

The *Hashira-matsu* and Shugendo¹

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The Problem

The rite known as *hashira-matsu* 柱松 (“pillar-pine”) has been discussed by YANAGITA Kunio (1915). This well-known folk observance most often took place on the 7th night of the 7th lunar month (the Tanabata 七夕 festival), or at Bon 盆. One or two pillars twice the height of a man, and up to two arm-spans around, made of bundled brushwood, were set up in an open space. To the top were attached *gohei* 御幣, *sakaki* branches and *noshi*-like strips: combustible materials which easily caught fire when the *hashira-matsu* were lit. Lighting the *hashira-matsu* involved a contest to see which pillar caught fire first.

In the past, this rite was widely performed from the Kanto to Kyushu. Yanagita pointed out that the local place-name “Hashira-matsu” often survived even where the rite had died out. He observed that, as in the case of other folk contests, the rite’s basic meaning had to do with divining the success or failure of that year’s harvest.

Since Yanagita’s time, further materials relevant to the *hashira-matsu* rite have been collected. Many similar rites are now known, under such names as *hi-age*, *hi-nage*, *nage-taimatsu*, *hashira-taimatsu*, *ho-age*, *hashiraimatsu*, *hotemu*, *hashira-matsuri*, or *hashira-maki*. Many share one obvious feature which has been overlooked: they were performed by yamabushi. What follows is therefore intended as a reevaluation of

¹ This article was originally published in Japanese (see WAKAMORI 1975a, pp. 362–376). Research for this article was done during the period 1963–1966, as part of a group survey of the Togakushi cult performed by the Togakushi Sōgō Chōsadan under Ishida Mosaku.

the rite's meaning and evolution, and as a contribution to the history of Shugendo.

The hashira-matsu and Togakushi Shugendo

The Tendai Shugendo of Togakushi-yama 戸隠山 in Nagano-ken was based at Kenkō-ji. On the subject of the *hashira-matsu* and Shugendo, *Kenkō-ji ruki*, preserved at the temple and dated Chōroku 2 (1458), contains the following entry:

In late summer there is also the *hashira-matsu*, which burns up all karmic sufferings due to the passions and reveals the spiritual power accumulated thanks to the practices done during the summer.

This rite was a counterpart to the spring *hana-e* 花会 ("flower assembly"). Indeed, the *hana-e*, which started at the Hon-in 本院 or Oku-sha 奥社 (the "inner [upper] shrine"), signified the direction of movement "from fruit to seed" 従果向因; whereas the *hashira-matsu* rite began from the Chūin 中院 or Naka-sha 中社 (the "middle shrine"), thus signifying the direction of movement "from seed to fruit" 従因至果. It is in these terms, characteristic of Shugendo, that the text stresses the importance of the rite.²

The text does not clearly describe what the *hashira-matsu* rite consisted of. However, the chapter entitled "Bettō shokui no koto" 別当職位之事 ("On the office of the *bettō*") has the following entry, dated Einin 5.7 (1297):

There was an argument between the practitioners (*gyōnin* 行人) and the elder monks (*rōsō* 老僧), concerning the *gohei* for the *hashira-matsu*. In the end, no one was designated to light them.

One glimpses here the dual structure common to many Shugendo temples in Kamakura times. At Togakushi as elsewhere, the yamabushi practitioners were distinguished from the scholar-monks. Normally, no doubt, both groups worked together in the *hashira-matsu* rite. In this instance, however, a quarrel arose, so that the *hashira-matsu* were in the end knocked down without ever having been lit at all.

² The pilgrimage from Kumano to Ōmine is known in Shugendo as going "from seed to fruit," whereas the pilgrimage from Yoshino through Ōmine was called "from fruit to seed." The former meant progressing, thanks to one's practice, from hell (the region furthest from enlightenment, "seed") to the buddha-realm of enlightenment ("fruit"). The latter signified movement from the buddha-realm toward hell, in order to save and enlighten sentient beings.

