conjecturally, be connected to the characteristic of a powerful, heavenly deity. More specifically, *henbai* dance movements, already employed in the previous *Tori mai*, are similarly included here to drive away bad spirits and to increase the life force. A combined, simultaneous folding of the sleeves gives added strength or “spiritual power” to the *henbai* movements and to the function it is supposed to serve. Likewise, as in the previous *Tori mai*, the “repetitive structure” of various movements gives added strength and power to the fan, though the purpose of that power is not mentioned in this context. An overall semblance of slow and graceful movements characterizes the dance of Okina and it is from this that the demeanor of a powerful, heavenly deity can be inferred. This may seem like fortuitous speculation but the contrasting movements of Sanbasō in the ensuing dance gives added weight to the elegance and nobility of Okina. As the counterpart to Okina, the identity and characteristics of Sanbasō have been given. Specifically, in a Buddhist interpretation, Sanbasō is

Amida Nyorai 阿弥陀如来, a positive force, but, conversely in *take kagura*, with the influence of Yoshida Shinto, Sanbasō becomes Hiruko no Mikoto. According to the *Kojiki*, Hiruko no Mikoto is the first child of Izanagi and Izanami but is born in the form of a leech, is deemed bad, and is subsequently floated away on a reed boat. This characteristic fits earlier descriptions of heavy and impure and, in keeping with this, the dance of Sanbasō is consequently wild, with leaps and turns in what Nagasawa summarizes as lacking any order, *muchitsujo* 無秩序. Through this, in contrast to the deified persona of Okina, Sanbasō is closer to the common man or at least occupies the border between deity and man. Historically, the status of Sanbasō in *take kagura* today is questionable in that the identity of, or appropriation of the name Hiru no Mikoto is from the Meiji period (1868–1912) and therefore, determining earlier characteristics in the dance is consequently problematic.

The fourth dance, *Hachiman mai* is, as the name indicates, a representation of the Hachiman deity of Usa shrine, Oita prefecture, Kyushu. Background influences to the Hachiman belief sees an input from Daoism, Buddhism, and Shinto which, in a Japanese context, is summarized by an identification with the Ōjin emperor 応神天皇. In the context of *take kagura*, directions given in the *kagura* text indicate a symbolism similar to that of Okina and Sanbasō, namely a harmonization of “heaven” and “earth” and a quote from the *Huainanzi* via the *Nihon shoki* which places a contrast between the exquisite and the superlative against the heavy and the impure. The dance, as Nagasawa explains, means the fixing or forming of the land, although there is no reference to the meaning of Hachiman in the text so explanations are dependent on alternative historical background sources. The structure of the dance, realized in two parts, the *neri* and the *kuzushi*, is itself again a “structure of opposites,” a dance for two corresponding, as Nagasawa explains, to a harmony between “heaven” and “earth” and, with an alternative title *yotsu yumi no mai* 四弓の舞, dance with four bows (as in bow and arrow), and the two dancers emphasize the directional nature of the dance. By loosing arrows in the four directions, purification and the expulsion of evil spirits is achieved. The brief references to Hachiman perhaps represent a later designation of this title to the dance in what Nagasawa suggests to be a “Shintoization” of this performance piece. Where *Hachiman mai* suggests, in its title, national influences, the title of the next piece *Yama no kamimai* attains closer identification to local mountain deities. That said, similarly titled pieces are to be found in many theatrically oriented *kagura* in other parts of the country. What the title does indicate is a deity with a greater degree of familiarity and, in the context of *take kagura*, an association with the all imposing Hayachine Mountain. The principle feature of this dance, manifest in the gentle movements of the *neri* section and the faster, more violent movements in the ensuing *kuzushi*, is the prime object of purification, represented by repeated circular movements. More precisely, through feet stamping (*henbai*), sword waving and similar movements, evil spirits are driven away from the four directions. And from this, wild movements lead to the per-

formance of a trance-like state, from which *takusen* 託宣 (oracles) and prayers are “received” and given.

The final dance in this series of ritual dances is *Iwato biraki mai* which, as is evident from the title, portrays the return of the sun goddess, Amaterasu Ōmikami, from her place of hiding in the cave, and restoring light to the world. The dance is, therefore, in contrast to the previous pieces, more theatrical in its presentation. In this realization of the myth in *take kagura*, four protagonists are portrayed, though one of the key figures, the goddess Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, whose dance lures Amaterasu Ōmikami from her place of hiding, is absent from the *omote mai* version of *Iwato biraki mai*. She appears only in the *ura mai* version. The four protagonists in order of their stage appearance are the deities Ame no Koyane no Mikoto, Tachikarao no Mikoto, Amaterasu Ōmikami, and finally Futotama no Mikoto. Although dance predominates, the depiction of a particular event in Japanese myth dictates the presentation. The structure of the performance therefore follows the unfolding or flow of the story and this makes it different from all the previous *shiki mai*. This is particularly evident in the inclusion of spoken extracts taken from the *Nihon shoki*, which make up one part of the performance. This, and subsequent dances, lead to the climax of the piece, the appearance of Amaterasu Ōmikami.

