

Mt. Hayachine and religion

Mt. Hayachine (1,917 meters high), the highest peak of the Kitakami Highlands is surrounded by Mt. Kengamine in the east, Mt. Nakadake, Mt. Keitouzan and Mt. Kenashimori in the west. The figure of the mountain extends approximately ten kilometers ~~or so~~ from east to west. On the mountain over 1,300 meters high, rugged, large, unique rocks composed of peridotite and serpentine are exposed.

In interstices of the rocks, there are *Leontopodium hayachinese* and 200 other kinds of alpine plants in riotous profusion. The mountain is accounted as one of the best mountains in Japan by Hisaya Fukada. Kenji Miyazawa, poet and fairytale writer, was fascinated by Mt. Hayachine's overwhelming presence and its pretty alpine plants, and wrote many poems and fairy tales related to the mountain.

Mt. Yakushi, which stands facing ~~to~~ Mt. Hayachine, is composed of granite, and harbors unique forest and plant communities. Since the vegetation is totally different from Mt. Hayachine's, the area is designated as national special natural asset of "Alpine belt, forest and plant communities of Mt. Hayachine and Mt. Yakushidake," and the surrounding area is protected as quasi-national park.

Mt. Hayachine's ancient name is Adzumanedake, or East Peak Mountain, and has been a spiritual attraction from ancient times. In a legend of the Ohasama area, a man named Tanakano Hyoubu reached the top of the mountain, tracing a white deer with a golden star-like mark on its forehead, and opened the mountain in 807.

In the feudal clan era, Mt. Hayachine was influential because it was thought to protect the territory of the Morioka Feudal Clan. At the foot of the mountain, the Takesenmyouji Temple was built to enshrine the Hayachine Daigongen statue, but because of the government decree to separate Shintoism from Buddhism in the early year of the Meiji Era, only the Hayachine Temple remains.

What is Hayachine Kagura?

Hayachine Kagura has been handed down in the Uchikawame area of Hanamaki Ohasama, Iwate Prefecture, and is a general term for two kinds of Kagura: Take Kagura, dedicated to the Hayachine Shrine, and Otugunai Kagura, dedicated to the Otugunai

Temple. It is said that Hayachine Kagura has been handed down by mountain priests who regard Mt. Hayachine as holy place for generations, and is called “Yamabushi Kagura, or mountain priest Kagura because it adopted forms of priests’ prayers in Kagura dances.

The origin of both of the Kaguras is not clear, but there is a Gongensam mask (lion mask) inscribed with the year 1596 in the Hayachine Temple. At a steward’s of the Otugunai Temple, there is a copy of a Kagura instruction written in 1488, so it is thought that Hayachine Kagura had already been handed down at least 500 years ago.

In the performances, there are elements of old folklore entertainments before Noh completed, and because of ~~the~~ its medieval atmosphere of entertainments, Hayachine Kagura was designated as national important cultural asset, and added ~~on~~ to the list of UNESCO intangible cultural heritage.

Generally, Take Kagura is based on five beats, and is a fast tempo and “valiant.” On the other hand, Otugunai Kagura is based on seven beats, and is a slow tempo and “graceful.” Also, both of the Kaguras are said to be two sides the same coin. You can see the symmetry from a Otugunai God mask with its mouth open like “Ah” shape and a Take mask with its mouth close like “Un” shape.

Until early in the Showa Era, Kagura performers holding lion masks called Gongensama used to tour around Hienuki and Waga County ~~at~~ during the farmers’ off-season ~~for farmers~~. This form called “Kagura on the street” or “Circulating Kagura” came to an end after World War II. At present, it became more common for Kagura performers to be invited to shrine festivals, other festivities and events in and outside the prefecture.

Follower schools of Hayachine Kagura spread in the center of Iwate Prefecture from Morioka City in the north to Ichinoseki City in the south, and the number of the schools is said to be approximately 100.

Kagura Stage

It is general for Kagura to be performed at a Kagura stage in the precinct of a shrine, because Kagura is supposed to be dedicated to shrine festivals. The size of the stage is

360 centimeters square, and a straw rope is stretched around the stage. When Hayachine Kagura groups toured around villages, they used to perform at private houses called “Kagura inn”. At that time, a wooden plank floor (usually living room) next to an earthen floor was stretched by a straw rope, and became a stage for Kagura. Then a reception room became a dressing room, with a Kagura screen between the dressing room and stage to discriminate them.

The standard size of a Kagura screen was based on the width of 180 centimeters and height of 90 centimeters. Recently, performances on a theater stage become more common, so the Kagura stage is arranged for 225 centimeters square because a 225 centimeter square screen is conspicuous on the theater stage.

The base color of a Kagura screen is supposed to be black or dark blue. In Take Kagura, the screen is dyed with the name of “Hayachine Temple” in the center and the Mukaidzuru (facing cranes) Crests in the left and right. In Otugunai Kagura, the screen is dyed with the name of “Otugunai Temple” in the center, the Chrysanthemum Crest in the left and the Paulownia Crest in the right.

