

Kagura and Sri Lankan Gammaduwa

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Kagura was originally an entertainment of music and dancing in the presence of a **Shinto deity**. On the other hand **Kagura** is the prototype of ancient **shamanic** rituals in Japan.¹ Of presentday dance forms, **kagura** is most directly connected with **Uzume's** original dance. Kagura, basically, is a symbolic reenactment of the dance before the sun-goddess. The word "Kagura" literally denotes music and has come to mean, by usage, any dance offered to console or placate the gods. It is now an integral part of shinto religion a peculiarly Japanese form of worship.² This folk drama is originally and primarily a performance related to shinto rituals. Kagura, the origin of which is tied to that of shinto rites, became differentiated into various type under the influence of the changing views of the deities and of the *geino*. A term that refers to drama and such fragmentary arts on its fringe as songs, dances and mimicry.³ This was the representative theatrical art of the period when people's life was centered round shinto rites. It remained representative of Japanese drama even in the seventh century and later. **Kagura** that started in the first half of the ancient period saw the development of such types as were combined with the customs and events of the year and with the progress of life and culture. Thus Kagura, which is sacred entertainment, expresses sacred mood that may sometimes be awesome, frightening and solemn, but are more often happy, joyful and comic. The *kami* often appear as warm and unthreatening, as close to the people. A merry celebration, complete with song, dance and sake, is the essential Kagura rite.⁴ Kagura is one of the folk performing arts of shinto origin in which such rituals as *kiyome*, or ablution, harai, or purification, and chinkon which means literally to quite or pacify a spirit, are held to prolong and revitalis man's life. Kagura is not only the most ancient Japanese ritual but Japan's most ancient performing art form. One interlectual, Hoff, defined Kagura as:

"A type of performance or ritual of shinto origin that dates from early times and is still found widely in contemporary Japan. In popular usage, kagura means any performance often one of masked dancing-that is part of the annual festival of a local shinto shrine. To scholars of the performing arts, however, Kagura is one of three primary categories in a widely accepted

classification system of Japanese folk performing arts (Minzoku geino). In this context Kagura is essentially the invocation of gods followed by the performance of song or dance or both, the whole event serving as prayer for the prolongation or revalidation of man's life".⁵

Dating from the ninth century was the **Mikagura**, performed at the ceremonies in the imperial court. This was a serious type of play, originating in the kagura offered to the god **Hachiman** and then adapted to court use.

The word "Kagara" is mentioned first in the court records of 885 CE, and again in 889. The first mention of folk kagura (sato kagura) at **Ise** is from 1031CE.⁶ Formed by two chinese characters, meaning "kami", and "music" or "enjoyment", respectively, the compound can be translated as 'entertainment for the kami. However most scholars agree that the word "Kagura" is of Japanese origin, and is probably a contracted form of **Kaminokura**, or **seat of the kami**. It must have originally implied the presence of the kami in the Kagura performance, or the performance itself as the dwelling place of the kami. Though the word appears only in the 9th century, the Japanese commonly trace the origin of kagura to the mythological age of the gods.⁷ Both the *kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki* describe the magical rite which coaxed the goddess, **Amaterasu Omikami** out of the heavenly cave in which she hid herself, angered by the pranks of her mischievous brother **susa no-ô**.

The whole world was engulfed in darkness when the sun goddess was in the cave, and life itself was threatened. The myriads of kami gathered in the heavenly river-bed and conducted a complex rite aimed at luring **Amaterasu** out. They gathered all the singing birds to sing. They made a great mirror and strings of *magatama* beads, they divined with deer-bones; they collected sacred branches from Mr. kagu and hung mirrors and beads on its branches; they read sacred **norito** (liturgy). At the climax of the rite, the goddess **Ame no uzume** performed a shamanic dance.⁸ Her curiosity aroused by the laughter and sounds of celebration at a time when darkness filled the world. **Amaterasu** opened the door a crack and asked why **Ame no uzume** was singing and dancing. The kami then used the mirror to trick **Amaterasu** into thinking that a sun deity greater than herself had appeared in the heavens. Then they pulled her out of the cave, and light and life returned to the universe.