In summary, analyses of the dances reveal movements which can be interpreted as symbolizing or reflecting particular belief systems or religious concepts. Yin/yang, Daoist principles, and the influence of *mikkyō* are the most obvious, though to what extent they represent the particular virtues or characteristics of each dance or the protagonist(s) in the dance is, at times, debatable. The elegance of *Okina mai*, contrasting with the vigor of Sanbasō, is a broad characteristic which, at least here, distinguishes the different nature of these two personae. More noticeably, however, is that similar functions seem to be served in all the dances, primarily the driving away of evil spirits, sometimes through *henbai*, and the strengthening of the force or power of the *torimono*, through repetitive movements, to summon deities. Yin/yang, Daoism, Shintoization through the influence of Yoshida Shinto, representations of the cosmology of the *kongō kai* and *taizō kai* can be academically discerned, but it is unclear to what extent these thought, ritual, and religious systems are appreciated by the performers themselves and what meaning or significance it holds for them, if any.

In terms of interpretation, the voice of the performer may be underrepresented in the first part of the book but, by contrast, in the second part of the book it is the voice of the performer that provides the background information to the realization of the *kagura* today. *Hitobito no jissen* 人々の実践 (The actual practice of the people), part two, is divided into four chapters: “Modern day *take kagura* rooted in performance”; “*Take kagura* as a spiritual resource”; “The body and form of the *gongen*”; and “The performance place.” The first of these chapters, chapter 8, “Modern day *take kagura* rooted in performance,” traces the *kagura* as it moves from the local to the global. A timetable of events, dating from the 1930s when Honda Yasuji “discovered” the *kagura* to more recent national and international performances, indicates the scale of activity which challenges performers today. A

complicated equation between the local and the global may prevail, but as Nagasawa explains, although outside forces may alter contexts or even help to save dying traditions, it is the local which holds sway as the local people are empowered by the external attention received. For the academic, the tourist agency, or the concert promoter, *take kagura* may offer historical insights or financial rewards to outside bodies, but it is the “here and now” of the performance which, as Nagasawa reveals in his interviews, is foremost in the minds of the performers. The visceral and experiential in the performance predominates and makes the *kagura* meaningful for the performers and the local community. As one performer explains, “city people may come to learn about our culture here, but when they see the *kagura* they are moved by it and so it is not the culture itself but the *kagura* which is great.” The performers are affected by the *kagura* on the emotional physical level, not the intellectual and, although at the administrative level, “preservation society,” “promotion/advertising,” “public concerts,” and “cultural property” may be factors which impinge on the activities of *take kagura* performers. Nagasawa’s interviews reveal that, as far as these activities are concerned, the performers are in a state of denial. The present, the now of the performance enhanced further by the sacred space or separate world which forms the small space of performance during performance gives the *kagura* its integrity. It is an integrity which, from my own observations, is matched by many other examples of the Japanese performing arts and, although the “global” may impinge, the force of the local prevails.

In the next chapter, “*Take kagura* as a spiritual resource,” Nagasawa moves away from what is perhaps the more obvious “tourist resource” or even “political resource” to examine the “spiritual resource” or effect that the *kagura* has on the community; in what way the *kagura*, as a “spiritual resource,” is good for, or benefits the community, and how it determines people’s behavior. The benefits become evident from statements given by members of the community. The *kagura* serves not only as a ritual performance in fixed festivals, but is performed at wedding ceremonies, before building constructions, or as a celebration on the completion of the construction of a new home. Nagasawa quotes: “Celebrations of the new year, driving away misfortune, [the *kagura*] is connected to everything, the lives and culture of the town folk ... and [with the sounds of the drum] (onomatopoeic representation of the drums), the god appears and one’s feelings change completely.” As Nagasawa explains, the *kagura* therefore evokes a “spirituality” or “joy” which is shared by the entire community. It also serves, as another conversation with a performer reveals, to forge human bonds regardless of differences in age between people; and this bond extends like a family between the performers and those watching the *kagura*. Criticism of actual performance display may come from the audience, particularly from older generations who have witnessed several generations of performers, but this too is positive in facilitating improved performance practice and, more importantly, continuity. When performances are given outside Ōhasama chō, in urban areas, although the same bond between the performers and audience may be absent, the sense of spirituality in the dance is felt, and the

“spiritual resource” of the *kagura* is realized here too, as Nagasawa discovers from the questionnaires he devised.