Musicians and Dancers

On the stage, a drummer sits facing to the Kagura screen, and two cymbalists sit on each side of the drummer. The drummer is called “Dotori (Domae)”, who not only leads the dancers but takes the main role as by singing songs about God and delivering part of the dialogue. Flutes and narrators are behind the Kagura screen so they cannot be seen from the audience.

The dancers appear from behind the dressing room when the Kagura screen is raised, and return to the dressing room when it is raised. Nationwide, it is very common that Kagura dancers appear from the wings of a stage, so this way to appear on the stage is said to be very rare. As many as to six to seven dancers sometimes appear.

Costumes and Outfits

(Kabuto or Headgear)

There are several kinds of headgear which dancers wear. The representative headgear is Fowl Headgear. The name of Fowl Headgear is originated from the figure of male and

female fowls on the top of the headgear. On both sides of the headgear, there are two big wings where auspicious stories such as carps going up the waterfall, plovers on the sea and a scene of a crane and tortoise with pine trees are drawn. There are three kinds of headgear such as “Okina Kabuto,” “Eboshi” and “Samurai Eboshi.” Eboshi do not have wings.

When no headgear is used, dancers put on a zukin or hood, kanashi or headband representing the sun over the clouds in female dances. In furious dances, dancers don a headband and zai or wig made of horse hair of black, brown and white.

(Omen or Mask)

In Hayachine Kagura, there are dances with masks and without masks. In the dances with masks, God inhabits the masks; therefore, the dancers become incarnations of God, pray and speak of oracles. This state is called “Neri.”

In God dances, dancers perform beautifully, quickly taking off the mask in the latter half of the dances. This state is called “Kuzushi,” and is thought to be a dance dedicated to God after the dancer returns to a human. Dancers sometimes perform without taking off a mask until the end.

Besides the characteristic masks such as Sambasou, Yamano Kami and Sarutahiko, the kinds of masks are Male God, Goddess, Furious God, Old Man, Man, Woman, Clown and animals. Those masks are used for multiple roles.

(Isho or Costume)

In general, dancers acting as Male God put on a chihaya, hadakko (underwear) and hakama. Dancers acting as Goddess put on a chihaya and kimono. In furious dances, a fugomi, sash and leggings are worn for aggressive actions. In donning the Kagura costume, there is a special way called “Nugidare,” which means the dancer removes the kimono worn on top of the underwear, and the upper part of the kimono dangles from the dancer’s waist. Drummers and cymbalists wear white kimonos and hakamas.

(Torimono or Outfit)

In Kagura dances, dancers wear or hold various items, collectively called “Torimono,” or outfit. Necessary elements include the Ougi or fan, Suzuki (wooden stick with bells and hempen fringes at the end) and tachi or long sword. Besides them, ken or sword, bow,

arrow, heisoku or zigzag sheet and kidzuchi or wooden hammer are used. In Kyogen comedies, hyoutan or gourd and tsue or cane are sometimes used as small outfits. In the drawing water dance, the dancer makes a carrying stick with red belts rolled on, and hangs his headgear, which is regarded as water buckets on each end of the carrying stick, which is a brilliant use of outfits.

Many dancers have something called "Kuji" made of paper string on both middle fingers. It is said dancers acting as God who can pray should have "Kuji," and dancers acting as God who cannot pray should not have "Kuji", and anybody without "Kuji" cannot enter the stage area. Those days drummers and cymbalist used to put on "Kuji."

Program and Composition

Programs of the both Kaguras are almost the same and more than 40 programs, including reverse dances, though the titles of the programs are somewhat different.. The programs are divided into "Shikimai," "Kamimai," "Onnamai," "Aramai," "Bangakumai," "Kyogen" and "Gongenmai."

In performing Kagura formally, first of all the drum rite must be performed to have God descend from heaven. After the rite, the six dances called "Shikimai" are supposed to be presented without fail. "When the curtains are not drawn" which means "when Kagura is danced all day long in the same place," reverse version dances of "Shikimai" are performed at night. The shortest program is 15 minutes long, but the longest one is more than 40 minutes long. When this "Shikimai" is finished, some dances including "Kamimai", "Onnamai", "Aramai" and "Bangakumai" are performed and "Kyogen" is sometimes danced along with them. And the end of the dances should be "Gongenmai."

(Shikimai)

Shikimai refers to the six dances which should be dedicated at first in performing Kagura. The content of the dances is purification, invocation of the spirits of the dead, repose of the dead's souls, prediction and oracle. The order of the dances is "Torimai," "Okinamai," "Sanbasou," "Hachimanmai," "Yamanokami," and "Iwatobiraki." Shikimai is composed of face dances and reverse (Ura) dances. Reverse dances of Shikimai include "Yonintorimai," "Matsumukae," "Urasanban," "Urahachiman," "Oyamanokami" and "Iwatobirakihonshiki." In Take Kagura, the reverse dance of Torimai is sometimes performed, and in Otugunai Kagura, "Inadahime" is sometimes danced as the reverse

dance of Iwatobiraki.

