Shamanic Dance in Japan
The Choreography of Possession in Kagura Performance

Abstract:
This paper discusses the choreography of trance in Japanese kagura dances and the shamanic elements that have been preserved in them. Three case studies of kagura are examined: (1) Ōmoto Kagura, in which an authentic shamanic trance is still performed and which serves as a point of comparison; (2) Hana Matsuri, which has a kagura dance which is believed to indicate that the dance once included a possession-trance (kamigakari); (3) Hayachine Kagura which never included a possession-trance but still displays clear shamanic choreography in its dances. Using these case studies, the shamanic character of kagura is discussed, as well as why such shamanic choreography is preserved even where real trance does not exist. It is also shown how kamigakari is expressed in dance and how it functions in such performances.

Key words: folk dance—choreography—possession—trance—kagura—kamigakari

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Religion in Japan is often characterized as shamanic in origin. Indeed, both religious ritual and the performing arts in Japan are generally acknowledged as originating from shamanic possession-trance. The ancient techniques involved in summoning the deities to possess their shamans included elements of the performing arts: dance, music, song, and drama. Japanese religious practice is thus rightfully described as “hierophany” or “a showing of the sacred” (Ellwood and Pilgrim 1985, 111). To this day, the great variety of the so-called minzoku geinō 民俗芸能 (folk performing arts) in Japan combine artistic and spiritual dimensions into functional ritual events.

This paper concentrates on kagura 神楽, the ancient Japanese ritual dance of shamanic origins. Kagura is a religious performance that often accompanies Shinto matsuri 祭 (rite or festival) and is considered its prototype. As is well known, however, actual shamanic possession-trance is now rare in Japan and can be observed in only a few places. The loss of shamanic energy is due not only to the advance of modernity, but also to the persecution toward the end of the 19th century of native practices deemed as “primitive” or “subversive” by the Meiji government (Grapard 1984; Yamaji 1987, 214–215). Most kagura schools as well have lost their “authentic” shamanic energy. They no longer display “real” trances or conduct direct communication with the spirits. Nevertheless, many kagura schools preserve the memory of a lost tradition of possession, and incorporate a choreography or a display of trance of some kind. In this respect, they are a “showing of the sacred.”

Of interest for us here is not only that these “displays” of trance, or the performances of the appearance of possession, are conducted in those performances where possession was once enacted, but also that possession is curiously choreographed in those kagura schools that had never performed it in the first place. This leads us to raise questions about “why” and “how.” We will first ask why such a choreography is perpetuated in kagura schools even when the real shamanic energy is lost. Then we will explore how possession-trance is enacted or “shown” in kagura performances.
This paper is thus concerned with the ritual expressions of shamanic energy in Japan in the context of kagura dance, and examines the performance or the display of shamanic possession-trance where it is no longer actually conducted. This is significant for the understanding of religious expression, as an exploration of shamanic elements in kagura may further our understanding of the way a culture preserves its philosophy and worldview through ritual expressions.

A few introductory remarks about kagura as shamanic performance, and about kagura dance, will precede our main discussion of three case studies of kagura.

KAGURA AS SHAMANIC PERFORMANCE
The characters forming the word “kagura” can be translated as “entertainment for the kami” 神 (deities). All agree that “kagura” is probably a contracted form of kami no kura 神の倉 (seat of the kami) implying the presence of kami in the kagura performance, or performance itself as the dwelling of kami (OriKuchi 1975, 250; Ishizuka 1984, 272–73; Nishitsunoi 1979, 99–102). Tradition crowns kagura as the heir of the prototypical ritual recorded in both the Kojiki and the Nihonigi: the account or Opening the Rock-Cave Door” (Itu to biraki 石扉開き). This myth describes a shamanic rite in which the goddess Ame-no-uzume 天于受買 performs a frenzied dance of possession.4 Shamanic elements from the myth were incorporated into later Shinto ritual and into kagura; for example, the torimono 掃物 (hand-held props), which appear in this myth and in kagura, serve as “channeling devices” for the kami to descend upon and enter the body of the shaman. Dance itself served both to induce trance and as the contextual manifestation that the dancer was possessed by the kami.

The word “kagura” is a relatively late appellation for the ancient imperial ritual of chinon 鎮魂. Chinon meant both “pacifying the spirit” (tama shizume) and “shaking the spirit” (tama furi) and was first performed by the Sarume 狼女 and the Asobibe 遊び部. The Sarume clan (Uzume’s descendants) conducted rites of rejuvenation for the spirits of the emperors; these involved possession-trance (kamigakari 神憑り, usually of a female shaman or miko 巫女), and a resulting oracle (takusen 託宣) from the deities. The Asobibe were a guild that performed their chinon to pacify the spirits of dead emperors (Obayashi 1984, 10–15).5 Both spirit pacification and rejuvenation were achieved by means of songs and dances, and both became the functions and goals of later kagura (Iwata 1990, 32; Hoff 1978, 161–62; Honda 1974a, 28).6

Most scholars see kamigakari or possession-trance as the core and essence of kagura. For, if kagura was originally kami no kura, referring to
both the place (the seat of the gods) and to the ritual action or event, then the most important elements in the ritual of kagura were the acts of summoning and welcoming the deities, worshipping them, and receiving their blessings and messages—in other words, to perform *kamigakari* and obtain a *takusen* (Ishizuka 1984, 273; Iwata 1990, 14).

The loss of authentic *kamigakari* has led to its imitation, and the process of “showing trance” has naturally led to the development of artistic performances. Today “kagura” is a collective name for the most ancient genre of the folk performing arts. Folk kagura is generally divided into four major types: *miyo kagura* 神子神楽, *Ise kagura* 伊勢神楽, *Izumo kagura* 出雲神楽 and *shishi kagura* 獅子神楽 (with its subgenre *yamabushi* kagura 山伏神楽). Except for *miyo* kagura, they have all been strongly influenced by Shugendō 修験道. As Miyake has shown, Shugendō itself is shamanic in nature, and its practitioners, the *yamabushi* 山伏 (those who lie in the mountains), practice an “aggressive” kind of shamanism, induced by the magic of ferocious ascetics (1984a 57–59; 1994, 76–77).

With all its variety of genres and types, there are common shamanic elements in all folk kagura schools. For example, the construction of the sacred enclosure or locus of a kagura event displays the basic character of kagura as *kami no kura*. It defines kagura as ritual space, as well as ritual action. Also, in any kagura performance the costumes are part of what transforms the dancer into the representation or the manifestation of the kami. The aforementioned *torimono* have been central as *yorishiro* 依代 (channeling devices for kami) in all kagura performances, as they were in the dance of Ame-no-uzume. (Nishitsuno 1979, 98; Takatori 1969). Masks are significant as a sign of possession in kagura as imitation of trance when there is none. Kagura music is universally composed of drum, flute, cymbals, and the singing of *kami uta* 神歌 (kami songs), each of which has the power to summon the deities. However, the most significant action associated with kagura as shamanic rite is the dance.

As our main interest in this paper lies with the choreography of possession in kagura, let us introduce the subject with a brief discussion of kagura dance.

**KAGURA DANCE**

The types of kagura dance are traditionally distinguished by two different terms: *mai* 舞 and *odori* 踊. Orikuchi established the formal definition of the two: *mai* is a dance in rotations and circular movements, characteristically slow and elegant; *odori* is a dance of leaping and jumping up and down, characteristically fast and energetic (Orikuchi 1975, 237–39; Yamaji 1983, 105–106; 1987, 216–19). These are ideal types, however. As Kikkawa rightfully
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remarks, there is no pure mai-circling dance in Japan: what is called mai usually contains jumping, and odori often refers to quiet dances (1989, 166–80). Both styles of dance are thought to have originated in shamanic possession-trance.

Among the ancient techniques to induce kamigakari there was one that involved a “set” made up of a shamaness and priests: trance was induced into the mi\o by priests around her. As in the myth, the mi\o held gohei (a wand of white-paper streamers) and various leafy branches (e.g., sakaki 梨 and sasa 竹 [bamboo grass]), as well as bells—all sound-producing instruments to summon the deities. The priests who performed purification held weapon-like torimonon: spears, swords, bows and arrows (IWATA 1990, 47–50). (In other techniques, as in the [presumed] example set by Ame-no-uzume, the shaman enters into a state of possession through his or her own music and dance.)

“Mai” is originally associated with the dance of a mi\o performed to the accompaniment of a chorus of priests; the mi\o circles and sways left and right until she falls into a trance. Once possessed, however, her dance becomes one of uncontrolled leaps and jumps, characterized as “odori.” Thus mai is understood as the preparation of trance, beginning in conscious action, and odori is then understood as the trance behavior itself, originally unconscious (Gunji quoted in YAMAJI 1987, 217).

“Odon,” however, is also associated with the priests’ dance that precedes that of the mi\o, and that is intended as exorcism of evil spirits. This pacification is achieved through stamping and henbai 反閉 (magical steps), turning to the five directions, and manipulation of weapon torimono. In the context of folk kagura today, this “preparatory” ritual dance of exorcism is indeed dominant.\[1\]

Be that as it may, one can typologically distinguish between the two types of kamigakari: the spontaneous (odori type), and the caused or induced (the mi\o-mai turned odori type) kamigakari. Whenever an expression of kamigakari is intended, it is shown through the imitation of either or both of these types, which describe unconscious movements.

Thus, the choreography of possession is a choreography that shows an imitation of the process leading to loss of control, or of a state of loss of control itself (as “mai” or “odori”). That is to say, either through the “preparation” dance of the mi\o—circling, waving, and sounding the torimono in all directions—or through imitation of loss of control: most commonly, through high jumps and leaps, but also through trembling hands or body, falling, walking in zigzag steps, or staggering backwards. In any of these cases, the point at which the kamigakari dance begins is the dramatic moment of transformation when, as KIKAWA puts it, “the dancer turns into a kami” (1989, 183–84).
Let me emphasize here again, that the choreography described above is the chosen choreography for a dance that strives to show (i.e., present) the appearance of trance. This choreography does not necessarily reflect real possession-trance conditions, as can be witnessed in various places around Japan. In many cases (e.g., as with the itako of north Japan or the kagura miko of Iwate Prefecture; see below), the possession trance of shamans does not involve a loss of consciousness or a loss of control of one’s movements. As we shall see below, even in genuine kagura kamigakari events, the conduct of the possessed is sometimes mild and still. However, whenever one tries to choreograph possession—to show kamigakari on stage—the chosen body language is always that of a violent trance, expressed through imitating loss of control. That choreography became the established dance code for expressing the state of kamigakari in kagura.