The *Nihongi* mentions the kindling of fires and the "divine utterance" or oracle. They are not included in the *kojiki* account. But the "strip show" of *Ame-no-uzume* is absent from the *Nihongi* vision. Both accounts, however describe the goddess as becoming possessed, and as dancing. In the *Nihongi* version *Ameno uzume's* dance is referred to as *waza ogi*, written with two Chinese characters now pronounce *haiyū* and meaning "an actor".⁹ According to another documents, however, 'haiyū' means "inviting the spirits" (*oguwaza*) and it is clear from its context that it was a kind of mimicry (*monomane*) or a mimic dance.¹⁰ According to the *kojiki*, the record of ancient matters (compiled in 712CE); *Ame no uzume's* dance as *asobi*, written with the Chinese character meaning "music" or "pleasure". For the present, 'Asobi' means "play", but in old Japanese it meant "songs and dances" in the performance of *chinkon* (spirit-pacification).¹¹

The spirit pacification and rejuvenation described in the myth of *Iwato biraki* is essentially a shamanic rite.¹² The frenzied dance of *Ame no uzume* is understood as a dance of possession. Among the many shamanic elements in the myth which have been incorporated into regular *shintō* ritual is the use of *torimono*, 'things held by hand' or props peculiar to kagura performances.¹³

Kagura is a collective term for a variety of schools of folk performing arts, and its "mythological" antiquity gives it first place in any typology. In Japanese, *minzoku geinō*¹⁴ describes the great variety of folk music, dances and theatre performed on the folk festivals of which Japan is so rich. The term *minzoku geinō* in use for only about 30 years, parallels the rise in scholarly interest on the subject. The basic typology of *minzoku geinō*, that of **Honda Yasuji**, distinguishes between three major types of folk performing arts;

1. Kagura aimed at revitalizing human and divine life
2. *Dengaku*, aimed at promoting the fertility of fields
3. *Furyū*, aimed at preventing calamities and diseases¹⁵

Kagura is originally and primarily a performance related to *shintō* rituals. Thus, all kagura schools in Japan, of whatever kind, refer to the myth of *Iwato biraki* as the "origin of the kagura." Almost every folk kagura school includes in its repertoire at least one dance which retells

the "opening of the Rock-cave door". Kagura was performed by shamanesses priestesses (*miko*) in antiquity, but was later performed by priests as well. Though today most kagura schools have become stylized ritual performances, some genres still retain their original shamanic energy.¹⁶

A kind of kagura called, *Mikagura* was held in the imperial palace. There was also the kagura performed among the common people called *sato kagura* or "village kagura". It consisted of imitations of *tanemaki*, or seed sowing, and other farming activities as a sort of incantatory magic, and the dance of *okina*, in which the god appeared in the figure of an old man connected with a prayer for longevity.¹⁷

During the thirteenth century, the dramatic quality of kagura increased and while preserving traditional elements, through adoption of new dramatic techniques and making use of various novel "theatrical arts" a different kind of kagura was introduced. Plays called by the name of kagura exist even today in various places, those of the archaic style mostly date from this period.

The myth of the Heavenly cave indicates the basic structural form kagura.¹⁸ Probably, on the basis of the tradition coming down from the primitive period, they performed the dance of their ancestors representing in the kagura the myth of the heavenly cave. *Miko* dances were shamanistic, in their nature are considered as belonging to the primitive kagura.

From the 9th to the 12th century (the Heian period) kagura was at a zenith. Although all *shintō* shrines featured the dance in one form or another, kagura declined and degenerated considerably. At Meiji restoration kagura was quite removed from its original intent, and kagura was filled with loyalty to the emperor. Now it is usually performed by *miko* or dancing girls attached to shrines, and this reconstructed type of kagura is still to be seen on festival days in various parts of the country.¹⁹

The kagura stage faces the shrine, as the performance is designed primarily for the pleasure of deity, but the curtains, which enclose the rear and sides, are usually arranged so as to allow spectators freely to observe the plays. Kagura are evening entertainments, beginning usually

at twilight and closing at morning cock crow. They are performed most frequently, through not exclusively, in the late autumn or early winter.