(Kamimai or God Dance)

Kamimai is a mythological dance. Drawing the theme from two ancient history books of "A Record on Ancient Matters" and "The Chronicles on Japan," the dancer appears with a mask without fail. In the first half of the dance, the dancer prays and speaks of oracles as an embodiment of God. In the middle, the dance stops, and the content of the story is told in the way of "Shamon." In the latter half of the dance, the dancer takes off the mask, and performs beautifully and quickly, so this dance is composed of two parts.

(Onnamai or Female Dance)

A woman (Goddess) is a main character in this dance. This dance has a storytelling element, and is graceful and beautiful, but in this dance, it is said that there is an atmosphere of a medieval performance called Shirabyoushi. There is no dance to perform quickly and beautifully in this dance like Kamimai, or God dance taking off the mask.

(Aramai or Furious Dance)

As the name of the dance indicates, this is a very furious dance, its action is very quick, and furious handling is characteristic. Since there are no God songs and scenarios handed down, the story of this dance is not clear. But this is very popular among the audience.

(Bangakumai)

Bangakumai is called "Samuraimono," or Samurai story, and "Bushimai," or warrior's dance. Therefore, this dance is a program with a good tempo that features a warrior's battle and revenge story. This story is familiar to people in Kabuki and Noh; therefore, many people understand the outline of the story.

(Kyogen or Comedy)

Kyogen comedy in Kagura advances in the dialogues between a dancer and drummer; therefore, quick-witted reactions are very important although the words of the dance are fixed. Funny and colorful stories are sometimes depicted. This dance has another name of "Clown."

(Gongenmai or Lion Mask Dance)

At the end of Kagura dances, this dance should be performed without fail. Gongen out of Gongenmai means that deities appear in this world as tentative figures, and in Kagura, the deities inhabit the Lion Mask (Gongensama). Therefore Gongenmai is treated as one of the most important in order to ward off every evil and pray for everyone's peace.

Shikimai

Torimai or Fowl Dance

Torima is a dance that two dancers in kimono without mask perform holding fans and suzukis. The dance is said to pray for good relationships of couples or the dance of Izanagino Mikoto and Izanamino Mikoto. The fowl is believed to be the bird to ward off evil spirits; therefore, this dance is thought to purify the Kagura stage.

In Take Kagura, a dancer putting on a headgear with both a male fowl and female fowl shows up, but in Otugunai Kagura a dancer putting on a male fowl headgear shows up first. This dance is short, but complicated, delicate, fast, sometimes slow and beautiful.

Okinamai or Old Man Dance

This dance is performed by an old dancer with a white mask. In Take Kagura, the dancer is called Amenokoyaneno Mikoto, but called Amenotokotachino Mikoto in Otugunai Kagura. This dance is difficult and has a slow tempo; therefore, there are few opportunities to perform it. This dance is for longevity, and is said the best God dance to comfort Amaterasu Omikami in front of the Amanot Iwatono Door. There used to be words related to Buddhism in Okinamai's old scenario, but the words diminished after the government decree to discriminate Shintoism from Buddhism early in the Meiji Era.

Sanbaso or the Third Dance of Shikimai

Sanbaso is the third dance of Shikimai, and is said to be the dance for Hirukono Mikoto to describe feelings, adversity and hardship in the world. This dance is the copy of the second dance of Okinamai, so an old dancer with a black mask shows up lightly. In the scenario, there are words to praise the old dancer, but the dancer humbles himself and calls his name humorously. Being different from the old dance which is a slow tempo,

Sanbaso has a quick tempo with acrobatic movements, so this is a very popular program for the audience.

Hachimanmai

This dance is to ask the origin of Hachiman Daijin God, and to praise his way to handle a bow and arrows. It is a dance to pray for eradicating evils as shooting arrows in all directions. Two dancers without masks show up. Each of them holds a bow in his left hand and two arrows on his waist. The two dancers are said to be Homudawakeno Mikoto (Ojin Emperor) and his elder brother Homuyakeno Mikoto.

This dance is as rare as Torimai or Fowl Dance because two dancers perform without masks.

Yamanokamimai or Mountain God Dance

Yamano Kami or Mountain God is Oyamatsumino Mikoto, and it is said he becomes the Agriculture God in coming to town in spring, and becomes Mountain God in returning to mountains in fall. So this program is the most important for farmers, people working in mountains and priest Kagura dancers. The dancer cuts the nine characters in the air, and expels evil spirits by making a symbolic hand gesture. In Otsugunai Kagura, a mask with its mouth open like “Ah” is used. On the other hand, in Take Kagura a mask with its mouth closed like “Un” is used.