Today, as already mentioned, most kagura forms seem to have lost their original association with genuine shamanic possession. Kagura events are still performed as religious and efficacious rites, incorporating shamanic elements into their dances, if only in stylized forms of masking or of shamanic choreography (ISHIZUKA 1984, 273).

I will next examine why and in what way a shamanic choreography that depicts possession is still extant in the genre of kagura.

THREE CASE STUDIES OF KAGURA
To demonstrate the shamanic structure of the kagura and how possession-trance choreography is preserved in its various kagura genres, I chose to present here three different examples from three different areas in Japan: Omoto Kagura 大元神楽 in Shimane Prefecture in western Japan on the Sea of Japan coast; Hana Matsuri 花祭 in Aichi Prefecture in central Japan; and Hayachine Kagura 早池峰神楽 in Iwate Prefecture in northeastern Japan. Each of these kagura schools, according to Honda’s classical division, represents a different genre of kagura: Omoto Kagura is classified in the Izumo kagura genre, Hana Matsuri as a Shimotsuki Kagura 霧月神楽 (kagura of the eleventh month) of the Ise kagura genre, and Hayachine Kagura as an example of the shishi kagura genre of northeastern Japan.¹²

All three kagura schools share in the basic structure of matsuri: summoning down the gods to a sacred enclosure; dancing for them, asking for their protection, worshipping them, and revitalizing them in the dance; and in sending them back with honor. All three schools are deeply influenced by the Shugendō tradition, and they also represent three different possibilities or styles for the display of shamanic trance.

Omoto Kagura of Shimane Prefecture is a school of kagura that still retains the tradition of real trance during performance. Omoto Kagura is
here taken as the first example, to serve as a reference point for the role the shamanic possession (*kamigakari*) and oracle (*takusen*) play in the context of kagura.

Hana Matsuri is an example of a kagura tradition that had lost its *kamigakari* as recently as the Meiji period (1868–1912). Living memory still refers to particular dances as “*kamigakari* dances,” and this shows in their choreography, as described below. This genre of kagura displays especially strong *yamabushi* colors. The various esoteric ritual sessions of Hana Matsuri at times produce such power and energy that they cause an “out of context” or “spontaneous” trance (though it never occurs during the dances).

Hayachine Kagura is a stage performance of ritual dance. Like Ōmoto Kagura, it is a professional-looking theater dance performance, related in its repertoire to ancient Nō. However, unlike Ōmoto, it has no tradition of trance: no historical mention of a *miko*, and no remnant or oral tradition of *kamigakari* during performance. Moreover, Hayachine Kagura is carefully constructed as an organized stage performance, with no room for loss of consciousness. It is by nature an itinerant kagura that had to be road-efficient and rely on its own powers to survive. Nevertheless, in spite of this lack of *kamigakari* tradition, there is a particular choreography in several of the dances (described below) that undeniably suggests *kamigakari* behavior. This makes Hayachine Kagura our most intriguing case.

**WHY AND HOW?**

Why perform a shamanic trance when there is none originally? Since kagura performance functions as a Shinto *matsuri*, one would expect that it would just follow the typical Shinto ritual structure: address the kami; honor and petition them; present offerings of food, sake, music and dance; and then send them back. If the shamanic energy is lost to such an extent that some kagura schools had never actually performed it, why is it important to preserve the appearance of trance or possession in the choreography of their dances? Is it not enough that the ritual is conducted as an offering for the kami, as indeed it claims to be? Are the kami not satisfied with just being summoned and worshiped? Why pretend—why “fake”—a shamanic trance?

These questions are especially pertinent for understanding the Hayachine Kagura performance, which is a ritual performance that functions not just as any *matsuri*, but has the active power of magical protection, exorcism, healing, and inducing fertility. Why is it not “satisfied” with its elaborate magical choreography? One possible answer is that the presence of the kami, in its original form, could only be seen in shamanic possession-trance. Kagura is the “seat of the kami,” but the kami is not really present
without a shamanic possession. Since kagura is a “showing of the sacred,” of the real divine presence, it requires more than a simple matsuri, or even a powerful magical ritual. Kagura must display the authentic presence of the kami, even in stylized form. Thus, efforts are made to maintain the kagura’s original power by preserving the energy of possession as proof of the kami presence. If it were not for this display of immediate divine presence, one would be unable to distinguish between kagura and other Shinto rites. Therefore, even though authentic trance no longer exists and much of the shamanic energy is lost, the attempt is still made to preserve the raison d’etre of kagura through the expression of trance.

How is this shamanic energy displayed in different kagura? This question of “how” pertains to the obvious features of possession-trance, and even more so to its culturally defined code of symbolic movements, which accords with its particular philosophy or worldview. We will thus see how tradition preserves the appearance of possession on stage. We will also investigate what is expected in the show of trance: is it a mere display of the presence of the deity, or is there an additional message? To answer our second question, we will next present the three kagura schools and the shamanic elements seen in the various facets of their performance: their stage structure, costumes, torimonos, masks, music, and, most importantly, their dances and their expressions of kamigakari that display shamanic energy.

ÖMOTO KAGURA: “THE REAL THING”

**Background**

The Ömoto Kagura school is found in the area of Iwami in the area of Iwami near the Sea of Japan in Ochi-gun, Shimane Prefecture (formerly Chugoku China). It is generally classified as belonging to the genre of Izumo kagura (USHIO 1985; ÖCHI-GUN HOZONKAI 1982). A strong and independent system of professional Shinto priests was organized in the area of Iwami (ISHIZUKA 1984, 275), and it is because of this local organization that the tradition and practice of kamigakari continued in this area even beyond the Meiji government prohibition.

Ömoto is the name given to the uji-gami (the ancestral deity), or the collective spirit of the ancestral deity of the area, who has been invited to dwell in a carefully prepared, long, straw snake (tsuna hebi). It is the representative of the deity Ömoto which means “Great Origin.” The straw snake is 13.65m. (7.5 hiro) long, and a red-cloth tongue hangs out of its mouth. This straw snake is worshiped coiled around a sacred tree, with an altar and gohei in front of it. On the day of its great matsuri, once every seven (or thirteen) years, it is taken down from its tree, coiled up and carried in a dignified procession through the village to the appointed shrine, where a
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night-long kagura is to take place before it. During this night-long kagura, Omoto-sama is expected to possess one of the villagers and give his oracular message (takusen). This takusen, achieved via genuine kamigakari, is the most important part, the very core of this kagura.

The kagura dancers are all male and so are the mediums. In the late middle ages the kamigakari was conducted by a miko, a female shamaness who became possessed through a trance induced by a yamabushi, often her husband. However, with the changes of time, men took over the role of the miko (ISHIZUKA 1984, 282–85). In Iwami, kamigakari was once the function of special families, but since Meiji it has been open to all local men who wish to volunteer. Three candidates are chosen each time to undergo a week-long purification before the matsuri so they may act as “oracle masters” (taku dayû 託太夫). The kagura dances themselves passed into the hands of the villagers even before Meiji, and the local priests (shinshoku 神職) are now responsible only for the ceremonial parts (shinji 神事) of the kagura (YAMAJI 1990, 214–16; USHIO 1985, 52–73).

The Structure of the Stage
The dance stage of Ōmoto Kagura is the main hall of a shrine, in front of an altar of steps covered with white cloth, on which the straw snake god is enshrined during the first part of the evening. The eastern and western poles at the corners of the stage are focal points for the ceremony. To each pole is tied a bag of rice into which numerous little gohei are inserted. From the beams of the four sides of the ceiling there hang elaborate paper cuttings, signifying the four seasons and corresponding to the four directions and the four colors: green (spring), red (summer), purple (winter), and white (autumn). Thus a sacred enclosure is defined. At the performance I witnessed in the village of Ota in November 1996, there was a curtain on one side and musicians on another, leaving two sides open for the audience.

Tengai (canopy 天蓋)
The shamanic meaning of the stage is especially embedded in the impressive 3.64 square meter tengai that is hung over the enclosure. Tengai means “cloud” or “heaven’s canopy.” It is a makeshift ceiling from which hang numerous paper cuttings in five colors: green, red, purple, white, and yellow. Among them are hung special rectangular-box-shaped paper hangings, called byakke or byakkai 白蓋, in all five colors. These byakke, nine in all (eight smaller rectangular ones in green, red, purple, and white, and a bigger, yellowish hexagonal one in the center), are tied with ropes and can be manipulated and made to “dance” or “jump” up, down, and around. The byakke play a central role in the kagura: at one point during the night these
paper “boxes,” with ropes held by three priests, are made to jump and prance around in such a way that their tails and fringes fly about. The dancing *tengai* is the major shamanic trait of the stage, for it is the place onto which the kami descend and in which they dwell. When it is shaken and activated, the kami can pass through it and possess those below it. Dancing underneath the *tengai* used to be one of the traditional methods used to achieve *kamigakari*, probably the original one; and as mentioned below, it still seems to be working today.

*The dances*

After the ceremonies of bringing Ōmoto-sama to the kagura hall are completed and the kami is properly enshrined, kagura dances are performed. From this point until the next morning, a mixed program of kagura dances and ceremonies follow one upon another in succession.

There is a strict division in Ōmoto Kagura between, on the one hand, the “ceremonial dances” conducted by the priests in all-white silk garments, during which *kamigakari* is attempted, and the kagura dances performed by the villagers, on the other. And, as in the genre of Izumo kagura, there are also two kinds of kagura dances: the *torimoto-mai* and the *Kagura-no*. The *torimoto-mai* are danced without masks and in relatively plain costumes. These are the magical dances of Shugendo and Onmyōdō (yin-yang school) heritage meant for purification. They are swift in tempo and conducted facing the five directions, with swords and other weapons of exorcism.

The *Kagura-no* dances display the spectacular character of Ōmoto Kagura. These are dramatic masked dances in full costume that tell stories from the myths and epics. Among the stories are famous ones such as the *Iwato biraki* and the more locally oriented story of *Susa-no-o* 須佐の男 and the dragons, in which the hero god fights two enormous dragons who whirl around him, spitting fire and smoke. Other numbers depict heroic fights between samurai or *yamabushi* and demons.