The procedure according to which the *gohei* were lighted and the *hashira-matsu* at last knocked down can be seen in the rite as practiced at Hiko-san 彦山 in Kyushu. Below, I shall discuss this topic as it appears in *Hiko-san sairei emaki*. For the moment, I shall only note that there occurred at Hiko-san, on the 15th day of the 2nd lunar month, a ceremony known as *hashira-matsu taoshi* ("the knocking down of the *hashira-matsu*") or *hei kiri* 幣切り ("the cutting of the *gohei*"). A yamabushi would climb the *hashira-matsu*, set fire to the *gohei* at the point where they were attached to the pillar; then cut off the *gohei*, above the point which was now burning, with a vigorous sweep of his sword. This event marked the conclusion of the matsuri.

At Togakushi, the time when the rite was performed, and the meaning attributed to it, were quite different. Nevertheless, the information regarding Hiko-san helps to clarify the meaning of the sentence, "In the end, no one was designated to light them."

The medieval *hashira-matsu* rite is described as having been performed only "in late summer." No further detail is given. In Tenmei 4 (1784), however, Sugae Masumi (1754-1828) visited Togakushi and noted that it took place on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month. He wrote the following in his travel account, *Kumeji no hashi* (1971):

The rite (*shinji* 神事) performed on the 7th day of this, the 7th month is called *hashira-matsu*. They set up three immensely tall pillars, each of which is given the name of one of the Three Shrines [i.e., the Oku-sha, Naka-sha, and Hōkō-sha 宝光社 of Togakushi]. A bundle of brushwood is affixed to the top of each pillar. The brushwood is lit, whereupon everyone quickly draws back and watches. The quality of that year's harvest, good or poor, is then divined according to the deity upon whose pillar the brushwood most quickly bursts into a full blaze. This year it was Tajikarao-no-mikoto's pillar [i.e. that of the Oku-sha] which blazed up first, suggesting that the harvest will be good.

Although this is the same *hashira-matsu* rite as the one mentioned in *Kenkō-ji ruki*, the significance attributed to the rite in each case appears to be different.

At this point, we must consider the mountain cult which became Togakushi Shugendo in the light of traditional lore about the mountain (see WAKAMORI 1975b). The traditional, popular conception of Togakushi arose on the one hand from the cult rendered to the mountain by those who lived on it or around its base. In this conception, the mountain was a spirit-world inhabited by such super-

natural beings as *oni* 鬼 and *yamauba* 山姥. Togakushi is the setting for the legend of the fearsome giant Daidarabotchi 大座法師, and there is even a place by that name on the south side of the mountain. There were also legends about a demon-woman (*kijo* 鬼女), of the kind so well known from the noh play *Momijigari* 紅葉狩. Tenpaku-san 天白さん, a tengu-like being, was greatly feared there. Thus, Togakushi was seen as a realm where such demonic creatures roamed freely.

Another element in the popular conception of Togakushi was the idea of it held by villagers who lived within view of the mountain, yet some distance away from it. Their cult had to do above all with prayers for rain. Such prayers were linked with Tane-ga-ike 種が池 a pond surrounded by lava rocks and situated beyond the Oku-sha, near the path to Kashiwabara 柏原. Even today, people come to Togakushi from quite far away to pray for rain. The people of the villages around Togakushi also watch the mountain for signs to guide their work in the fields.

The former kind of cult was no doubt stronger in the middle ages and the latter in the Edo period. Although we now tend to assume that agriculture-centered religion goes back to the very earliest times, it may well have been only in the Edo period that farmers began to be personally concerned about the success or failure of their crops. Perhaps this sort of concern became genuinely strong only after a large number of landowning peasants (*honbyakushō* 本百姓) had emerged and, through their annual taxes, developed a direct relationship with their domain lord or estate owner. Until then, it may well have been the ruling class more than anyone else who worried about the crop.

At Togakushi, belief in the demonic powers of the mountain surely appeared first. Yamabushi adepts (*kenza* 験者) were then needed to quell them. Tane-ga-ike was feared as the dwelling place of Kuzuryū 九頭竜 ("Nine-Headed Dragon"), which can be fairly described as the local deity (*jimushi-gami* 地主神) of the mountain.³ Thus, the pond was more the home of a demonic power than a place for farmers to pray for rain. Perhaps it was this belief in Kuzuryū which led to the rise of Tendai-affiliated Shugendo at Kenkō-ji and of Shingon-affiliated Shugendo at Sai-in 西院. In general, the yamabushi appeared in answer to a need for sorcerers (*jujutsushi* 呪術師)

³ *Kenkō-ji ruki* describes a confrontation between Kuzuryū and Gakumon Gyōja, the "opener" of Togakushi.

to quell such powers, and they developed a body of teachings well suited to this purpose. For the yamabushi, the lighting of the *hashira-matsu* had to do with burning up karmic impediments created by the passions. For the common people, however, the rite no doubt meant burning up the demon powers which underlie the passions themselves.