Slightly before to a performance a garden fire (niwabi) is lighted on the ground in front of the shrine. This is tended by special attendants. At the appointed time the singers, musicians, and director enter the platform and take their seats upon either side at right - angles to the shrine. Players of the flute (wabve) and harp (wagoto) sit upon the left. Players of the flageolet (hichiriki) upon the right. The singers are divided for antiphonal purposes, those upon left being called leaders (motokata), those upon the right, followers (suikata).²⁰ When all have been seated the players ceremonially test their instruments; the director rises and going to the fire, orders the attendants to tend the fire. At his command an introductory ceremony is given. This is usually the *Niwabi* or the *Achime* and it is followed by the evenings series of kagura, each being rather brief.

In the performance of true kagura, dancing has a large part and with the growth of kagura as a regular ceremony a special group of trained dancers, as well as players and singers, was developed. These were called *maiko* and *kagura oh*. The former were young women of good social standing. The latter were men.²¹

According to *tachibana* the ancient kagura songs, which are now extant, may be arranged in groups each having a distinct and appropriate name. The first group, called simply kagura, contains only two songs. *Niwabi* and *Achime*. These are of great interest because of their primitive character but they might better be called introductory kagura since they serve usually to introduce a kagura service and are in themselves of the utmost simplicity.²²

Kagura were played at night. This necessitated artificial lightning, and natural fires were kindled before the shrine. Even in the modern rendering of this kagura a tradition of simplicity is followed. There is no beating of time by the director. The flute, flageolet and harp are first played in successive solos; then the flute and the flageolet are played in duet. There is no dancing.

Moreover, considering that the period treated was the Age of the Gods, the piece might well be called kagura.

The *Achime* is the most tenuous of all extant forms. Its origin is lost in antiquity; but it is based traditionally upon the dance of *Ame no uzume*, before the rock cave in which the sun-Goddess was hiding. It is no real song, but merely a cry or shout.²³

The Second group of kagura called songs of offerings (Torimonouta), contain eight or ten songs. The *Torimono* are offerings presented to the deity. The songs are two stanzas each *Maiko* dance appropriately in the centre front of the kagura stage. The *nusa* is a gohei, or wand, laden at one end with strips of white or coloured paper, symbolic of primitive offerings. The *tsume* is a stick or staff such as a pilgrim might use, and it is not a frequent offering at shrines by pilgrims. The *sasa* is bamboo grass which may be used for the making of arrows.

The *hisago* is a gourd, in ancient use for the carrying of water and an object of beauty because of its *graceful shake*. These eight *Torimono uta*, with the two introductory Kagura, appear to make up the formal or ceremonial Kagura songs.

These ceremonial Kagura betray something of popular influence; but it is much more apparent that popular desire and priestly favour met in the inclusion of the *O* and *Ko* (large and small) *saibary* within the body of Kagura songs; for each of their songs bears clear internal evidence of its original character.²⁴

In addition to these ancient kagura, used in court ceremonies generally available for all shrines, each important shrine has such Kagura as may be called locally canonical.

There is a major division between *mikagura*, the Kagura performed in the Imperial palace and the shrines related to it, and *Sato Kagura*, the folk Kagura performed in the countryside.²⁵ *Sato Kagura* is divided into types that are more or less defined by locality. According to *Honda*, the main types are; *Miko Kagura*, *Ise Kagura*, *Izumo Kagura* and *Shishi Kagura*. Except for *miko Kagura*, they have all been strongly influenced by *shugendō*. *Miko Kagura*, the oldest type of Kagura, is danced by women in shinto shrines during folk festivals. The ancient *miko* were shamanesses. But they are now considered priestesses in the service of Shinto shrines. This Kagura is characterized by slow, elegant,

circular movements, by emphasis on the four directions and by the central use of *torimono* especially the fan and the bells.²⁶

Ise Kagura is a collective name for the great variety of rituals that have their prototype in the Ise shrine. It is also called *Yudate Kagura*. Until the Meiji restoration, this kind of Kagura was performed as an offering by pilgrims to Ise. It includes all the ritual events at which Yudate (boiling water rites, of shugendo origin) are performed. Honda also calls this category *Shimotsuki Kagura* (11 months Kagura), for it is often performed toward the end of the year.