Music in Ōmoto Kagura is commonly based on drums, flutes, and cymbals. The drummers accompany the performance with continuous singing of *kami uta*. Ōmoto kagura texts are exclusively narrated by the dancers themselves.

Ōmoto Kagura costumes are extremely shiny and colorful. They are heavily brocaded and embroidered, and equally flashy for both evil demons and righteous samurai. The masks are also spectacular, especially the enormous and terrifying *hannya* demon masks. Ōmoto Kagura feature some sophisticated stage pyrotechnics, where demon (*oni* 鬼) characters spit fire and fill the stage with their vile smoke. Various *torimoto*, including fans,
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stirks, bows, arrows, spears, and swords, feature in the dances. There is also a straw mat for acrobatic dancing (also considered a special yorishiro), and a decorated magic wheel to pacify the enemies. All these torimono serve as magical tools of purification and exorcism. The use of gohei is reserved for the priests in the ceremonial dances. Ōmoto Kagura uses a great variety of specialized gohei, which serve both as conductors of kami energy and as purifying agents. The great misaki gohei, for example, is used to pacify the taku dayū (Ushio 1985; Ōchi-gun Hozonkai 1982; Takeuchi 1995).

The kamigakari
The ritual dance sessions (shinji) where kamigakari is induced are inserted in between the Kagura dances. Those are conducted strictly by the priests (shinshoku) in their pure-white garments. Thus a striking visual contrast is created between the colorful Kagura-no and the ceremonial dances.

Today kamigakari is attempted during three ceremonial dances: the Tsuna-nuki (Rope brace), Rokushō-mai (Dance of six directions) and Mitsuna-matsuri (Rite of the sacred rope). During the Tsuna-nuki, the long straw snake is taken off its pedestal, stretched to its length, and carried on stage by a large group of priests. It is paraded around the stage in an “S” shaped line, with the parade’s gait becoming faster and faster. The taku dayū (oracle master) walks along in the middle of the parade and holds on to the snake, while the priests “wrap” him inside the fast-moving coils. If he does not fall into kamigakari at that time, a second attempt will be made later. The priests then hang the straw snake inside the tengai canopy with white cloth, and position it so the tail is pointing toward the western pole and the head to the eastern pole. A magical purification dance called Goryū-ō (Five dragon-kings) follows Tsuna-nuki. This dance is influenced by magic of the yin-yang and the five elements of Onmyōdō and Shugendō.

The next attempt is during Rokushō-mai. The priests come on stage and form a tight circle around the taku dayū. They start to chant kami uta in ever stronger voices, while they walk-dance in a circle at a faster and faster pace, tapping the back of the taku dayū with their gohei to put him into a trance. Kamigakari is expected to occur during this priestly dance. Mitsunamatsuri is the last chance for kamigakari in a given performance. Again the large group of priests and their trance candidate come on stage and call on Ōmoto-sama, while loosening the straw snake from the ceiling so it is at eye level. They begin to push and pull the snake back and forth, and while waving it thus they chant a poem: “Here we are, in this year and this month, making kami asobi in the Kagura garden.” Kamigakari may occur now as well. All attempts are usually repeated for each of the three different taku

If all goes well and one man falls into kamigakari, he loses consciousness, his body becomes very rigid, he makes strange sounds, and the color of his face changes. This change in countenance is reported as being very frightening. More often than not, his trance is recognized as such when he begins to leap up and down violently and out of control, sometimes jumping as high as one meter. (This is reminiscent of the theory of the odori type dance of possession.) Then the priests immediately jump on him to restrain him. They catch him from behind and hold him firmly, leaning him on the straw snake. Restraining him is mandatory, for if the possessed sits down or becomes too restless, the spirit of the kami may separate itself and be lost, and if he jumps too high and over the rope the possessed will die.

There are also times when the kamigakari condition is quite subdued and manifested only by a loss of consciousness and a stiff body. Such a case from three years ago was reported to me in November 1996 in the village of Yamauchi, by the man who was possessed. These “mild” cases are either dismissed as nonauthentic or explained as manifesting a female deity (USHIO 1985, 85–86). After calming the possessed on the straw snake, one villager or priest questions him about next year’s harvest, any foreseen calamities, and if he likes the matsuri. The possessed answers shortly, if at all: yes, no, good, bad, or else just snorts unintelligible sounds. When the questioning is finished, a priest chants the prayer of “sending off the kami” and waves a gohei of purification over the medium, who then quiets down and sleeps until the next day. Even if no meaningful takusen is obtained, at least it is acknowledged that the god has consented to come and visit his community.

There used to be various methods to induce kamigakari, but the one using the straw snake seems to be the most recent. An older method was dancing with a sword underneath the jumping tengai while avoiding the prancing byakke through which one became possessed.16

There are some eyewitness reports in the last several decades of kamigakari occurring in the areas of Iwami, Bitchū, and Bingo during performances of Ōmoto and Kōjin Kagura.17 The interesting fact revealed in these reports, however, is that in most recent cases the kamigakari occurred not at its planned time (i.e., during the appointed snake dances of Tsuna-nuki or Rokushō-mai), but rather during the tengai number. It happened either on stage (as in Ota 小田 in 1980) or backstage (as in Yatto 八戸 in 1968; see KIKKAWA 1991, 73–76; USHIO 1985, 86–90; YAMAJI 1990, 217–18). Thus it seems that the tengai method has worked better in recent years.18 Also, it is not only the trance candidate who can become kamigakari. Often an unexpected member gets possessed (as did the host official in Yatto in 1968). This
fact seems to indicate how precarious, how unpredictable, and how uncontrollable, are authentic states of possession.

Successful *kamigakari* is rare, however. The ceremony is conducted once every seven years, and not many places have preserved the tradition of inducing possession. And then, it does not always work. Indeed, nothing happened during the Ômoto Kagura performance that I witnessed in November 1996.

At any rate, the example of Ômoto Kagura shows us that when real trance is possible, it gets priority in the kagura. The whole event is orchestrated around, and for the sake of, the *kamigakari*; i.e., around the actual appearance and actual presence of the kami, who converses directly with his villagers and gives them his advice for the future. The centrality of the *kamigakari*, its being the core and the essence of the kagura, is obvious as well as inevitable.

Thus, even when a whole night of kagura is successfully over, and even if the dances were beautifully executed, but no *kamigakari* had occurred, there is a sense of disappointment, not of satisfaction. Indeed, when nothing happened during the performance of November 1996, it caused a vague sense of frustration. This was expected, however. That particular performance was conducted out of its set year, just for making recordings. Only one trance candidate was prepared, and too many groups assembled to perform it. As one kagura master assured me, “No one thought *kamigakari* would occur.” Still, the lingering feeling of disappointment was evident.

This shared feeling of disappointment pertains to our first question of “why.” As noted above, the essence of kagura is *kamigakari*; if there is no *kamigakari*, “something is missing” (KikKawa 1991, 72). This “something” is sought in authentic *kamigakari* or, if this is not possible, in its imitation.

Against the authentic and living *kamigakari* tradition of Ômoto Kagura, we can compare the other dance traditions that have lost, or never had, a trance during kagura. Real trance, of course, cannot be orchestrated or planned. It can be induced, but no one can foresee exactly how, to whom, or what will happen when it is, let alone what the bodily movements of the possessed will be. Though the *kamigakari* in Ômoto Kagura is often associated with high leaps and violent, uncontrolled movements, it is not always uniform. The one possessed may leap high or not at all, may fall down on the floor, or may just become stiff and still. However, when people try to imitate the condition of *kamigakari*—try to show it on purpose—it is always associated with high leaps, trembling, fast whirling, and with imitations of loss-of-control. In Ômoto Kagura we have seen a rare case of *kamigakari* par excellence, a performance of real trance with a real oracle. Let us now turn to the second example of trance imitation, in a place where authentic trance has been lost.
Hana Matsuri: “The Lost Trance”

Background
Hana Matsuri is a collective name of the kagura of the area of Okumikawa, situated mainly in today’s Kitashitara-gun in Aichi Prefecture. Hana Matsuri belongs to the folk genre of shimotsuki kagura or yudate kagura (kagura of the boiling water ritual), classified under the general genre of Ise kagura.

Hana matsuri rites have been documented since the Muromachi period, though their roots are probably older. They were constructed by the yamabushi of Kumano Shugendo, who spread their esoteric Buddhist and Onmyōdō teachings along the Tenryū River, on their way from Kumano to Suwa (Takei 1990b, 200–201). Hana Matsuri inherited many of the traditions of Ōkagura, a dramatic kagura that died out some 150 years ago. Its rituals still manifest strong Shugendo influence, despite the forced Shinto influence of the Meiji era. Nevertheless, Hana matsuri lost many of its traditional features after Meiji, including that of kamigakari.

Modern houses now often delegate performances to public halls, though in certain villages traditional house performances continue. Hana Matsuri is performed annually, at fixed times (between the eleventh month and the New Year season, depending on the place), as a rite to renew the life forces of the community during the cold winter. It was once also performed as traditional kagura upon request to celebrate newly built houses, and to bless a certain family. No less than 225 deities are invited to be worshiped during the Hana Matsuri. They include mysterious deities like Kirume-no-oji (a male fire god of Kumano), Mirume-no-miko (a female water goddess of Ise), as well as oni (earth and mountain deities with demonic appearances), and ancestral spirits.

Stage and canopy
The ritual complex for Hana Matsuri occupies several rooms, including a back room for preparation and purification, and a room with an elevated platform with a temporary shrine to which the kami is transferred for the matsuri and where the matsuri officials sit. The functions of the officials, or myōdo (in Tsuki they are nine elders), and of the head priest, the hana dayū (the hana master), are hereditary. They conduct the various ceremonies and play the ritual music; there is a single drummer (often the hana dayū), and several flutists and cymbalists. They play and chant kami uta and narration all through the thirty-hour-long ritual in a mesmerizing monotone melody. The audience often joins in the singing.