Greeting Ancestral Spirits and Quelling Malevolent Spirits

At the origin of this sort of interpretation is the Mantō-e 万灯会 (“assembly of ten thousand lights”). The purpose of this pre-medieval rite was *zange* 懺悔 (“confession”), and the rite involved the destruction of the passions. It included the erection of *hashira-matsu*.

The Mantō-e of Tōdai-ji, famous since the Nara period, is discussed in *Tōdai-ji yōroku* 東大寺要録 (ca. 1118), kan 5, under the heading *Nenjū sechie shitaku* 年中節会支度 (“Preparations for the seasonal festivals”). The entry is derived from a record of the Kanpyō era (889–898). Among the materials needed for the Mantō-e, which was performed on the 14th day of the 12th month, it lists “*hashira-matsu*, forty bundles, at a cost of two *koku*.” Other kinds of fires appear to have been lit as well, and each is listed along with its cost. Thus *Tōdai-ji yōroku* gives us a glimpse of a great temple’s *hashira-matsu* observance.

However, the *hashira-matsu* rite did not originate at Buddhist temples. Indeed, the *tachiakashi* 立ちあかし (“standing lamps”) mentioned in *Sagoromo* 狭衣 *monogatari* were *hashira-matsu* in the broadest sense. One theory even has it that since the *hashira* character can also be read *tsuku*, the characters for *hashira-matsu* can also read *tsui-matsu*, which is then an archaic form of the word *taimatsu* 松明 (“torch”).⁴

This *hashira-matsu* in the form of a huge *taimatsu* appears in *Konjaku monogatari shū* (kan 25, no. 4), which tells how a gentleman traveled from Mutsu to visit his father in Kazusa. There, “*hashira-matsu* were lit here and there, since it was the last day of the ninth month and the garden was therefore dark.” Such *hashira-matsu* were simply used for outdoor lighting. They consisted of pillars at the top of which a fire was lit. These thoroughly practical *hashira-matsu* were then turned to religious purposes and adopted into the regular round of annual observances at temples. Concerning their use by

⁴ See headnote to *Konjaku monogatari*, scroll 25, no. 4; YAMADA 1962, vol. 4 (25), p. 371.

yamabushi at Togakushi for the quelling of demons, in the 7th month, it is noteworthy that there already existed the custom of lighting *hashira-matsu* at Bon, to welcome the ancestral spirits (*shōryō* 精霊). Almost all mentions of *hashira-matsu* in connection with folk practices have to do with Bon observances in the 7th month. The tall lanterns which later became associated with Bon no doubt descend from these same *hashira-matsu*. In time, folk observances turned into contests in which small *taimatsu* were tossed at the large *hashira-matsu*, but this development represents only a later transformation of the *hashira-matsu* as a sort of game.⁵ The original purpose of the folk *hashira-matsu* was surely to welcome and send off the ancestral spirits at Bon. Since the rite involved not only the lighting of a fire but the erection of a tall pillar, it was linked also with an ancient idea of the pillar as a vehicle (*yorimashi*) for divine beings or spirits. This made it particularly appropriate for the Bon observance.

By the time Sugae Masumi visited Togakushi, the Bon *hashira-matsu* observance had largely lost its original function and served instead to divine the quality of the harvest. Nevertheless, the date of the rite, the 7th day of the 7th month (the start of Bon) still recalls the rite's earlier significance.

Why did the yamabushi, who came forward as wonder-workers to quell demonic powers, adopt this *hashira-matsu* rite celebrated in the season of Bon? No doubt because the demonic powers who roamed the mountains were felt to be continuous with malevolent ancestral spirits (*goryō* 御霊, *onryō* 怨霊). Thus, the *hashira-matsu* rite was probably adopted in order to pacify not so much ancestral spirits in general, as those among them which had turned malevolent.