Iwatobiraki

The famous myth of “Amano Iwato” or the rock door to heaven is the theme of this dance. Amaterasu Omikami was quite furious about her younger brother Susano Mikoto’s vandalism, and shut herself in the rock door to heaven. Since the goddess shut herself in the rock, heaven and earth became dark, so gods at a loss discussed, and placed offerings in front of the rock door. Amenokoyaneno Mikoto recited a Shinto prayer, and Ameno Udzuneno Mikoto danced in front of the rock door. As soon as Amaterasu Omikami thought the situation strange and opened the door slightly, Tajikaraono Mikoto who was ready at the rock dragged the door open, and welcomed Amaterasu Omikami.

Urashikimai

Yonin Torimai or Fowl Dance of four

This dance is the reverse dance of Shikimai. Four dancers in kimono without mask show up and perform. Those four dancers are regarded as four gods, and they are said the couple of Izanagino Mikoto, Izanamino Mikoto, their son Susanoono Mikoto and the son's princess Inadahimeno Mikoto. This dance is to pray for matrimonial happiness, prosperity and family safety. In Take Kagura, the dance of Inadahime sometimes becomes the reverse dance of Fowl Dance.

Matsumukae

Otoshino Mikoto had two brothers named Okagayamatoomino Mikoto and Mitoshino Mikoto. The elder brother had another name of Senshu, and the younger brother had another name of Bansei. Those two gods hosted their father god Otoshino Mikoto and mother god Kayohimeno Mikoto in welcoming a new year. They decorated pine trees and bamboos at the gate, and made offerings inside the home. Otoshino Mikoto is also called "Toshigami" or Year God, and he is thought to be a visitor god to come to each family on the new year's day, so this dance is performed as the first dance in a new year.

Urasanba/Manesanba

This dance is the reverse dance of Sanbaso. A dancer in the role of Sanbaso and another dancer, a clown, shows up. They are said to be two gods of Hirokono Mikoto and Awasimano Mikoto, but it is not clear. The clown dancer putting an Eboshi headgear on back to front with a clown mask performs Sanbaso dance, following the other's dance. When the Sanbaso dancer throws back his head, the clown dancer droops and falls down to try to stand on one leg. The clown dancer sometimes fools the audience, and continues the awkward dance, but actually he is a very good dancer.

Urahachiman/Jibome/Yoyuminomai

The face dance of Hachimanmai is Two Gods Dance, but its reverse dance is Four Gods Dance. Main characters are Homudawakeno Mikoto (Ojin Emperor), Sokotsutsuono Mikoto, Nakatsutsuono Mikoto and Uwatsutsuono Mikoto, who are called three Sumiyoshi gods. The number of the dancers increases, but the way to perform and

scenario are the same as the face dance.

Koyamanokami

Koyamanokami is the dance clowning Yamanokamimai Dance. In the face dance of Yamanokami, the dancer performs a severe and dignified god, but in Koyamanokami, the dancer puts on a weird white clown mask. This god is said to be Oyamatsumino Mikoto's son, Kunisatsuchino Mikoto. In the first part of the performance, the dance looks severe, but in the latter part of it, the dance becomes comical because the dancer cannot pull his sword easily. When this dance is performed in a living room where the audience is very close, it is a program that makes the audience feel a sense of belonging to the dance.

Iwatobirakihonshiki/Honbiraki

Iwatobiraki is the reverse dance of Iwatomai. The story of this dance is the same as the face dance of Iwatomai, but there are some differences between them: there adds Mikomai that is Amenoudzumeno Mikoto holding bamboo leaves in both of her hands dances in front of the rock door, in Take Kagura Amaterasu Omikami sees a kuzushimai-dance sitting behind the screen along with Amenoomoikaneno Mikoto. In Otsugunai Kagura, "Inadahime" sometimes becomes the reverse dance of "Iwabobiraki."

Inadahime/Orochitaiji

In Take Kagura, this is a program performed as the reverse dance of Fowl Dance. In Otsugunai Kagura, this is performed as the reverse dance of Iwatobiraki. Susanoono Mikoto, who performed numerous acts of vandalism, was exiled from heaven, and descended to the upper waters of the Hinokawa River in the country of Idzumo. There, the couple of Ashinadzuchino Mikoto and Tenadzuchino Mikoto lamented because their daughter Inadanohimeno Mikoto was supposed to be eaten by a big snake named Yamatano Orochi. This dance shows the process by which Susanoono Mikoto is successful in exterminating the snake.