Next to the platform is the dancing area, or maido. In the center of the maido stands the kamado, an elevated clay stove with a cauldron on
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top; it is nicknamed yama 山 (mountain), and it is the locus of the yudate ritual.\(^2\) The kamado marks the center of the ritual enclosure around which the dancers revolve, and on which the oni lean their feet. The oni also “cut” it with their axes to purify and release its forces. The standing audience forms a tight circle around the maido, often encroaching on the dancers. This enclosure thus differs from those of other kagura, on whose stages there are only dancers; but it is no less shamanic.

A sacred rope encloses the dancing area, on which various paper pictures are hung as gohei. Over the enclosure is spread an elaborate tengai made of colorful paper streamers and five-colored paper boxes (byakke). The canopy of Hana Matsuri resembles the Ōmoto Kagura with its five-colored paper streamers, its byakke, and its directional orientation. It no doubt shares in the same Onmyōdō heritage: sakaki leaves and colored gohei, tied at the four corners and connected to the center, signify the five directions, and create a kami no michi 神の道, a route for the kami to descend through the canopy.\(^2\) Unlike Ōmoto’s, this tengai and its byakke are stationary. In the middle of the ceiling, directly above the hearth, hangs an especially great byakke called yubuta 湯蓋 (hot-water cover). The other byakke are also complex and elaborate. Dedicated by local families, they are considered precious and sacred as they contain the various families’ requests for the descending gods.\(^2\) Thus, when arriving to celebrate the Hana Matsuri, one enters a newly constructed ritual area, a pure world of fresh paper cuttings, fresh leaves and fresh branches that embody a path for the gods.

The performance
Hana Matsuri is a two-day, one-night, complex matsuri. During its thirty-odd hours there are three climaxes: the yudate, or ritual of boiling water; the appearance of the oni (kami-demons) in the middle of the night; and the yubayashi 湯ばやし (the “hot-water accompaniment”), the purification by boiling water, toward the end. In between them, various kagura dances are performed. Sacred water, fetched from the local waterfall, is poured into the cauldron on top of the clay kamado stove in the center of the enclosure. It is then joined with the purified fire, ritually lit with flint stones, to enact the yamabushi rite of yudate.\(^2\) The hot steam rising from the kamado into the canopy creates a bridge between heaven and earth. Thus a “station on the route” for the descending kami is created. The steam and water sprinkled on the people around the area are a means by which the audience can come into direct contact with the gods, and be purified (YAMAMOTO 1994, 129–34). Towards the end of the ceremonies, the yubayashi takes place. Four youths with bundles of straw in their hands dance around the boiling water, and in the climactic end, they dump the bundles in the cauldron and spray the hot
waters around, until everyone in sight is properly wet. This signifies the purification of the community and the whole universe.

The midpoint climax in Hana Matsuri is the appearance of the oni. These are divine/demonic figures who are designated as mountain gods and earthly deities. The oni are verily the inheritors of Shugendō practices. They are associated with fire, and appear in all-red garments carrying axes. The oni are represented with large, heavy, ferocious red masks weighing up to six kilograms each. During the night in Tsuki, the oni rush to a bonfire and raise a stream of sparks high into the night sky, creating a bridge of fire between heaven and earth.

The tradition of kamigakari
Until Meiji, there was a tradition of kamigakari and takusen under the ten-gai, recorded in the village of Yamauchi (Misawa). A priest would hide his upper body in the byakke and give takusen about the coming year’s weather and calamities. Lots for the coming year were pulled, and divination arrows were shot as well. The tradition of trance with the help of the tengai was stopped by the police in Meiji 17 (1884) (HAYAKAWA 1994:117; TAKEI 1990b, 205). In yet another village (Komadate) the priest still wears a scarlet hakama, a testimony to a time when a [female] miko performed there (HAYAKAWA 1971:117). This information points to the former function of the hana dayū as otoko miko (male shaman), whose charisma allowed him to become possessed (TAKEI 1990b, 212). There are indeed modern oral reports of the hana dayū falling into kamigakari during one of his secret rites (Ama no matsuri). Also, in performing the Shizume rite a few years ago in Tsuki, the hana dayū suddenly got into a violent trance in which he leaped and shouted (Suzuki Masataka, personal communication). So the lost tradition of kamigakari in Hana Matsuri is of male shamans, as befits this characteristic Shugendō tradition, which was stopped by government force. Even now much of the Hana Matsuri is dependent upon the spiritual charisma of the hana dayū, and his power to summon the gods and to exorcise evil.

The shinji
In Hana Matsuri as well, there is a distinction between the ritual parts (shinji), which open and close the matsuri, and the dances. The rituals are performed by the hana dayū and the myōdo. The hana dayū conducts powerful Shugendō-style magical purification rites of exorcism, which include magical gestures (mudra), intonation of mantras and incantations, and magical steps (henbai), requiring special knowledge and training. The henbai (or
henbei) are sets of magical steps meant to pacify the great earth by drawing magic mandalas on it. Especially powerful are the henbei performed by the hana dayū at the rite of Shizume, when he wears the mask of a tengu. As mentioned, the hana dayū may fall into kamigakari while performing this mysterious rite.

Here we see that the chinkon element of exorcism and purification is wedded to kamigakari (in spite of their supposedly different origins). The kamigakari and takusen of the male shaman is obviously related to the magical techniques of the yamabushi: mudra, henbei, and other exorcistic formulas that may lead to possession.

The dances

There are also two kinds of dances: the “ceremonial” dances, which are performed first, partly by the hana dayū and myōdo, and the kagura dances, which proceed into the night. Various dances are assigned to different generations, but from old men to three-year-old children, the whole village dances kagura.

In Tsuki, the opening ceremonial dances are done to purify the yudate water and invite the kami in, to purify the drumsticks, and one to purify the whole maido. Another is the special dance of Ichi-no-mai 市の舞, described below for its choreography of possession.

Among the following dances of youth groups, the popular Hana-no-mai, danced bravely by children three to five years old, is one of the highlights. The dances, which take most of the night, are quite uniform (with the exception of the oni dances and their special henbei). In the dance circling around the kamado, the two, three, or four dancers carefully revolve themselves towards all directions, marking the edges of the sacred enclosure with their dance line. Their dance itself is elegant, though repetitive, with small hopping steps and arms spread wide. They thus create an air of jumpy lightness, in spite of the repetitive circling movements that are reminiscent of the original meaning of mai (Hayakawa 1994:1, 166).

In striking contrast to the gaudy and flamboyant Ômoto Kagura costumes, the clothes in Tsuki are dark-green or blue cotton garments with wide sleeves and a pattern of cranes, leggings, and headbands. The youth dances are all unmasked. The dancers of Hana Matsuri use a variety of torimono: fans, bells, swords, special jagged wooden swords, and a variety of branches. The oni use their characteristic axes and sticks. In Hana Matsuri different gohei are used, each with a name and a function. They are primarily featured in the ritual parts of the matsuri, and to a lesser extent in the hands of the dancers. The sword is also used as a purification device in the hands of the hana dayū. All torimono are considered as parts of the kami no michi,
the route for the gods to come to the kagura. Thus they are the intentional, purposeful shamanic tools of the kagura.

**Kami no michi**

In Hana Matsuri the kami are thus invited to come down in a variety of ways and are given a choice of paths, or *kami no michi*: the complex *tengai* and its *byakkô*, the hot water and steam, the fire, the masks, the *torimono* in the hands of the dancers, the *gohei*, and (tradition has it) the leading priest’s body. The dances themselves create the sacred locus for the kami to come down. The kami are summoned to the dancers’ *torimono*, to be shaken out and spread their blessing to the whole community. This accords with the shamanic character of the whole *matsuri*, with its being a *kami no kura*, seat of the kami. In an abstract way, as INOUE remarks, the dancer becomes the kami when dancing, for the kami comes into his *torimono* and dances through it (1994, 152–54). However, when the kami come to the *kami no kura*, the locus of kagura, it is still in the abstract, and not as authentic as when the kami manifests in a person through possession. An authentic possession notwithstanding, however, a dance that imitates a state of possession is a more convincing form of “proof” of the presence of the god than an abstract notion. In the tradition of Hana Matsuri there used to be authentic *kamigakari*, which is now lost. However, it is still preserved, remembered, and reactivated through the choreography of trance. In Hana Matsuri it is seen in the dance called Ichi-no-mai.

**Ichi-no-mai**

Ichi-no-mai is one of the ceremonial dances, performed by a single dancer and repeated two or three times by different men. This dance is special and important, and there is no village that skips it. Ichi-no-mai calls for skill; it offers a chance to show off talent, and it is thus quite prestigious. The dancer wears an upper garment with wide sleeves tied so as to resemble wings, straw sandals, leggings, and a headband. He holds *torimono* that include an opened fan, bells, and *sakaki* branches (or young bamboo branches; in some places, both kinds). These *torimono* place the dancer in the category of *miô*, for he holds the traditional *torimono* of Ame-no-uzume. Indeed, the meaning of the name Ichi-no-mai is “miô no mai” 巫女の舞, the dance of the *miô* (ichî-miô is the nickname for *miô* in this area). It is thus generally acknowledged that this dance imitates the dance of a *miô*, i.e., the dance of *kamigakari* (HAYAKAWA 1994:1, 160–65; HAGA 1977, 56).

Compared to other places, the dance in Tsuki is not particularly impressive. Still, the choreography is very clear: the dancer enters and faces the *kamado*, bows to the *kamado* and the four directions with his *torimono* hands
joined together. He then spreads his arms wide, and starts twisting his whole body—left and right, up and down—imitating the flight of a hawk or a crane (Hayakawa 1994:1, 162). The hands holding the branches are trembling, and the whole image of the dancer is elegant, agile, and fluid.

After this “flight” the drum changes suddenly to a faster tempo, and the dancer starts jumping up and down in place, facing the kamado, with his torimono hands again joined together and stretched upward. He leaps high three times in a zigzag; with each leap he faces to the left or right. Then he runs over to the side of the kamado and, facing it from the left side, leaps high thrice again. He goes on to run-and-jump in all five directions: east, south, north, west, and east again, which indicates the center.

These high leaps are unique in the circular dance style of Hana Matsuri, and are definitely meant to imitate kamigakari. They are, in effect, a choreographed possession-trance. As we saw, high leaps are the prime traditional means to identify possession and are related to the origin of odori.