The *Nagato-bon* version of *Heike monogatari* clearly shows *hashira-matsu* being used to pacify such spirits. In the *Hashira-matsu innen no koto* 柱松因縁事 (On the origins of *hashira-matsu*) and *Hanahagi Dainagon no koto* 花萩大納言事 chapters in *kan* 3, Fujiwara no Narihika 藤原成親 is exiled for a crime, then dies an untimely death before he can be pardoned. The account of the memorial rites performed for him includes a description of the *hashira-matsu* observance. The observance is explained as having originated in the *kōmyō-age* 光明揚げ ("raising the light") ceremony performed by a disciple of the Indian Yuien Shōnin 唯円上人 to mourn his master's death. The *hashira-matsu* rite therefore honors and pacifies the spirit of someone

⁵ See the references to *hashiramatsu*, *nage-daimatsu*, and so forth in the *Sōgō Nihon minzoku goi*, MINZOKUGAKU KENKYŪJO 1955-1956.

who ought not to have died. The so-called *yamauba*, too, was believed to be ultimately the spirit of someone who had died an untimely death in the mountains. Thus it is natural that the *hashira-matsu* should have been used to quell such entities.

Gen-kurabe 験くらべ (“Contests of Power”)

Now that the *hashira-matsu* rite of Togakushi has died out, nothing further can be learned about it.⁶ Surely it had not always involved the three pillars as described by Sugae Masumi. Judging from the observation in *Kenkō-ji ruki* that the rite started from the Naka-sha, a *hashira-matsu* was probably erected at each of the three halls. In the Edo period, then, the custom would have changed to lighting three *hashira-matsu* in a single spot, which allowed the rite to stress crop divination in response to the demands of the peasants of the time.

Myōkō-zan 妙高山 in Echigo, not far from Togakushi, is likewise a Shugendo mountain. According to *Echigo shiryaku* 越後志略, two *hashira-matsu* were erected at Sekiyama Sansha Daigongen 関山三社大権現 (“The Triple Shrine of Sekiyama”), on the 17th day of the 6th month. Two “temporary yamabushi” (lay believers dressed up as yamabushi) were led forward by the arm, carrying tinder-boxes, by a sendatsu 先達 (a senior yamabushi). When the sendatsu released their arms, each dashed to one of the *hashira-matsu*, scrambled up and went about striking fire. Victory depended on which *hashira-matsu* blazed up first. This Myōkō-zan version of the rite is characteristic of the Edo period. Since the purely popular *hashira-matsu* almost always consisted of *nage-taimatsu* (“*taimatsu*-tossing”) or *hi-age* (“fire-raising”) practices, the *hashira-matsu* of Hiko-san, Myōkō-zan, and Togakushi, in which a man climbed the pillar to light the fire at its top, deserve special notice.

A *hashira-matsu* rite exactly like the one at Myōkō-zan was performed in Nagano-ken at Daishō-in 大聖院, a temple associated with Shingon-affiliated Shugendo and located within the present city limits

⁶ No mention of *hashira-matsu* occurs in *Okunoin nenjū gyōji* or *Hōkōin nenjū gyōji*, two manuscripts roughly of the Genroku period (ca. 1700) which are owned by Togakushi Jinja. However, a “divine rite in the ancient manner” (*kohō shinji*) is listed for the seventh day of the seventh month. This probably means that the *hashira-matsu* rite, having ceased to be the property of the yamabushi and become instead a rite for the peasants, was no longer considered a “public” (*ōyake*) observance, so that only an abbreviated mention of it was given.

of Iiyama 飯山 . The rite is still performed on July 15 at Kosuge 小菅 Jinja. Two *hashira-matsu* are erected on July 12. Gōdo-buraku 神戸部落 , on land which formerly belonged to Daishō-in, contributes firewood; Maesaka 前坂-buraku contributes grape vines; while the two buraku of Harida 針田 and Sasada 笹田 raise the *hashira-matsu*. One of the two *hashira-matsu* is said to stand for Kosuge, and the other for all the other buraku. The Kosuge *hashira-matsu* is bound with nine strands of grape vine, while the other is bound with seven; the Kosuge *hashira-matsu* is also a little taller and thicker. Sakaki branches with *gohei* in them are set in the top of each.