Kamimai or God Dance

Amakudari/Tenrinkoson

Ninigino Mikoto, the grandson of Amaterasu Omikami was told by Amaterasu Omikami to govern Toyoashiharano Nakatsukuni (Japan), so he descended to the peak of Takachiho in the country of Hyuga along with three followers of Amenoudzumenomikoto, Amenooshihomimino Mikoto and Amenokushitsuno Mikoto. This dance shows the situation where Sarudahikono Mikoto on his way from Toyoashirano Nakatsukuni to welcome the group, and Ninigino and Ninigino Mikoto's followers meet with each other. In the first half of the dance, it is featured that the Sarudahikono Mikoto Dancer with a red goblin mask performs a brave neri-dance. And in the latter half of the dance, it is featured that the four dancers without masks perform a kuzushi-dance.

Amakumabitogokoku/Otokogokoku

Amaterasu Omikami heard that there was a goddess named "Ukemochino Kami" in a the country of Toyoashihara no Nakatsu, and dispatched "Tsukiyomino Mikoto" to her. She was very pleased to host Tsukiyomino Mikoto by feasting many meals out of her mouth. But Tsukiyomino Mikoto was furious regarding the meals dirty, and as a result, Tsukiyomino Mikoto killed her. Amaterasu Omikami was very surprised by the news, and dispatched Amano Kumabito to look into the circumstances. Amano Kumabito found the goddess' body from which five grains grew. This dance shows Amano Kumabito hands the five grains from Ukemochino Kami's body to Amenofutodamano Mikoto in order to dedicate the five grains to Amaterasu Omikami.

Amaterasugogoku/Onnagokoku

Amaterasugogoku is the sequel to "Amakumabitogokoku", and shows Amenofutodamano Mikoto receiving the five grains from Amekumabito Mikoto hands them to Amaterasu Omikami. Amaterasu Omikami is so happy to be dedicating the five grains, and decides to make them people's food. She orders Amenosadahikono Mikoto and Amenonagatahikono Mikoto to plant them on rice fields and farms. This is the origin of agriculture, and Ukemochino Kami was deified as Inaridaimyoujin God to protect the five grains.

Sujinnomai

The great king of Byobugaoka, the leader of the dragon gods over sixty provinces in Japan, is very angry to see rivers and clean waters ruined by human beings, so he collected many fellows of his in the upper part of the Otonashi River in order to inflict damage to human beings. But many big and small rivers and waterfalls stopped because Amaterasu Oomikami came to know this trial and told Futsunushino Mikoto to stop raining. The great king was at a loss, and asked for forgiveness to Amaterasu Oomikami. So Futsunushino Mikoto pledges him to protect human beings, and endowed him with the position of Water God to control water.

Akujintaiji

Ninigino Mikoto, the grandson of Amaterasu, wanted to descend to the country of Toyoashiharano Nakatsukoku, but evil gods and demons annoyed the country, so Ninigino Mikoto dispatched Amenohohino Mikoto to eradicate the evil ones, but Amenohohino Mikoto never returned. Next, Amenowakahikono Mikoto and Mikumano Daijin were sent, but they also never returned. So brave Takemikadzuchino Mikoto and Futunushino Mikoto were dispatched, and finally the evil gods and demons were ousted. In Take Kagura, the story of this dance is a fight dance between the two gods of Takemikadzuchino Mikoto and Futsunushino Mikoto and the evil ones, but in Otsugunai Kagura, this dance is a fabulous god dance in which seven god dancers appear.

Sankan or Three Koreas

Jingu Empress, Ojin Emperor's mother, decided to go on an expedition to three Koreas (Shiragi, Korai and Kudara) along with Takenouchino Sukune as general according to an oracle from Sumiyoshi Daijin though she was pregnant at that time. Takenouchino Sukune ordered Atobeno Isora to borrow Shiomitsutama (high tide ball) and Shiohirutame (low tide ball) from the Dragon's Palace, and succeeded in surpressing three Koreas using those two balls. This dance starts with Jingu Empress's graceful dance which appeases in all direction. Then, it features the furious battle scene between Takenouchino Sukune and the king of three Koreas.

Mikotozoroi/Mutsukimai/Minadzuki/Yojinmikonomai

This dance is called “Mikotozoroi” and “Mutsukimai” in Take Kagura, and “Minadzuki” and “Yojinmikotonomai” in Otsugunai Kagura. Minadzuki means June in the lunar calendar, and in this month the Gion Matsuri Festival in Kyoto is held. On the Gion Festival day, gods in heaven gather around Amaterasu Omikami, and the gods tell about the righteousness of Ninigino Mikoto’s succession of the nation and the origin of the three sacred treasures. They entertain Amaterasu Omikami performing Kaura to celebrate universal peace and prosperity.

Godzutenou/Tennoumai

When Tennou, whose head is like a bull head, went to the southern ocean to marry Otohimi, the dragon king’s daughter, he asked rich man Konan to let him stay at Konan’s for a night, but Konan, who was voracious and did evil things, refused this favor. On the other hand, Sominshorai, Konan’s elder brother was poor, but he showed much hospitality to Tennou. Tennou was able to go to the southern ocean safely, and he and Otohime got a child named Hachioji (Hasshoujin). Afterward, Tennou destroyed Konan on his way back, and endowed Sominshorai enchantments to ward off sickness.