Ichi-no-mai is even more powerful in places like the village of Futto 古戸, as is recorded by Hayakawa (1994:1, 160–65). In that village, for example, the dancer holds long sakaki leaves with trembling hands. When he jumps with his arms stretched upwards, he sweeps the tengai with his branches. This in itself is an indication of kamigakari, for the branches are the yorishiro of the kami, and in touching the tengai they “sweep away” the kami from it onto the yorishiro branches, and into the dancer. The Ichi-no-mai dance in Futto apparently gets to be quite violent. The dancer runs to the audience and whips the people around the kamado with his branches. The dancer often loses his mind and acts crazy, sometimes falling down, even on purpose, to amuse the audience. (The Ichi-no-mai in Shimoawashiro 下粟代 [Grim and Grim 1982, 170] is also reported as being quite energetic; the one recorded in Misawa [Yamauchi], however, seems more subdued [Honda 1954, 391–92]).

In the context of Hana Matsuri’s circling dances, the high jumping dance of Ichi-no-mai is conspicuous, indicative, and purposeful. They are choreographed to show the kami entering into the dancer to produce the state of kamigakari. And it follows closely all the “rules” of trance behavior: imitating the flight of a bird (an explicit kami-behavior), the appropriate torimono, agile twists, trembling hands, high leaps in the five directions, and losing control of oneself with mock-falling. All these elements indicate an imitation of a dance of possession, a choreographed kamigakari.

Thus we see in Hana Matsuri that the kamigakari, which was once an authentic part of the matsuri, is remembered in a special dance, a particularly sacred dance, which imitates possession-trance quite faithfully. Kamigakari is therefore performed, because the raison d’être of these kagura is to show
the appearance of a kami (i.e., to “prove” the kami has appeared). The rituals, and even the masked dances, are not enough. A real authentic appearance of kami is only acknowledged through kamigakari.

It is of interest to the scholar of religion that the tradition of kamigakari is not forgotten. As mentioned above, there are many examples of dance or ritual traditions in Japan that show that the dance once included kamigakari. Thus, when a kagura school claims no such tradition, it is likely that it was not just forgotten, but was never really there. Let us now turn to Hayachine Kagura, which does not indicate a tradition of kamigakari. And we shall see how, even with no such tradition, it still performs the choreography of kamigakari.

**Hayachine Kagura: “The Show of Trance”**

**Background**

Hayachine Kagura is centered on Mt. Hayachine 早池峰 in central Iwate Prefecture, northeastern Japan; it includes two rival or “sister” schools of kagura that form a “female-male” relationship: the “female” school of Ôtsugunai 大償 and the “masculine” school of Take 岳 Kagura. In Honda’s classification, Hayachine Kagura belongs to the Yamabushi kagura stream in the general genre of shishi kagura; it indeed displays strong Shugendo influence.

The roots of Hayachine Kagura may be dated to the middle ages, when wandering Kumano yamabushi brought their Gongen cult to the area. The kagura’s focus of worship is manifested in a wooden shishi head, reverently called Gongen-sama 権現さま. This physical manifestation of their kami, which has the head of a black unidentified mountain animal with golden clacking teeth, is always carried along with the kagura. The shishi dance (Gongen-mai 権現舞) is the oldest and most sacred dance of Hayachine Kagura, as well as its central ritual part. The Gongen-sama is worshiped by being danced with: this is called “asobaseru,” making the kami play. The Gongen-sama of Hayachine Kagura embodies the kami of Mt. Hayachine and brings its blessings of water and fertility.

In contrast to both Ômoto and Hana Matsuri, which are local traditions performed by native priests, Hayachine Kagura is a semiprofessional, itinerant kagura of the former yamabushi of Mt. Hayachine, who used to make the rounds among the villages of the outlying area near the mountain for two or three months every spring, earning their livelihood by performing their ritual dances.

On arriving in a village, the kagura group worshiped with their sacred music (gokito 御祈祷) at all the village shrines, and performed the dance for Gongen-sama’s blessing and protection (Gongen-mai) in every house, thus consecrating the whole village. They would then perform a full-night program
of kagura in the house where they lodged. Today as well, Hayachine kagura schools perform by invitation, but private house performances are rare. Kagura groups are usually invited by villages to perform as part of their local matsuri, on their special shrine stages.

The specialty of this kagura is magical power. Here the yamabushi rites are combined into the theatrical dance performance. All the techniques of yamabushi magic are present here: mudras, mantras, henbai, and torimono manipulation. Though not as detailed as in Hana Matsuri, they are still as strong and effective in performing their function of magical protection, exorcism, fire prevention, healing, and increasing fertility. The kagura performance itself forms a matsuri: there is no distinction here between “ceremony” (shinji) and dance. In older times, the gokito music and the Gongen-mai fulfilled the role of the standard Shinto rite, for the yamabushi of old functioned as religious priests. Today the kagura gokito is played alongside the Shinto music and overlaps with the worship of the deity.39

The kami worshiped in Hayachine Kagura is not the local ancestral kami of the villagers; it is a “foreign” deity, the god from Mt. Hayachine, who comes to visit in their homes and bestow blessings upon them. The Gongen-sama who moves throughout the village “visits” and “blesses” the local ancestral kami. Thus (unlike Ômoto Kagura), there is no ancestral kamigakari or takusen tradition recorded in Hayachine Kagura (though miko takusen is mentioned once in it; see below).

Even though there is no kamigakari tradition in Hayachine Kagura, shamanic elements abound in it. It is deliberately structured as a shamanic rite, in which every facet symbolizes the summoning of deities.

The stage

Hayachine Kagura stage structure displays its shamanic character. Square with four tall branches of green leaves erected at its corners, it is enclosed by a sacred rope with white paper gohei hanging from it. A curtain is drawn along the back of the stage, hiding a dressing room, from which the dancers appear and into which they retreat. In contrast to both Ômoto Kagura and Hana Matsuri, there is no canopy in Hayachine Kagura. Instead, the shamanic structure is here imbedded in the special ritual orientation of the stage: the drummer sits at the front, facing the curtain with his back to the audience, and is flanked by two cymbal players. The flute player and the narrator are hidden from view behind the curtain.

Set up as it is, the stage symbolizes this world of humans, where the kami come to visit. The dressing room is the heavenly realm of the gods, and the curtain is the marker between the two realms. The role of the drummer is visually displayed by his facing the curtain rather than the audience. He
serves as the orientation point for the dances, gives them rhythm with his
drum and the singing of *kami uta*; at times he conducts poem-exchanges
with the dancers. The drummer is thus the *yamabushi*-shaman who draws
the kami out of their abode and into this world. However, the dancers also
stand for the shamans (or the manifested deities), as in the old recorded rit-
uals that induced possession. A symbolic universe is thus created on stage, in
which the dancers are both the manifestations of the kami, and the shamans
who summon them into their bodies with their dance (AVERBUCH 1995,
79–82).

The performance
On the whole, the clothing of Take Kagura is meant to create the appear-
ance of travelers. As in Hana Matsuri, the costumes are made of plain cot-
ton; they are colored blue and turquoise with prints of cranes and pine trees,
which are divine signs. Headdresses are distinctively tall and pointed and
serve as *yorishiro* "channels" for the kami to descend into the dancer
(AVERBUCH 1995, 92–96). Hayachine Kagura uses small Nō-style masks. They feature many characters: the old Sarugaku pair of Okina 翁 and
Sambasō 三番叟; various women, *oni*, and hero masks; young heavenly
deities, and dark earthly clowns. In Hayachine they use the verb “to attach”
(*tsuku*) a mask, which implies possession by a kami or spirit (AVERBUCH
1995, 97–100).

The basic *torimono* used in Hayachine Kagura are the fan, the bell-
wand (*suzuki 鈴木*), the sword, and the *gohei*. Hayachine Kagura’s *torimono*
share in the original shamanic function but have taken on an additional
symbolic layer of magical protection. The exorcist sword, which displays the
*yamabushi* magical character of this kagura, is prominent. Take Kagura still
uses “live” swords in its dances, and is famous for its spectacular sword rou-
tines. Other shamanic *torimono* of fresh leaves and branches are also used.
Unlike the elaborate and numerous *gohei* of Ōmoto Kagura and Hana
Matsuri, Hayachine Kagura has but a single type of *gohei* in its dances, the
*gohei* unique to the kami of Mt. Hayachine. It is appropriately manipulated
in the dances as a *yorishiro* and as a marker of a purifying divine presence

The kagura music is composed of drum, flute, cymbals, and the singing
of *kami uta* (AVERBUCH 1995, 83–92). The drumming style of Hayachine
Kagura is very powerful. The drumsticks are prepared by the drummer from
a special tough sacred tree. This emphasizes the shamanic role of the kagura
drum (as we saw in Hana Matsuri), which not only summons the kami but
also makes them dance to its rhythm. The occasional drummer-dancer
poem exchange is based on the *mondo* 問答 (question-and-answer) routine
of takusen in which the priest converses with the deity via the possessed shaman. Indeed, Prof. Honda once suggested (in a personal communication) that the rare utterance by the Hayachine dancer, be it a poem-line or a word, can be considered as “divine utterance” or a sort of takusen, to emphasize the deity’s epiphany on stage. That is because the Hayachine dancers do not usually speak on stage the way Ōmoto dancers do; their stories and purposes are chanted in the narration from behind the curtain.

Hayachine kagura is an intentionally and carefully constructed performance. It is symmetrical and balanced, from the relations between the two schools to the structure of each dance. Its structure is guided by Shugendō thought. Each performance of Hayachine kagura starts with the six dances of Shiki-mai 式舞 (the ceremonial dances) (AVERBUCH 1995, 125–68). Those are fixed in order, and depict the process of creation of the universe. The first three Shiki-mai are based on the tripartite performance of the Sarugaku tradition (HONDA 1971, 60–61); the fourth is the dance of Hachiman. The fifth is Yama-no-kami-mai 山の神舞, the dance of the mountain god, discussed below; and the last is the dance of Iwato biraki. This last dance describes the first shamanic ritual, which established the channel for transferring energy and life-forces, as well as communication, between the realms. The dance depicts Ame-no-uzume’s dance of possession (see below).

There are other dance categories that follow in performance: Kami-mai 神舞, featuring mythical stories; Za-mai 座舞, dramatic dances with epic stories; Kyōgen 狂言 humoresques; and Gongen dances. A Gongen-mai concludes all Hayachine Kagura performances (AVERBUCH 1995, 115–23).