Chapter 9, “The body and form of the *gongen*” draws attention to the essence of *take kagura*, the appearance of the *gongen*, namely the appearance of the Buddha in an alternate guise—the lion dance. This is the climax of the *kagura* and it is here that the shrine priest makes his entrance and the *gongen* answers the prayers of those gathered. Venues can vary and, unlike other pieces in the *take kagura* repertoire, *gongen* can “leave the stage” and be performed separately in a variety of contexts. Through repeated visits to people’s homes, the *gongen* becomes a patterned image or force, and the lion’s head is that of an unrivalled spiritual animal which serves as a medium for realizing or bringing about prayers. The repeated performances and patterned image become a symbol of the community and the presence of the *gongen* overlaps with the symbol of Hayachine mountain itself as both define the essence or identity of the community. Although in the advertised festival of July and August, the *gongen* dance seemingly fulfills tourist expectations of show and entertainment, in alternative contexts, in the *kado uchi* house performances, the reverence of the dance is all, as old and young sit before the deity with hands clasped in prayer. The “force” of the *gongen* is all apparent.

In the final chapter (10), it is clear that “The performance place” for *take kagura* can vary from the festivals of the New Year, local festivals for the community in May, the opening of the mountains in June, the well publicized grand festival of August, the local festivals of October, end of year festivals in December, and the private gatherings which occur throughout the year. To this can be added both national and international performance venues where *take kagura* obtain a variety of guises and functions. Nagasawa details a variety of contexts ranging from the “original,” devoid of the concerns of tourists and kept private, private to the extent that Nagasawa is requested not to give details of time and place. However, Nagasawa’s use of the term “place” extends beyond the physical reality of the stage to the “performing form” of the “entertainment” (*geinō* 芸能) itself which is at the centre of that place. With this, attention is turned to the realization of performance practice and performance knowledge acquisition, the learning of the *kagura*. In order for the “form” to be realized, effort is needed in practice through observation and imitation of elders. However, despite the positive comments of performers, adaptations to modern work practices and a shift away from an agricultural economy place restrictions on practice times.

Turning back to the dances, their analyses in the first part of the book reveal characteristics peculiar to each dance. Nagasawa is therefore wary of the research of previous scholars who see repeated patterned movements, *tegoto* 手ごと, across dances facilitating dance instruction and acquisition. Yet, he acknowledges that there are *tegoto* common to a number of pieces which do, in fact, assist in the realization of a number of dances, though the combinations in which they occur differ from dance to dance, complicating that realization process. The early stages of tuition require conscious reaction before a state of unconscious performance, namely “completion” of the dance or, borrowing Pierre Bourdieu’s “habitus,”

a state of unconscious habitual action is achieved. But, as Nagasawa points out, it is not just the body movements which are internalized but also the nature or spirit of the given deity performed. Through this internalization process, the “force” necessary for the “purification,” “blessing,” and “prayer” in the dance is obtained and, in realizing the force, the performance environment, atmosphere, audience reaction and interaction also play a significant role. External evaluations and audience reaction can determine the quality of the performance as performers are either stimulated by audience reaction or, alternatively, stunted by that reaction. A reflexive position adopted by the performers can determine a good performance and, ultimately, this will be inextricably linked to the survival of the tradition itself. The performance is immanent and transient and its realization is the product of subjective experiences of the performers and subjective memories which in turn become part of the whole, which is transmitted between performers and is ultimately made common amongst performers. Nagasawa’s descriptions of the “performance space” and his wide interpretation of the word from the physical performance of the space, to the actual “performing form” and the transcendent “performance existence,” realized through the accumulated subjective experiences of its performers, are conditions easily identifiable in a wide range of performing arts whether they be folk or even performances of art music on the urban stage. They are conditions which have an artistic universality.

When Honda Yasuji was first introduced to a dance derived from Hayachine *kagura* in the 1930s, he was told by a local acquaintance that the dance he saw was an example of *yamabushi kagura*. On the basis of this single piece of information, *yamabushi kagura* became the generic term to describe the *kagura* of the north east of Japan. Kanda Yoriko has cast doubts on the credibility of this term, and the research of the dances by Nagasawa Sōhei here similarly reveals a complex of ritual and religious systems ranging from Daoism, yin/yang, Buddhism, and Yoshida Shinto which negates the simple attribution of *yamabushi kagura*. For my own research on Iwami *kagura* 石見神楽 in the west of Japan, which itself includes dance analysis, Nagasawa’s analyses of the dance show that belief and thought systems need to be considered and that movements, performed in ritual contexts, are not simply a series of motions arranged for aesthetic purposes but can be physical representations of thought systems. That said, the question remains as to what extent performers are, in fact, aware of the representative meanings of the dances and one wonders, in the original creation process, a process which, in fact, can never be known, to what degree there was a conscious attempt to represent thought systems in dance form.

In the second part of the book, Nagasawa’s work on the various social contexts in which *take kagura* is located parallels many examples of the folk performing arts and deals with issues which transcend national boundaries. It is this transcendence which makes Nagasawa’s publication valuable not only to those specializing in the Japanese folk performing arts but to a wider audience concerned with the processes of performance.

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