Ebisumai

When Hirukono Mikoto of Mallow Bay, Yosanakori County, country of Tango asked Amaterasu Omikami where to get a large catch, she gave an oracle to go to Nagisano Ura Bay. In the bay, there was a large catch as the oracle said, so Hirukono Mikoto dedicated many kinds of seafood. Amaterasu Omikami was so glad to receive them, so told Hirukono Mikoto to become “Ebisu” or guardian god of fishing. This dance is to pray for a good catch and huge harvest, but Ebisu is also famous as a god for good business.

Godairyuo

Taishakuten had four princes and one princess. Taishakuten distributed one year of 365 days by season to the four princes, and three god treasures to the princess. But the princess was not satisfied and raised an army because she was not given any days. Taishakuten sent a messenger named Monzen to the four princes to give the last eighteen days of each season to the princess. As a result, each of the eighteen day periods given to the princess came to be called “Doyou”

Ryuguwatari/Anzanmai

The brother of Umisachihiko (Honosusorino Mikoto) and Ymasachihiko (Hikohohodeminono Mikoto) exchanged their hunting outfits one day, and Yamasachihiko went to the sea, but resulted in being taken away the important fishing hook. Then, Shiotsuchino Okina was just passing by, and told him to go to the Dragon King's Palace and ask Dragon King to resume it. Yamasachihiko reached the Dragon King's Palace, exterminating sea ghosts, and succeeded in finding the fishing hook. He married Toyotamahimeno Mikoto, Dragon King's daughter. Later it is said Toyotamahimeno Mikoto became the god for safe birth, after being blessed with children.

Onnamai or Female Dance

Shiokukumi

This is a dance called in the field called Kagura Noh. This dance is graceful to refers to how to draw seawater. It is said this dance became independent from a part called "Rongi" (A dancer and singers or dancers themselves sing songs alternatively like dialogues.) of "Matsukaze" or Pine tree and wind of Noh. However, it is not clear this is originated from Noh or from older performances than Noh. The verse, "There are a moon and two shadows which look the moon on the two shadows until the high tide comes," is poetic and makes beautiful dance music.

Hataori or weaver

Once upon a time, there was a happy couple in the country of Wakasa. One day the husband went to Kyoto, and did not return home for a long time. In the meantime a rich neighborhood man who felt deeply about the wife weaver asked a bad person to spread evil rumors about the husband. The wife heard these rumors and was not able to endure the stories, so she threw herself into the pond. But she never went to heaven and became a ghost. She wove as if insane according to weaver's songs. When the husband came home from Kyoto, he learned the circumstances, and held memorial services to become a Buddhism priest.

Kanemaki/Dojoji Temple

A girl wanted to visit and worship Kanemakidera Temple where women were not allowed to visit, but a steward of the temple refused her claim because there were five wonders in the temple. The girl still wanted to worship the temple in spite of the refusal, so the steward refused once again because there were seven wonders in the temple, and advised her that she would transform into a snake when she touched a rope of the bell in the temple. But the girl that didn't give up her hope visited and worshiped the temple, and became a snake because she took the rope of the bell. A priest (mountain priest) came to know this story, fought with the snake, and converted the snake to Buddhism by the power of the Buddhist Law.

Nekokiri/Warabiori

On the foot of Mt. Fuji, there were old parents and a beautiful daughter. The daughter was asked by the parents to go to southern mountains across the river in order to take brackens. But on her way back home, the river was rising because of the wind and rain, so she was not able to return home. The daughter told a lie to an old boatman that she would do whatever the boatman wants, and she was able to return home getting time of one day and one night. The boatman waited and waited, but the daughter never returned, so he became a snake and attacked humans out of spite.

Nenju or longevity

This is a story that there was a religious couple on daily basis on the bay area of Nanigawaura, and they received longevity because of the blessing of Yakushi Daimyoin God. The old couple worshiped the gods and Buddha without missing a single day to appreciate them because they thought the gods and Buddha make them live happy days in their later years. And on the thirty-third day for a great ambition, a goddess showed up in front of the old couple, and said "I will make the 80-year-old man become 30 years old, and 70-year-old woman become 20 years old". The goddess rejuvenated the two.

Odamaki

Odamaki refers to a hollow thread made of hemp yarns. There was a very beautiful woman and a young man who visited the woman secretly at nights. The young man

came to the woman at nights, but never showed up in the daytime. The woman was suspicious about that, so she passed a hemp thread from the hollow thread, and needled it to the hem of the young man's clothes. When the woman traced the thread, there was a big snake that the young man transformed himself into, so the woman lamented.