The dances
Hayachine Kagura dance style is unique and outstanding. Especially in the “masculine” Take school, it is ferocious and energetic, featuring powerful stamping, swift turns, abrupt stops, and high leaps that exert heat that is felt all around the dancers. Though called mai, as all kagura dances, most of Hayachine dances feature odori-style leaps.

There are no unmasked torimono as opposed to masked “Nō dances” in Hayachine Kagura. Instead, the dances have the unique feature of Yamabushi kagura: a binary structure of a first masked, slow part (neri ねり) and a second unmasked, fast part (kuzushi くずし). The masks are removed in mid-dance, on stage (AVERBUCH 1995, 113–15). There is a practical explanation for this: Hayachine masks are small and fit tightly, providing limited vision, and so are removed to facilitate the second and faster part of the dances. Still, this unique practice is quite peculiar and remains a puzzle. It seems to reverse the expected shamanic process of masked dances, as for
example in Nō’s Okina and in Gongen-mai, where an introductory unmasked trance-inducing dance is followed by a masked manifestation of the deity.

In most cases of masked kagura in Japan, the dancer appears masked on stage. The mask usually indicates the presence of the deity. When the mask is donned on stage, as in the case of the Nō play Okina, it is meant to depict the very process of possession and the dancer’s transformation into a deity. It is thus rare indeed for the process to be reversed, for the mask to be taken off on stage. Why choose to reverse the order? Why show the kami masked on stage, and then deprive them of their divinity?

Some scholars insist that the second unmasked part is a dance of offering to the gods, and that the dancers remove their masks to return to their human nature and dance as priests (Honda, 1974b, 203; Hoff 1978, 173). Still, the public transition from kami to human is logically awkward. Hayachine Kagura is a carefully and deliberately structured performance and such a strange structural event cannot be simply accidental: it must have a reason and a purpose. It is thus doubtful that the divine manifestation is meant to be lost. The dancers, who gathered divine powers while dancing in the masks, might represent shamans in whose bodies the kami continue to reside.

I tend to agree with Kanda (1984b, 7) that removing the mask in the second part was a yamabushi device meant to emphasize the divine powers in their own bodies. For, no matter the historical process that crystallized the dances’ structure in this particular way, it is quite likely that the performing yamabushi added their concepts to this peculiar choreography (Averbuch 1995, 209–10).

*Miko-mai* 神子舞
Though there is no tradition of kamigakari and takusen in Hayachine, there are references to them in the context of the kagura. In a dance called Hashikake 橋架け, a female *miko* is called upon to give *takusen* of a tree kami. This may point to the historical tradition of a *miko* who performs during Yudate-kagura, a tradition extinct in Hayachine but alive elsewhere in the vicinity. In Kuromori 黒森 Kagura of the Sanriku 三陸 coast of eastern Iwate Prefecture, there are still some *miko* who perform Miko-mai and *takusen* during the rite of *yudate* conducted by a *yamabushi* in conjunction with a kagura performance (Kanda 1984a, 1985). I witnessed this Miko-mai and *takusen* in October 1996. The *miko* character who appears in Hayachine’s Hashikake may imply such former association between oracle-giving *miko* and Hayachine Kagura. However, neither a *miko takusen* nor *yudate* are performed in Hayachine Kagura and there is no memory of it. In Hayachine,
the concept of takusen refers only to the speech of the miko character in that particular dance, which belongs to the more dramatic category of Za-mai and which tells a folktale with no sacred function.

Of greater interest is the Miko-mai of Hashikake, and the better known Miko-mai of the goddess Ame-no-uzume in Iwato-biraki-(ura 裏)-mai. Tradition claims that this dance preserves the authentic steps of a miko, who might have performed with this kagura. Uzume’s Miko-mai is indeed similar to the aforementioned dance of the miko associated with Kuromori Kagura in eastern Iwate Prefecture. The dancing miko waves her shamanic torimono of bamboo leaves in, out, up, down, and to all directions, thus purifying the stage. She does this while moving in a circle, tilting her head and bending her body in an expression of a loss of control. Thus the dancer imitates a miko dance of possession.

The miko dance in Iwato-biraki-(ura)-mai and in Hashikake, however, is a show-of-a-show of a trance: a set choreography of the mythical, ritual-trance. A male dancer wears a mask of a miko, and performs a stage role: kamigakari does not, and cannot, happen to him.

Yamabushi kagura was always an all-male enterprise, with traditional prohibition on female participation. In former times, women were not allowed to set foot on any Hayachine Kagura stage; and in Kuromori Kagura, women were not allowed even to watch Yama-no-kami-mai. The female miko might have performed her outside role, but could not participate in the kagura dance itself. It is not in this Miko-mai, then, that we should look for our choreography of possession.

As is acknowledged by the performers, Hayachine Kagura has no kamigakari tradition, no memory of male trance, no role of otoño miko. Still, such trance choreography is present in their dances, apart from the Miko-mai. The special instances I refer to present a depiction of male type, violent possession, conducted in appropriate dances; for example, during the most sacred dance of the kagura repertoire, Yama-no-kami-mai. As I will presently show, it is achieved both by choreography and by structural devices. I suggest that the choreography of trance is an intentional one that serves a doctrinal purpose.43

Yama-no-kami-mai
In Take Kagura, Yama no kami is the male mountain god of agriculture who comes down every spring into the rice-fields and returns to the mountain in the autumn. This mountain god belongs to the ferocious oni type of deities who bring fertility and protection (to which also belong the oni of Hana Matsuri; ITAYA 1990). Yama no kami, the ruler of the “other world” of the
mountain, is a magic-oriented god of mixed Shugendō origins with a strong shamanic tradition.

Yama-no-kami-mai is considered the most sacred and the most difficult of the kagura dances, and is surrounded by various taboos. It employs the whole variety of magical gestures: henbai steps, stamps, jumps, hops, magical esoteric mudras, spectacular sword routines, spreading rice, and hand clapping as means to summon the gods. These are repeated toward all directions, to form an imaginary mandala universe on stage. Yama no kami’s “power-dress” costume and torimono are activated in the dance to render effective their powers.

The dance as a whole depicts the gradual approach of the kami to his people. The masked kami who comes from afar, gradually sheds parts of his costume during the neri. Most of his dance expresses valor, power, magical protection, and the blessing of fertility. In the last part of the kuzushi, in the gohei dance, we can see a description of shamanic possession.

The shamanic choreography begins in the structure of the dance. This structure is unique. After the neri, the mask is taken off, and the dancer appears showing his face. The unmasked kuzushi starts with the purification sword-dance. Then the narration is given, in which the mountain god’s powers are counted; he conquers fire, theft, and war, and brings harmony and fertility to fields and wombs. Lastly comes the gohei dance, in which a choreography of possession-trance is displayed. The manifestation of the kami begins when he first enters the stage in his mask; but as mentioned, the dance takes a dramatic turn when he takes it off, and builds up towards his last “real” manifestation, expressed in the choreography of this last gohei dance.

Many shamanic elements are concentrated in this gohei dance. The gohei itself, the traditional shamanic tool, symbolizes the presence of the Shinto kami. To emphasize the shamanic manifestation, the aforementioned rare “divine utterances” occur during this gohei dance. Four times (towards the four directions) the dancer shouts the first line of a kami uta, which the drummer completes.

The kamigakari elements here include fast jumping-and-spinning, frenzied flailing of the gohei in the air, and violent shaking of the bells. Simultaneously with his kami uta cry, the dancer waves the gohei right and left, jerks his body backward, and staggers back three steps, hands stretched forward as if he were drunk. The backward staggering step imitates a state of lack of control of one’s movements. He then circles around his gohei with quick steps so it seems as if the gohei is leading and dragging the dancer. Next comes a climactic routine. “Piercing” the air with the gohei the dancer leaps high, lands low, kneeling on one knee, and “plants” the gohei on the
floor on both sides. He repeats this leaping-and-landing routine to the four directions, four times.

The choreography of this part clearly evinces stylized trance routines, imitations of a shamanic possession. Again, it follows the “rules” that indicate loss of control: the swift jumping and whirling around; the vigorous shaking and “planting” of the gohei; the circling around the gohei as if pulled by it; the falling forward and staggering back. And of course, the high leaps and low landings are the most obvious indications of choreographed trance. Thus the dancer-yamabushi displays his shamanic abilities through his dance.

This stylized, choreographed state of possession brings immediacy to the manifestation of Yama no kami on stage. The kami has completed his approach to his people: he looks human and behaves like a shaman. In other words, in his final manifestation, the kami is present in the person whom he possesses.

The choreography of trance is especially significant in the context of this kagura, which does not have a kamigakari tradition. Here we have a well-constructed kagura obviously intended to propagate its particular doctrinal worldview, in addition to maintaining its very shamanic core. All the trance “symptoms” are present; only here an additional statement, an additional lesson beyond just the manifestation of the kami, is intended. This “lesson” is imbedded in the special structure of this dance. Kamigakari is depicted without a mask, and the structure of taking off the mask in mid-dance serves to emphasize the human face. This brings home the idea that everybody can become a kami, that is, a yamabushi with the power to embody the kami and produce divine powers. It says, “if you follow the yamabushi way, you can become a deity in your very body, as we do here on stage, before your very eyes!” The gradual approach of the kami to the people is thus meant to remind the spectators of their own possible gradual approach to becoming divine. So here we see how an explicit choreography of trance is still maintained in a kagura that has no kamigakari tradition.

CONCLUSION
In most forms of kagura, real shamanic trance no longer exists. Still, many kagura schools can point to a specific dance, to a certain occasion in the performance, when a trance once occurred. This practice of “showing trance” is also kept in kagura schools that have never actually performed shamanic trance.

In the beginning of this paper I raised two questions concerning this practice. The first pertained to the question “Why display possession behavior where possession is no longer actually enacted?” As we have seen, the
reason is that it preserves the character and function of kagura as a ritual in which the kami manifest themselves and communicate directly with their believers. Kamigakari, we found, is the very essence and the raison d'être of the kagura. Thus every kagura school tries to display its lost kamigakari, even if in stylized form. And those kagura schools that never had the tradition of kamigakari, try therefore to recreate and imitate it in their dances.