Another type of Kagura is called *Izumo Kagura*. It is centered in the *sada* Shrine of Izumo, Shimane prefecture. It including two categories; *torimono mai*, unmasked dances that employ 'held objects', and *Shinno* (sacred No), dramatic masked dances based on myths. This is probably the most widespread type of Kagura. It has spread during the Tokugawa period, with the influence of Yoshida Shinto. However, there is no one place in which this style is pure; mostly it is the structure if *Izumo Kagura* that is obvious.

Shishi Kagura or the Shugen No tradition employs the dances of a *shishi* (lion) mask as the image and presence of the deity. It includes the *Ise daikagura* group and the *Yamabushi Kagura* and *bangaku* groups of the Tōhoku area. Here, Ise daikagura group is different from the above *Ise kagura*. The *Ise daikagura* employs a large red Chinese type *Shishi* head. It can move its ears. The *Shishi* head of the Yamabushi Kagura School is black and can click its teeth. While in other Kagura types the Kami appears only temporarily during the performance.²⁷ The Yamabushi Kagura tradition retains its ritualistic character and religious nature. Among the many schools of *Yamabushi Kagura* are *Kuromori Kagura*, *Tono Kagura*, *Enmanji Kagura* and *Hayachine Kagura*.

The dancers of the shrine maiden Kagura often hold some type of objects fan or bells, for example, that are said to be symbolic of the presence of the deities for whom the dances are performed. Honda makes *torimono* Kagura (the Kagura of handheld objects) a separate sub category. Other objects include wands decorated with strips of paper used in Shinto rituals, branches of sakaki, swords, and bows and arrows. *Torimono* Kagura is also known as *Izumo Kagura* because of its association with *Sada* in the *Izumo* area of western Japan.²⁸

Since the late *Heian* period, *shugendo* has exerted its artistic influence on all three major categories of folk performing arts. The strong connection of the *Yamabushi* to the agricultural life of farmers explains why *dengaku* type performances throughout Japan often display strong *yamabushi* influences.²⁹

The wandering Kagura is especially common in the North of Japan, where it is known by the collective name *Yamabushi Kagura*. Its repertoire of myths and epics enriches the cultural consciousness of the villagers. It is more importantly, *Kitō Kagura*, charged with magical powers to prevent fires and other calamities, to purify and bless people and houses and to increase fertility. The *yamabushi* kagura brings these blessings to the villages along with a manifestation of the protective deity (*gongen*) in a form of the lion.

Indeed the word 'Kagura' itself refers to both the music and the dance offered as worship to the kami (god).

Kagura has a particularly strong Kinesthetic impact on its audiences. It is due to its powers of impact and communication, and because dance communicates through symbols, that the dance itself has become a powerful symbol. The symbol of dance is often chosen to portray the order of human reality.³⁰

The Kagura dance cannot be understood separately from the Japanese cultural and religious tradition of which it is a product, and which it serves to maintain.

Some Scholars say that *Hayachine Kagura*, at least in its present form, was organized only in the beginning of the Edo period (early 1600), when Lord *Nambu Toshinao* revived *Myosenji*, the *Roku-bo* reorganized, and the area became an important gold mining centre. Just as *Itabashi no Tasobi* carries on without any rice planting, *Hayachine Kagura* continues without the *Yamabushi* (mountain ascetics) who originally performed it. The word *Hayachine* refers to the name of a mountain in Iwate prefecture in northeastern Japan. Mount *Hayachine* was revered by *Yamabushi* who were followers of *shugendo*, a blend of Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religion. It was outlawed in the Meiji period when Buddhism in general was circumscribed and anything smacking of superstition altogether banned.