Tennyo or Celestial nymph

This dance refers to the situation where the gods gather to play instruments and dance at the night before the Gion Matsuri Festival. At that time, a young beautiful goddess who is good at dancing was on duty for dancing, so every god was so happy. This dance is said to adopt the way of medieval Shirabyoshi Dance, so it is beautiful and graceful. This goddess is called AmenoUdzumeno Mikoto" in Take Kagura, and "Suwano Shinnyo" in Otsugunak Kagura.

Hashikake or Building a bridge

The Natorigawa River of the country of Omi was so broad and deep that people were not able to build a bridge those days. So they planned to cut the biggest cedar tree among the sacred trees in the upper part of the river to make a part of the bridge. But this cedar tree grew again the following morning after being cut in the previous evening, and vice versa, so it took seven days and nights to cut it down. But people were not move the cut tree at all. Then, according to an oracle, people asked Ototsurugozen to seek help, and finally they accomplished building the tree bridge safely.

Aramai or Furious Dance

Setsurugi/Tetsurugi or Hand sword

This dance is also called "Three-men-passing-through Dance," and is said to ward off evils by three gods and an enchantment dance to avoid disasters. But it is unknown what the dance shows because there is no verse of the dance. First,, three dancers without masks perform furiously, and after taking off their masks, they pass through each other holding their swords and drawing a circle, which is a thrilling and interesting program.

Sasawake/Sasawarinomai

It is said that this dance is originated from a Shinto ritual called “Yudate.” “Yudate” refers to the Shinto ritual that wards off troubles and sickness getting the spray from a big pot by the bamboo leaves dipped in the big pot. The god appearing in the dance is “Katakurokushin,” guardian god for home and residence. So this dance is thought to be performed in building and renovating a house. This dance is performed by three dancers. The dancers suppress the stage in all directions furiously, expel evil spirits with bamboo leaves in their hands, and drive out demons.

Fuhsho/Fusho

This dance is the most furious one among the furious dances, and it is said this dance was performed by the furious god in heaven to suppress in all directions, ward off seven disasters and to expel demons. This furious god is thought to be brave Takemikadzuchino Mikoto or Amenoohabarino Mikoto, but it is not clear because there is no verse of this dance. There are some point where singers and the dancer’s movement meet with each other closely, and in happening this splendidly this dance becomes a popular program which is lifted up by the audience’ enthusiastic shouts and applauds.

Ryuden

This dance refers to a dance based on a legend that Amenotorifumino Mikoto and Takemikadzuchino Mikoto descended from heaven to the beach of Inasanoobama in the country of Idzumo in order to suppress evil gods in the country of Nakatsu and to recommend Onamuchino Mikoto (Okuninushino Mikoto) to succeed his country to an heir. Or, it is thought to have something do with the Dragon’s King. In this performance there are an action to suppress in all directions and stomping action by the two furious god dancers with one’s mouth open and the other’s mouth closed. In performing taking off their masks, their action holding each end of their swords and passing through each other is a good scene, and it is called “Two-men-passing-through dance.”

Shimekiri

It is said that to cut a sacred straw festoon in this dance originates from the legend that

people welcomed Amaterasu Omikami cutting a sacred straw festoon when she came out of the cave in heaven. Or it is said this dance is to resume the space getting rid of a boundary between the divine territory and human territory at the end of Kagura at the Kagura stage that was prepared by roping off the sacred straw festoon.

Therefore, it is said nothing but Gongenmai should be performed after this dance. In Otsugunai Kagura, the dancer cut the sacred straw festoon actually pulling a real sword, but in Take Kagura, the dancer does a behavior as if he cut the festoon.

Bangakumai

Kurama/Kuramatengu

Zenkaibo (Jinkaibo), leader of Chinese goblins, came to Ushiwakamaru (who became Minamoto no Yoshitune later) who was trained in swordmanship by Japanese goblins at the Kuramadera Temple in Kyoto in order to compete with Ushiwakamaru. Zenkaibo attacked Ushiwakamaru, swaying his huge iron stick, but Ushiwakamaru fought with Zenkaibo using kinds of secret plans. In the end Zenkaibo surrendered, and ran away to China.

Yashima

The outline of this dance is that a visitor priest dreamed of the story of the Yashima and Dannoura Battles between the Minamoto clan and Taira clan from an old man in the inn where he came and stayed in Yashima. Akushichihyoe Kagekikyo of the Taira clan fights hard with warriors of the Minamoto clan. When Yoshitsune sees the scene of the fight and goes close to the scene, Tairano Noritsune, head of the Taira clan, who is good at Japanese archery, shoots an arrow. Sato Tsugunobu, Yoshitsune's follower is killed by the shot arrow because he becomes a shield of Yoshitune. Kikuomaru, Noritsune's follower, is also killed in the battle.

Kisomai

Kiso Yoshinaka performed a great deed to exile the Taira clan from Kyoto, but later he was attacked by Minamoto no Yoritomo's force. Yoshinaka's force and Yoritomo's force fought at the Ujigawa River, and Yoshinaka was finally killed in the battle of Awazu in the country of Omi. This dance refers to the scene Tomoe Gozen, who is thought to be

Yoshinaka's wife, told about the battle story to a traveling priest by chance. She asked the priest to hold a memorial service for her deceased sisters of Aoi and Yamabuki who fought with her, and bravely returned to the battlefield.