Two children known as *matsu miko* 松神子 light the fires, having first been suitably purified. Actually, each *matsu miko* has an entourage of six young men who lift the *matsu miko* up and thus assist in the fire-lighting. The contest is, as usual, to see which side can first strike a fire and set its *hashira-matsu* ablaze, and the result is interpreted as predicting which side (Kosuge or the other group of buraku) will have the better harvest. At present, Kosuge and the group of other buraku no longer necessarily supply one *matsu miko* each, for both *matsu miko* may come from Kosuge alone. In the past, however, the distinction must have been carefully made. The two groups of six young men, each leading a *matsu miko* by the hand, rush toward the *hashira-matsu*, the starting signal having been given by the so-called *matsu taiko* 松太鼓 ("matsu drummer"): a man wearing an extraordinary, bird-beaked tengu mask. The *matsu taiko* actually represents a yamabushi. (At other *hashira-matsu* rites elsewhere, the starting signal may be given by blowing on a conch shell, which yamabushi normally carry.) Moreover, when the *matsu miko* appear, wearing special costumes, they form a procession not only with the *matsu taiko*, but with the figure known as *nakadori* 中どり , who wears an extraordinary, red-colored, *yamauba*-like mask. The *nakadori* stops before the Kōdō 講堂 of Daishōin and, facing the *hashira-matsu*, performs a *hanpei* 反問 rite.⁷ The *matsu taiko* then gives the starting signal. Both *matsu taiko* and *nakadori* are derived from yamabushi figures.

Yamabushi undoubtedly once played a commanding role in the Kosuge *hashira-matsu* observance. Even today, when the whole responsibility for the rite has devolved upon the *ujiko* 氏子 (traditional supporters) of the shrine, it is interesting to see that the form of

⁷ A *hanpei* is a secret rite of the Abe family performed in order to drive off evil spirits and invite good fortune. See MOROHASHI 1984, vol. 2, p. 1777a.

climbing the pillars to light them is still preserved.⁸ This aspect of Shugendo-related *hashira-matsu* rites may well have to do with the *gen-kurabe* (“contest of spiritual power”) practices characteristic of Shugendo.

A *hashira-matsu* rite which takes the form of a *gen-kurabe* contest appears in the documents at Kokawa-dera (Wakayama-ken). Here, in the Muromachi period, the rite was performed on the 13th or 14th days of the 1st month. Great significance was attached to the quick and successful lighting of the fire. A relevant passage notes one such observance performed on Ōei 30.1.13 (1423). It then goes on to state:

On Bunmei 9.1.14 (1476) the *saki-yamabushi* 前山伏, Kakugen-bō, spent a whole hour [in the pre-modern sense] trying to light the *hashira-matsu*, but without success. He therefore leaped back to the ground. Genkaku-bō, Kyōzō-bō and all the others of their group then came forward again, and Kyōzō-bō, the *ato-yamabushi* 跡 (後) 山伏, scrambled up. Having successfully started a fire, he waved *gohei*, blew his conch shell, and came down. However, the *hashira-matsu* still failed to blaze up properly. Thereupon an anonymous message (*rakusho* 落書), as follows, appeared on the walls of Muryōju-in: The name Kakugen 覚眼 means “enlightened eye,” but the fellow it belongs to never managed to light a fire at all. The name Kyōzō 教藏 means “keeping the Teaching locked away,” and that’s quite right. The fellow it belongs to will never set anything on fire with the Teaching he keeps locked up.

Thus, the *hashira-matsu* rite of Kokawadera was performed by *yamabushi* and included such roles as *saki-yamabushi* (“fore-yamabushi”) and *ato-yamabushi* (“hind-yamabushi”). These two figures became a laughing-stock when, despite all the spiritual power they were supposed to possess, neither was able successfully to light the *hashira-matsu*. The Kokawadera documents show that the *hashira-matsu* rite of the temple had lapsed for nine years because the temple had burned down, and was revived only in the first month of Bunmei 8 (1475), after peace had been restored the previous fall. Therefore, these *yamabushi* had not performed the rite for many years, and their skills had presumably become rusty.