The second question was, “How is kamigakari displayed in performance?” In order to answer this I presented three examples of kagura schools. The first was of a kagura school in which authentic kamigakari is still experienced; it served as a point of comparison for the “displayed” possession-trance of the other two. We have seen how kamigakari is performed in Ōmoto Kagura in the context of its ritual parts, and how unpredictable and uncontrollable it is. The second example was of a kagura that preserves the memory of a lost kamigakari tradition in the form of dance. We discussed the Ichi-no-mai of Hana Matsuri, the imitation of a former trance that is now ceremonial, well choreographed, and self-conscious. The third and most intriguing example was of a kagura that never had a tradition of possession, but that nevertheless displays kamigakari behavior in the choreography of its dances. We saw how possession is clearly depicted in the deliberately structured Yama-no-kami-mai of Hayachine Kagura, which adds to it its own hidden agenda of yamabushi propaganda. Here, however, the trance behavior is not self-conscious, for it is not acknowledged by the dancers as a tradition of kamigakari. Nevertheless, the choreography of trance is conspicuously and undeniably there, woven into the sacred dance.

It has been said that trance behavior is culturally defined, socially agreed upon. In Japan, the presence of the kami is thus understood through accepted forms: the dance of kagura, the appearance of certain masks on certain occasions, and certain choreography that indicates possession-trance, even when it is not there.

It is a combination of dance structure, of agreed upon tools and external signs like masks and torimono, or the setting of a sacred space, that culturally shows, and expresses, the possibility of shamanic possession. But it is the choreography, that is, the dance, that “proves” it. Jumping and leaping high in the air, and loss of control and trembling, are the main publicly recognizable traits of kamigakari. Form is important, symbol is important; but the action, the dance, is essential. Dance is the forte of kagura that has preserved its core of kamigakari through the ages.

Understanding why a trance is preserved when it is not there is significant not only for the study of kagura, but more generally for understanding the forces that shape the preservation of traditions through rituals. It is also significant for the study of shamanism in Japan and its expression in the folk
performing arts, and should lead us to pay particular attention to the agency of dance, the agency that has perpetuated the world of kagura.

NOTES

1. The discussion about the definition of "shaman" and "shamanism" is still ongoing, but it lies outside the scope of this paper. Many now agree that these and related terms are culturally defined. To briefly define my use of these terms in this paper: I favor the broad definition that sees the "shaman" as a social functionary (HULTKRANTZ 1993; HAMAYON 1993). I agree with the general consensus among Japanese ethnographers, that native shamanic experiences are mainly those of the possession type (SASAKI 1992, 77, 232, 238; MIYATA 1984; ISHIZUKA 1984, 279–85; SAKURA 1994, 9–10). I thus treat the terms "trance" and "possession" as synonyms here, and use them interchangeably. Also, I try to avoid the term "shamanism" (which implies an established system) and prefer to speak about "shamanic elements." I call "shamanic" any element or facet of ritual behavior and performance, be it a costume piece, a musical instrument, a stage prop, or a dance routine—all that pertains to summoning the deities into the body of the shaman, or into the kagura dancer, and to bringing about divine blessing and oracle.

2. The connection between "shamanism" and the performing arts is universally recognized (see KIM et al. 1995). It forms a part of the general discussion on the relation between ritual and theater, that has been considered extensively in recent years. In comparing the shaman to an actor, and the shamanic ritual to performance, scholars have come to realize that, as with any ritual, performance is effective, and thus the shaman's efficacy is not dependent on whether his or her trance is "genuine" (HAMAYON 1993, 11–22). This realization will help us understand Japanese shamanic phenomena in their context of ritualistic performing arts.

3. Thus, as Iwata claims, the study of kagura is inseparable from the study of matsuri. Iwata's criticism points to a fault in the study of shamanism in Japan, which bypasses the study of kagura. (IWATA 1992, 427–29; and HAGIWARA 1990, 359–61).

4. The Kojiki version can be summarized thus: When the sun goddess Amaterasu hid herself in the Heavenly Cave, the whole world plunged into darkness. The myriads of kami gathered to perform a rite to lure out the sun. At the climax of the rite, the goddess Ameno-uzume bound up her sleeves with a sacred cord, held bamboo leaves in her hands, overturned a bucket upon which she started stamping and dancing. She then became possessed (kamigakari) and took off all her clothes. Then the heavens shook as the eight-hundred myriad deities laughed, arousing the curiosity of Amaterasu, who opened the door a crack to inquire. She was then pulled out of the cave, and light and life returned to the world (PHILIPPI 1968, 81–85). The Nihonji version disregards the "strip show" but mentions "a divinely-inspired utterance" (takusen) (ASTON 1972, 44).


6. Shaking was believed to have an energizing effect, hence the essential role of dance (IWATA 1990, 32–50; 1992, 129–30). According to Iwata, the element of pacification and exorcism became the dominant influence in the development of kagura; the element of kamigakari (characteristically female) has therefore been weakened, if not entirely lost (IWATA 1990, 34; 1992, 61–62).

7. Orikuchi has remarked that the dance in order to get kamigakari is not geinō 芸能 (performing art), but the dance that imitates the dance of kamigakari is the birth of geinō.
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(HAGIWARA 1990, 359). Thus, the “showing” of the possession-trance constitutes an artistic performance, while the “real thing,” the authentic trance, is not a performing art: it is ritual. Yamaji commented that the performing arts were born from the imitation of the spirit world, which only few could see, to benefit greater audiences (YAMAJI 1987, 220–21).

8. “Shugendō” means “the way of gaining magical powers by ascetic practice” in the mountains. Those ancient mountain cults drew their doctrinal concepts and practices from esoteric Buddhism, Shinto, old Taoist lore, and mountain worship. The Shugendō practitioners aspire to “become Buddha in this body,” as well as to gain magical powers.

9. A special yamabushi shamanic technique is the yori kito, an induced possession used to obtain an oracle or to force an evil spirit to move to the body of a medium before exorcising it. Another yamabushi service is kaji kito, a magical prayer-ritual in which the yamabushi partakes of his deity’s powers, to use for exorcism, healing, or blessing.

The yamabushi display their magical powers in rituals that often lend themselves to artistic performance. They employ techniques such as drumming, reciting sutras and mantras, and manipulating mudras. In their rituals the yamabushi use weapons for magical protection: the sword, ax, bow and arrow, as well as the shamanic gohei. These tools were incorporated as props in the folk performing arts. Since the middle ages, folk kagura has spread throughout Japan largely under the impact of Shugendō. On Shugendō and the folk performing arts see: MIYAKE 1984 ed.; GORAI 1980; HONDA 1971; ISHIUKA 1984, 279–85.

10. The Japanese word “mask” also means “front,” or “face.” Masks are a kind of yorishiro, and serve as a reminder of the kami’s presence. It is of interest that the original women shamans of ancient Japan did not use masks, and that the use of masks to depict divine presence developed under Chinese and Buddhist influence. Even so, masks have a long history in Japan, and are often treated as sacred objects. The two forms of masked and unmasked kagura dances coexist everywhere. There is a general sense, however, that the masked dances are “inferior” to the unmasked, for they are a less “authentic” expression of divine manifestation. One scholar even thinks that when masks came into use the kagura had lost its unique meaning (see IWATA 1992, 236–37; also KIKAWA 1991, 72, 77, 1989, 182–83).

11. See: IWATA 1990, 35; HONDA 1983, 99–100; MIYATA 1984, 40–42; HAGIWARA 1990, 359. Today mai is associated with a person on stage dancing with accompaniment, as in the mikkyō/priests “set”; while odori is associated with the common folk, anyone can participate, and it is usually danced in great numbers. Yamaji adds an interesting interpretation, saying that in odori (as seen in many forms today), the dancer often plays his own music (e.g., a drum tied to the waist); thus the origin of the dance and rhythm comes from inside the dancer. In mai, however, the origin of the dance and rhythm comes from outside the dancer, who is caused to move by it (YAMAJI 1983, 106; 1987, 217–18). Though I agree with Yamaji’s formal observation of the folk dance data, I question the logic he uses in his thesis about the origin of mai and odori dance in kamigakari. For example, if the dancer prepares intentionally for trance (in mai), does the dance not come from within her? And if the dancer jumps (odori) in possession, is he not moved from outside?


13. Ōmoto Kagura is often mentioned and described along with the Kōjin Kagura school of Hiroshima Prefecture (from the areas of Bingo and Bitchū), the other kagura school that still preserves authentic trance. In Kōjin Kagura, a special group of
people perform the *kamigakari* and the dances, and the *yamabushi* influence remains strong (Suzuki 1990). In Iwami, however, the *yamabushi* converted to Yoshida Shinto and became Shinto priests (Ishizuka 1984, 274–75). In places where there was no such local organization (as in Hana Matsuri), the *kamigakari* tradition has been lost.

14. The kagura *tengai* is connected to the Buddhist *tengai*, the sacred canopy of Indian origin. In kagura it has various names, like *byakkai*, or *byakhe*, implying “white cover.” It is connected to the white cloth of funeral rites and to the ancient *yamabushi* rituals of rejuvenation, or *umareiyomi*, “being born again and purified.” It is also related to the Shirayama *gyōji*, a rite for rejuvenation in paradise performed until late Edo period in Ōkagura, which is related to today’s Hana Matsuri (see below). See the discussion on *tengai* in Kato 1984, 364–68.

15. As Uschio admitted, he could not sleep the whole night after seeing this red and black face of an *oni* (1985, 88). Kikkawa also reported his fear at lodging at the possessed man’s house even after the trance was over (1991, 74–75).

16. In Kōjin Kagura the candidate becomes violently possessed while dancing near the straw dragon. Those around him, hold him and sit him down, then coil the dragon around him, and question him. Other techniques of inducing trance during kagura recorded in the connecting areas include waving and dancing with a long white silk cloth. Another method (in a different place) for becoming possessed was to dance wildly with a sword in front of a pillar on which a sacred straw sac, signifying a kami-seat, is tied, and then, using the sword, to pierce the sac; the moment the sac was pierced the dancer would become possessed. In another place the kagura dancer used to dance with a bow and arrow, shoot the arrow into a bag of rice hanging inside the *tengai*, and lose consciousness. In yet another place, the dancer falls into a trance by people singing around him (Ishizuka 1984, 274–79; Iwata 1992, 267–73; Uschio 1985, 86–89; Kikkawa 1991).