Hayachine Kagura is comprised of *Take Kagura* and *Otsugumai Kagura*, named for the two communities in the town of *ôhasama*, *Iwate* prefecture, where the performance traditions are based. Kagura, in general, influenced and was itself influenced by the development of No. Far from dying out as a result of the prohibition against shugendo, *Hayachine Kagura* has become the focus of renewed commitments on the part of the *take* and *otsugunai* communities towards their traditions of performance. Until the mid showa period the Kagura was performed between November and February. The performers would travel from house to house dancing. Stopping at a farmhouse for the night, they would perform lengthier dramatic programmes for people in the area. *Hayachine Kagura* is now mainly performed at the festival that take place on at folk performing arts events around the country.³¹ However *Hayachine Kagura* has maintained much of its shugendo characteristics, both in style and purpose.³²

Hayachine Kagura can be traced through the geographical distribution of typical Kagura stage-halls in shrines and temples of the vicinity. According to this, *Hayachine Kagura* was widespread in a radius of 40 to 50 kilometers around Mr. *Hayachine*, from *Kawaimura* in the northeast, to *Tôno* in the southeast, to *Esashi* in the southwest, to *Kitakami*, *Hanamaki* and *Ishitoriya* in the west, and to *Morioka* in the northwest. Mr. **Kikuchi Kazushige** thinks that the Kagura's distribution area marks the cultural influence sphere of Mr. *Hayachine*.³³

Tradition has it that the ideal Kagura group consists of 12 members. The number 12 is auspicious, with several symbolical layers. First, it stands for the seven generations of Heavenly Deities, and five generations of Earthly Deities, based on the **Kojiki** and the **Nihongi** creation myths. This system of 12, which appears in the **shamon** (narration) of the kagura, seems to be a later shinto creation adopted by *shugendo*.³⁴

The Kagura in *saitama* must first of all be divided into two categories; presentations that are given by a group associated solely with one community and its shrines and those given by a troupe that is based in a particular community. It is the second category that creates a bit of a paradox within the folk performing arts. Kagura troupes organized around a core of professional performers were established in the Meiji period.

'Community' here refers to the home base of the head of the troupe, who is variously called the Kagura-tayu, or Kagura no monojime. There are fifteen such people in *Saitama*, among whom five lead independent troupes that perform regularly in the *Saitama* and *Tokyo* areas. The five troupes in *Saitama* are the **Okada** (in the city of *Urawa*), **Maeda** (in the city of *Miyoshi*), **Negihshi** (in the city of *kawagoe*), **Ishiyama** (in the city of *Niiza*), and **Shimamura** (in the city of *ômiya*). All are named for the family that founded and leads the group.³⁵

Performing the Kagura is no easy task, and is not open for all. The benefits that the Kagura could bring its performers are not obvious at first glance. In this - worldly benefit - oriented Japan, there must be some good reasons for choosing to perform the Kagura in the first place. Traditionally, kagura served as a means for the people of **Dake** to earn a living. *Dake Village* is situated so high on Mr. *Hayachine* that rice cannot grow there, agricultural products being limited to *soba*. Some coarse barley and, recently tobacco. Thus, it was economic need that caused *Dake Kagura* to become artistically skillful, so that it would be popular in villages where rice was to be found. Skillful dancing was crucial for their success. History shows that artistic talent and exciting performance were fundamental to the survival of the Kagura. Today, with a changed economic situation, the Kagura earns far less money for its performers than it used to, and it cannot be compared with the salaries in the modern entertainment professions.³⁶ Why, then, do they continue to perform? The Kagura is a self-denominator, a part of their self-identity which they refuse to lose.³⁷ But this is not the same with **Ishihato oka-kagura**. They did it for the love of the dances, for love of the Kagura, and others said their love of the art form was mixed with conscious religious emotions. They said, this is what our fore fathers did. In other words, the Kagura is 'ours', this is what we do, and somebody has to do it. While few today cite religious reasons for participating in the Kagura, they never perform the Kagura as just music and dance. It is more than that.³⁸