At Haguro-san, the center of the Shugendo of Dewa Sanzan, one

⁸ The fact that this form has survived in a region where Shugendo itself has vanished has to do with the rite’s significance for divining the future health of cattle and horses. Kosuge has long been an active horse-trading center, and Daishōin houses a Heian-style Batō (“Horse-Headed”) Kannon.

finds an analogous rite performed on the last day of the year. Named not *hashira-matsu* but *matsu no reisai* 松例祭, it involves a contest from which is divined the quality of the following year's crop. The key roles are played by two yamabushi, or *matsu hijiri* 松聖. The rite involves setting fire to and tugging on a great heap of straw called *tsutsuga*. The outcome of the contest shows which will be greater for that year, the harvest from the sea or the harvest from the land. The observance also includes a contest over striking fire from stone and from metal. No doubt this *uchikae* 打替 *shinji* was originally a contest over lighting the *tsutsuga* itself, but it is now independent. The contestant who first succeeds in lighting the tinder wins. In all likelihood, the origin of the *matsu no reisai* was the need to quell, at the start of the year, the *tsutsuga-mushi* (a disease-causing mite) which threatened both people and crops. At any rate, the *uchikae shinji* clearly recalls the older *gen-kurabe* pattern of the yamabushi.

Hashira-matsu as a Fire Rite (Saitō Goma 柴灯護摩)

Just as the *matsu no reisai* of Haguro ushers in the new year, the *hashira-matsu* rite was not necessarily held only in late summer or in the season of Bon. The *hashira-matsu* observance of Kokawa-dera, in which the *gen-kurabe* element was much more important than divination, was held in the first month. In this case, the rite was obviously connected with the folk custom of sending off the deity of the old year and with greeting the deity of the new year (*toshigami* 年神).

The yamabushi of Hiko-san responded to peasant concerns in the Edo period by introducing into their own rites, which were centered on deciding the hierarchical order of the yamabushi group itself, traditional peasant prayer rituals for a good harvest (*toshigoi* 祈年). Thus, they sought to attract the peasants' religious devotion. The resulting observance was the Toshigoi o-taue matsuri 祈年御田植祭 ("Rice-planting festival with prayers for a good harvest") which was performed on the 13th day of the 2nd month and which died out in the late Edo period. It began with raising *hashira-matsu*. As one learns from *Hiko-san sairei emaki* 彦山祭礼絵巻, the yamabushi settlement at Hiko-san had an observance called *shōe* 松会 ("pine assembly") which included an *o-taue matsuri*. This rice-planting rite was performed on the 13th and 14th days of the 2nd month. On the

13th, the whole *nagatoko-shu* 長床衆 (the yamabushi of the main temple hall) turned out, forty strong. Four leaders (*bugyō* 奉行) gave orders from the four corners of the ritual space as the *saki-yamabushi* raised a *hashira-matsu*. Once it was raised, white *gohei* were attached to its top. Thick ropes were also tied to it, stretching east and west, and secured to stakes set in the ground. This whole procedure, known as *hashira-matsu okoshi* (“the raising of the *hashira-matsu*”) constituted a prayer for a good harvest. There followed a sequence of other rites which evoked tilling and sowing the fields; the last one, known as *ii kagume shiru kagume* 飯戴汁戴, involved pregnant women bearing rice and soup on their heads. When the whole rice-planting festival was over, the deity’s sacred vehicle left the sacred space, and there followed a rite in which the *sendatsu* of the yamabushi community were appointed. Next came various other contests, including *sumō*, performed by the *saki-yamabushi*. When all this was over, the *nagatoko-shu* withdrew. At this point, a call was blown on a conch shell, and the *hashira-matsu* was knocked down. *Hiko-san sairei emaki* gives the following description:

The four *saki-yamabushi* (for so those who lead the *hashira-matsu* rite are called), each bearing his own *fuda* 札, circle the *hashira-matsu* three times. Having done so, they cut off the *gohei*. An official then climbs to the top of the pillar. When he has finished [lighting the *gohei* with his flint], he draws his sword and cuts the *gohei* down. The senior [yamabushi] officials present then intone the *Hokke senbō* 法花懺法 and knock the *hashira-matsu* down. With this, the rite is over. The presiding officials then leave.