17. The most famous cases are reported in Uschio 1985, 74–90; but also see Kikkawa 1991; Yamaji 1987; 1990; Suzuki 1990; and Ishizuka 1984.

18. In 1980, for example, the *taku dayū* suddenly leaped on stage towards the end of the *tengai* number and held on to the *byakhe* ropes. Holding the ropes, he jumped out of control and his whole body convoluted. The program was immediately stopped, and the Tsuna-nuki was conducted out of turn. The priests quickly brought out the snake, hung it from the ceiling, leaned the possessed on it, and questioned him. The possessed gave his *takusen* and was calmed down and taken to rest. (This can be seen in the video recording *Shugen to Kagura* 1990.) The kagura night continued afterwards as planned, but with no real attempt at *kamigakari*, for it can only happen once in a given performance.

19. Hana Matsuri is conducted in twenty-three villages, with variations between them. Most villages are in Aichi Prefecture, three are in Shizuoka, and one is in Nagano Prefecture. On Hana Matsuri see Hayakawa 1994 (vol 1); Haga 1977; Yamamoto 1993; 1994; Takei 1990b; Honda 1984. For a description of Hana Matsuri in English see GRIM and GRIM 1982.

20. The original Ōkagura included three initiation rites: the *umarego*, to ask the kami to help bring up the baby; *kiyomari*, an adulthood initiation rite; and *jūdo iri*, celebrated at the age of 60, a request to be reborn in paradise (Yamamoto 1993, 95–224; 1994, 128–29; Kobayashi 1995, 9, 24; on Ōkagura see Hayakawa 1994: 2).

21. The Hana Matsuri I attended on 22 and 23 November 1996 at Tsuki (Tōei-chō, Kitashitara-gun) was conducted in the community center on the main road of the village.

22. In effect, the ritual area encompasses the entire village. Elaborate rituals of summoning the deities before the performance of Hana matsuri are conducted all around the matsuri hall, on the mountain side, and in the fields around it. Also, all through the Hana matsuri night, the *oni* circle the entire village from house to house to bless and protect each one.
23. In Hana Matsuri there are no narrated masked dramas as in Omoto Kagura. The exceptions are the _oni_ or demons, and the Okina figure appearing at dawn, who conduct question-and-answer (_mondō_) sessions with one of the priests.

24. The setting of the cauldron in the _yudate_ ritual differs slightly between the two genres of Hana Matsuri, the _furikusa_ 振草 and the _ōnyū_ 大入: the _furikusa_, to which Tsuki belongs, has a clay stove with the cauldron set on top, and the _ōnyū_ has just an elevated cauldron for boiling water.

25. The northwest is designated as the entrance to the "route of the kami." The directions, however, are not consistent with the natural ones.

26. The main _yubuta_ contains a bag full of small presents, which is to be brought down in the end by one of the _oni_ and distributed for good luck. The _tengai_ contains a variety of other paper cuttings. See Hayakawa 1994:1, 70–82; Grim and Grim 1982, 164–65.

27. Boiling water is the meeting place of the two universal forces, fire and water, and in esoteric Buddhism it signifies the joining of polar opposites: yin-yang, male and female, the Womb and Diamond mandalas, etc. The Shugendo ritual of _yudate_ is widespread in Japan; it is performed in Omoto Kagura as well.

28. These _oni_ have evolved from being purely evil demons of hell (in the 16th century) into mountain gods and earthly deities with divine names (like Sakaki _oni_ 神鬼 or Yamami _oni_ 山見鬼), and transformed their dwelling to the mountains. They became divine, though ferocious, manifestations, identified with mythological earth gods (of Chinese origin) and with mountain gods of _yamabushi_ characteristics, like Saruta-hiko and the _tengu_ 天狗 (the _yamabushi_ mountain goblin, possessor of secret lore) (Yamamoto 1994, 136–41). In Hana Matsuri the _oni_ hands over the land to humans in a way that is similar to an old Kamakura rite in which an ax was used to signify the opening of new land (Takei 1990b, 209). The _oni_, who also impersonate the locals’ ancestral spirits, are purified by the _yudate_, achieve salvation, and return to their world (Kobayashi 1981). The _oni_ also reflects the villagers themselves by holding tools of mountain people (e.g. axes, sticks, and saws).

29. That _kamigakari_ was related to the lost Okagura ritual of _umarekiyomari_. The philosophy of this rite is preserved in Hana Matsuri and is seen in the _byakfuke_. See Kato 1984, 364–68; Yamamoto 1993, 95–224.

30. This tradition is also reported in the 1993 documentary film “Hana matsuri” (in the series _Eizō jinruigaku: Nihon no matsuri_ [Visual anthropology: the festivals of Japan], produced by “Visual Folklore”).

31. As an integral part of _yamabushi_ lore the _henbai_ are found in many Japanese rituals. Their presence in Hana Matsuri testifies to its original meaning as _chinkon_ kagura, meant to pacify the spirits of the dead and of the earth. Another function of the _henbai_ is to bring out treasures from the earth to make the earth produce its powers of growth. This is the power of _Yama no kami_, the _tengu_, and the _oni_ of Hana Matsuri, as it is the power of the _yamabushi_ themselves (Yamamoto 1994, 139–41).

32. The _yamabushi_ techniques of possession have been pointed out by scholars such as Miyake and Gorai (see Miyake 1971, 315–509; Miyake 1984; Miyake 1984 ed.; and Gorai 1980) and can be seen in the form of induced possession in Ontake-kyō 御岳教. This is reflected in the words of the _kami uta_: “Kami of the golden peak, he jumps and leaps and drives away all evil spirits, bringing in the good luck.” This song describes a power dance into which the kami comes, enters the dancer, dances himself and performs exorcism. It is true also for Omoto Kagura (Itaya 1990, 244–45), and for Hayachine Kagura. Another song says there are only male shamans ( _ota no miwo_ ) in the “east” (i.e., “here”; Takei 1990b, 212).

33. Thus the kagura in Hana Matsuri is strikingly different from Omoto and Hayachine Kagura. In Omoto, only selected dancers, mostly young men, dance Kagura, while in the
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itinerant Hayachine Kagura, the groups are fixed and composed of semiprofessional dancers. Hayakawa counted thirteen types of dances that are shared by all locations, and eight unique types. He also distinguished between two dance types according to their location in the maido: either before or all around the kamado. Then there are the unmasked vs. the masked dances, which usually refer to the oni (HAYAKAWA 1994:1, 154–60; INOUE 1994).

34. The few masked dances are performed toward the morning, using typical Sarugaku masks. They feature a pair of clowns who chase the audience to smear miso on their faces with phallic sticks, as well as Kirume-no-ōji, Mirume-no-miko, the famous Okina, and a shishi-mai to end it all. The spectacular huge masks of Hana Matsuri belong to the oni (TAKEI 1990a, 173–77; 1990b, 209).

35. Expressed as A-UN 阿吽, an esoteric combination of Shugendō concepts that conveys the idea of the unity of opposite principles. On Hayachine Kagura see, for example, HONDA 1971; SUGAWARA 1979; HOFF 1978; MORIGUCHI 1971; and AVERBUCH 1995.

36. Gongen 権現 is a Buddhist word meaning “manifestation.” It refers to a kami as a manifestation of a universal Buddha; “gongen” thus implies an object of worship that is both a kami and a Buddha. The use of this concept indicates yamabushi influence.

37. An indigo hemp robe is attached to the shishi head. This robe forms the “body” of the gongen, and carries the school symbols of the gongen and the name of its shrine of origin. The dancer enters this long “body” to manipulate it from within. It is interesting that, as with Ōmoto Kagura, the main deity is manifested in the form of a wild (mountain) animal.

38. Rice does not grow in the high altitudes on Mt. Hayachine, and the yearly rounds of kagura were the means to gain rice for the whole year. This kagura was once performed exclusively by yamabushi, but since the famines in late Tokugawa, the two Hayachine schools started teaching their art to local farmers, establishing disciple-groups in the area.

39. This is not without its tensions, for the itinerant kagura strives to preserve its traditional religious status in spite of the former national Shinto trends. An example of this can be seen in the refusal of the master of Ishihatoooka Kagura (a Take Kagura disciple-group) to give up his purple (a high-ranking priestly color) hakama, against the protest of the Shinto establishment.

40. This puts the Hayachine Kagura drummer in the same charismatic role as the hana dayū, or the priests of Ōmoto Kagura who induce trance.

41. The paper rings, called kuji 九字, are a unique feature of this kagura. The kuji is a magical charm transformed into a tangible object. The kuji charm is performed by intoning its mantras and forming the mudras of the nine syllables, followed by the sword-mudra drawing of a magical net in the air (MIYAKE 1971, 87–92). The kuji rings, made of white paper, are worn as rings on the fingers (AVERBUCH 1995, 100–102).

42. This may at times be a fair explanation. In several of the kami mai dances, where the last line of the narration proclaims, “let us dance the kagura of the thousand ages,” the unmasked group dance that follows can be understood as a dance of human joy and celebration for the kami. At least this seems to be the consensus among the kagura members.

43. All conclusions drawn from our example of the Yama-no-kami-mai of the Take school of Hayachine Kagura, also apply to the same dance in Kuromori Kagura, and to other Yama-no-kami-mai of Yamabushi kagura.

44. Every yamabushi kagura school includes Yama-no-kami-mai in its category of ceremonial dances (HONDA 1971, 434–40). The Take Kagura Yama-no-kami is identified with the mythical mountain god Ō-yama-zumi-no-mikoto 大山祇命 (PHILIPPI 1968, 56, 92, 144–45, 552). SUGAWARA marks this dance as kuji 結縁, that is, a rite in which the practitioner draws on the deity’s powers to perform a magic act (1979, 142–43). For a detailed description of the dance in Take Kagura, see AVERBUCH 1995, 169–212.
45. In most cases, the mask is taken off on stage before the kuzushi. Here, the dancer sticks his head inside the curtain to take off his mask and to put on a horse-mane headdress, which partially covers his face. Also, the narration is usually heard when the dancers are masked. Here, however, the mask is taken off before the narration, to show that the kami speaks via his narrator, who is the unmasked shaman.

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