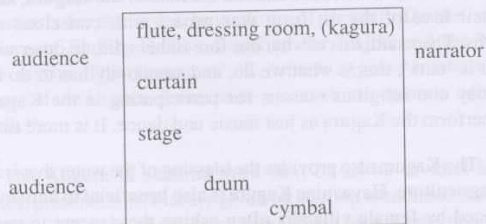
The Kagura also provides the blessing of the water that is essential to rice agriculture. *Hayachine Kagura* is also beneficial to human fertility, as evinced by female villagers often asking the dancers to perform in their *kimono* and *obi*, to ensure female fertility and easy delivery. It brings blessings of harmony between husband and wife, and general prosperity to the household or community. However, although it grants fertility, it

is considered unlucky and very dangerous to perform Kagura at weddings or at child-birth celebrations.

The Kagura is also an entertaining³⁹ performance and great fun. Its educational and artistic values play a major role in its popularity. Before television, the movies, and baseball, kagura was the highlight of the festivals.

Kagura performances have always been accompanied by *sake* drinking. Originally sacred to the gods (Kami), *sake* was drunk only on festival days, when drunkenness was considered a divine state. The kagura indeed offers a variety of entertainment: music, singing, exciting, drumming, suspenseful and heroic battle dances cathartic exorcism dances.⁴⁰ Every kagura performance offers a mix of drama, humour and awe.⁴¹

Hayachine kagura displays its shamanic character in the very setting of its stage. There is the permanent, elevated kagura-den in the local shrine. A curtain is drawn along the back of the stage, hiding a narrow dressing room (gakuya), from which the dances appear and into which they disappear. Three sides of the stage are open to audience view. The drummer sits at the front of the stage, facing the curtain, and is flanked by two cymbal-players. All three sit with their backs to the audience behind them. The stage is divided into left and right from the drummer's vantage point. Left stage is called *hidari bachi* (left drumstick), and right-stage *mihi bachi* (right drumstick). The flute player and the narrator are stationed behind the curtain, hidden from view.⁴²



The Kagura stage becomes a sacred ritualistic enclosure where the gods manifest themselves. Until recently, the Kagura stage was considered so sacred that women are not allowed to set foot on it for fear

of ritual pollution. The stage symbolizes this world of humans, where the gods come to visit.⁴³ The Kagura curtain (maku) is the 'flag' of individual Kagura groups, each having its own distinctive curtain. The curtain is also used in different ways when leaving the stage at the end of a dance, but the dancers generally disappear into it abruptly, like vanishing spirits.

The stage setting creates a symbolic universe in which the deities commute between their heavenly abode and the human world, and on which the dancers are both manifestations of the gods and the priests who summon them down to worship them. The structure of the setting itself and the symbolic devices render the kagura performance magically efficacious.

Music plays a central shamanic role in the Kagura performance. The music is arranged to encourage the gods to manifest themselves and make them dance. The Kagura music is both instrumental and vocal, the dancers adding to the musical effect with their bells and stamping feet. The drum is the focal point of both music and dance in Kagura; and the whole performance revolves around it. The drummer (domae or dotori) kneels down in front of the drum, drumming it on both sides. He uses two drumsticks. The special attention to the drumsticks emphasizes the shamanic role of the Kagura drum. It not only summons the gods but also makes them dance to its rhythm. The drummer is usually the Kagura master. He carries the secret magical knowledge. As the most demanding of Kagura skills, drumming is highly valued.⁴⁴ While drumming, the drummer also sings of gods, the sacred Kagura songs of blessing and charm. Some songs are specific to certain dances. But in many instances the drummer decides which song to use. The Kagura flute provides the melody of the Kagura. It is a side-flute of six holes, of which only four are used for Kagura music. The Kagura uses two pairs of simple cymbals.

The Kagura music is part of local religious worship. Before the performance, the Kagura group usually goes around the village to worship before all the small shrines located where the Kagura will take place.⁴⁵ The narration, called *shamon* in Hayachine Kagura accompanies many of its dances. The origin of this word is unclear. But it was usually considered a distortion of *saimon* (ritual). Professor Honda believes that it originated in the word **Shamon**, meaning Buddhist Priest.⁴⁶ The

narration style is a kind of chanting-recitation, which at times can be characterized as singing. Honda says that it originated in the **Kōwaka** style of the Muromachi period (1338-1573), and is pre-No. The languages used in the shamon is also quite archaic, typical of the Middle Ages and even earlier. The narrator (shamon gatari) is always stationed behind the curtain, unseen by the audience. Just before a dance begins, he usually announces the deity who is about to appear.