This took place on the 15th day of the month. Each of the four *saki-yamabushi* wore around his neck a large *fuda* (“tablet”) with his name on it. The “official” who climbed the pillar wore the red *suzukake* 鈴懸 (stole), *tokin* 兜巾 (cap), *habaki* 脛巾 (leggings), etc. of a Shugendo practitioner. If he cut off the *gohei* with a single stroke of his sword, this meant peace for the realm.

Since in this case only one *hashira-matsu* was erected, its purpose was to greet the divine spirits and to invite them to enter the pillar. Therefore, knocking down the *hashira-matsu* signified sending off the deity. It is noteworthy that cutting off the *gohei* still required a yamabushi to display a special skill.

This *hashira-matsu* rite of Hiko-san is derived from one of the most ancient forms of *matsuri*: that in which a divinity is called down into a pillar erected within the ritual space. However, the yamabushi

involved were seeking the religious devotion of the peasants of all of northern Kyushu, so as to acquire in them a base of economic support. They therefore ended up officiating at a rice-planting festival. Originally, however, at Hiko-san as at Togakushi, the *hashira-matsu* must have had for the yamabushi a meaning peculiar to their own tradition. Analogous yamabushi rites, from an earlier period, were known as *shōe* (discussed above) or *matsu-mori* 松盛. These were tests which gained a yamabushi recognition for his prowess, and they involved the erection of a single *hashira-matsu*.

YANAGITA Kunio (1915) argued that the single *hashira-matsu* rite was derived from the pattern of the double or triple *hashira-matsu*, and that the harvest-divination meaning of the rite was primary. However, quite apart from the number of *hashira-matsu* involved, the simple act of setting such an object ablaze was bound to be interpreted differently by different spectators. Whatever interpretation one may give it, the *hashira-matsu*'s function in welcoming ancestral and malevolent spirits is surely fundamental, while its divination function arose, as already noted, when the peasants became more self-conscious and more concerned about their own crops. This is particularly true for the *hashira-matsu* events involving yamabushi. In such cases, the rite seems to have evolved from one which established a yamabushi's prowess, to one in which the yamabushi presided over crop-divination, and then to one in which the yamabushi functioned simply as officiants for a rite in which they otherwise participated little.

The *hashira-matsu* rite of Kashiwano 栢野 at Ayuhara-mura 鮎原村 (Tsunagi-gun 津名郡) on Awaji is explained as being a *saitō goma* practice. This rite, which still survives, appears also in *Awaji no kuni fūzoku mondō jō* 淡路国風俗問答状 (Bunka 10 [1813]), *Awaji-gusa* 淡路草 (Bunsei 8 [1825]), *Miji-gusa* 味地草 (Tenpō 10 [1839]) and *Awaji no kuni meisho zue* 淡路国名所図会 (Kaei 4 [1851]). Also called *hashira-maki* 柱巻 or *hashira-taimatsu* 柱松明, it occurs during Bon, on the 16th of the 7th month, and involves a single *hashira-matsu* which is interpreted as gathering into one all the fires lit by the families of the region to welcome the ancestral spirits. A bundle of straw is tied to a long bamboo pole, then the straw is lit and applied to the top of the *hashira-matsu*, which catches fire in turn. This observance has nothing to do with divination. Instead, the object of the rite is the fire itself. In the Edo period, the rite was performed by the priests from Jizō-ji 地藏寺, Saikō-ji 西光寺, and Ryūun-ji 竜雲寺, which

became Shingon temples in Edo times. Before then, however, it must have been performed by yamabushi. This would explain why it is called *saitō goma*, a term peculiar to the yamabushi tradition. And the fact that it bears this name shows that the Shugendo *hashira-matsu* had about the same meaning as the burning of *goma* sticks by the yamabushi on the *saeto* (the spot for honoring the *sae-no-kami*, the gods of the road), in order to gain or to refine spiritual power. At the origin of this observance, too, there lies the custom of greeting and sending off divine spirits at a crossroads ritual site. The *hashira-matsu* in its *hi-age* ("fire-raising") form, at least as observed on Awaji, originally was surely run by yamabushi and by Shingon monks.

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