One of the major *torimono* (props) of Kagura, the sword (katana or tachi) is mentioned among the Kagura Torimono in the god songs of the Heian period. In Hayachine Kagura, the sword figures prominently on stage and is used in all the *aramai* (ferocious dances). **Ishihato oka** Kagura now uses stage swords (imitation swords) in its performances. But Dake Kagura still dances with 'live' swords. The sword is also represented on stage by *torimono* such as wooden swords (Ken) of various sizes and *shahes*, used by particular deities in addition to the regular ones. **Gohei** also is the kind of *torimono*, which is the unique shintō sacred wand of neatly cut white paper streamers. It is also called **nusa**, **mitogura**, **nigite**. Originally made of cloth and hemp, white paper has become the standard. Other *torimono* are more specific to particular deities. For example, the bow and arrow (yumi-ya) play an important role in yamabushi ritual.

There is some resemblance between "Kagura" and "*Gammaduwa*" in Sri Lanka. "*Gammadu*" is, in general, a ritual enacted for the gods and goddesses where blessings are endowed requesting for security and fertility to the crops of the village. "Kagura" is a folk ritual, born out of Shinto Buddhism, based on former rationale, which includes religious music and dance. Further, Yamabushi Kagura, which is a branch of Kagura, has more affinity with "*Gammaduwa*". Kagura, too, like "*Panthis Kolmura*" of "*Gammaduwa*" is enacted through songs, dances and music related to folk stories of gods and goddesses. The drum, the *thālampota* (kind of a cymbal) and the flute are its main instruments. The songs of praise are sung in a mellifluous manner while acting gods. Kagura is based on the same concept as "*Gammaduwa*". "*Halan Wedeema*" is an interesting element of "*Gammaduwa*". Here, the jewelry of goddess Paththini is brought onto a platform. Then they are shaken so that they make a noise and honored so that victims and villagers are blessed.

"*Marā Ipedduma*" (resurrection) is another dramatic scene in *Gammaduwa*. This story illustrates the resurrection of goddess *Paththini's* husband, Prince *Palanga*. The assassination of Rama is, too, a scene enacted. By observing branches of Kagura affiliated to "magical caves", "fortune of mountains" and "fortune of the ocean", one can ascertain the above mentioned traits.

In Kagura, within the last 10 to 20 minutes, the actor who characterized the god blesses the audience and leaves the theatre. The village folk believe that Kagura is an instance where gods and goddesses descend from heaven to interact with humans.

Even in *Gammaduwa*, around six in the morning the *Goraka Yaka* (kind of a devil) starts dancing. Here too, the devil is mounted on a platform created by a pestle hewn horizontally between two branches of a "*goraka*" (garciana) tree. The devil dances till the branch breaks and it symbolizes purgation.

Thus, in modern Japan, Kagura is a considered a ritual that brings blessings to the village and the country just as much as a symbol of traditional Japan's identity.

Note:

- 1 Irith Averbuch - The gods comes Dancing - U.S.A. Cornell University - First print - 1995 P.3.
- 2 Faubian Bowers - Japanese Theatre - Charles E. Tuttle company, Tokyo - First Edition - 1952 First Tuttle Edition. 1974, P.5.
- 3 N.K. - P.17.
- 4 T.G.C.D. - P.7.
- 5 T.G.C.D. - P.9.
- 6 Nishitsunei - Minzoku geinō nyumon, 99-102.
- 7 T.G.C.D. - P.10.
- 8 Kojiki (The record of Ancient matters (compiled in 712 CE) Translated: Philippi - P.85.
- 9 Nihongi - (Trans, Aslon) - P.44.
- 10 Nishitsunei - P.28.
- 11 T.G.C.D. - P.11.
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