Other dances (No photos)

Akumataiji or expelling demons ※"God Dance"

This dance is based on the legend of Jinmu Emperor's invasion of eastern countries. Jinmu Emperor heads for the east from Takachiho of Hyuga to seek for a suitable capital of Toyoashiharano Nakatsukoku. When Jinmu Emperor and his group entered the area of Yamato, Nagasunehiko blocked their way and was forced to engage in a struggle. But Jinmu Emperor conquered the area because of Michiomino Mikoto and others' great efforts. And Jinmu Emperor ascended to the throne at the Kashiharano Miya Palace. This dance refers to the virtue and power of the sword, and is a prayer dance to expel demons.

Sanjinnomai or Three gods dance ※"Furious Dance"

This dance is handed down only to Otsugunai Kagura. Firstly three dancers with angry god masks on as well as the dance of "Setsurugi"(Tetsurugi) suppress the stage furiously, and in the second half, they take off the masks. They hold each end of their swords together, and pass through each other. As well as other furious dances, the verse is not handed down, so it is not clear what kind of god dance it is.

Soga/Sogakyodai or Soga Brothers ※Bangakumai

In 1993 Minamoto Yoritomo held a large-scale hunting event. Warriors in the eight states of the Kanto District participated in it together. Among the warriors, Soga Juro Sukenari and Soga Goro Tokimune, whose father Kawadzu Saburo Sukeyasu was killed by Kudo Suketsune because of their fief battle, slipped in. The Soga brothers were successful in taking revenge on Kudo Suketsune at his camp at the end of the hunting event. But the elder brother was killed by Nida Shiro Tadatsune; the younger brother was caught and beheaded when he broke into Yoritomo's castle. This is one of three famous revenge stories in Japan.

Ondaimai ※"Prayer Dance"

Omuchino Mikoto (Okuninushino Mikoto) is the god who created the nation, and is respected as agriculture god, commerce god and medicine god. This dance is said to be the dance to purify a building site or to do good horse business. So the dancers get astride small male and female horse dolls made of straw. The dance starts from the straw horse doll parade, and then is followed by the all-out drummers and people in the dressing room. When they are short of hands, even the audience is involved in, and they walk in all the rooms in a line, which feels strange.

Oshikimai/Zenmai

"Oshiki" means small dining table and tray for Shinto ritual and ceremony. This dance is a program to perform acrobatically holding those things. "Oshiki" with offerings for gods on should never be fallen down until it is served on the altar even if you stumble or fall down. This dance is said to show this careful manner. Therefore, the dancer rotates a small table on his palm, and somersaults with his head touching the ground without falling down the table and tray.

Kyogen (Partial dances shown)

Taue or Planting rice

This dance shows a comedy that the Tairazaemon Family brings about when they go to their master to help plan rice. Tairazaemon makes a pass at a young woman named Omatsu, so Tairazaemon's wife is jealous about Omatsu and quarrels with her. Then, Tairazaemon mediates between them. Tairazaemon's grandparents show up, and the comedy becomes happy and lively. In the end, the performance is finished by a part graceful dance with hands called "Yoshikono."

Sarubiki

A masterless samurai traveling across the country doing monkey performances and a blind priest with his wife meet. The blind priest hits his wife with a stick, behaves outrageously, calls her and finally starts a drinking party. In the meantime, the samurai and the wife get along with each other, and the samurai runs away the wife roping his monkey around the blind priest's waist. In the end, the dance is finished by a chase

between the blind priest and the monkey, which is angry about being touched from tip to toe.

Bakamusuko or Foolish son

Saburobe is asked by his master to seek for a good husband for his daughter, and he introduces a foolish friend to the master. The friend is an inconsistent man, but once he performs Daikokumai Dance, the master is very glad because the inconsistent man appears to bring good luck.

Hakonebansho or Hakone Watchhouse

An official at the Hakone Watchhouse likes to see entertainment, so he tells the passengers that he will approve their passing if they perform something for him. Whenever passengers perform something, the official gives his clothes to them saying it is very interesting. Finally the official performs together, undoes the belt naked, and enters the screen.

Shutokenzan or Father-in-law's appearance

A man who sees his father-in-law ten years after he got married is terrible, and misunderstands what people say, so he develops inconsistent dialogues. The father-in-law is finally amazed by his attitude, and forgave him.

Kitsunetori or hunting a fox

Hachizo, hunter of the Tohoku mountains, comes to the Shindagamori Woods to hunt a fox. A fox in the shape of woman appears and Hachizo approaches her. In the end the fox reveals its natural form being seduced by a stick with feed on its head, chases Hachizo, and enters the screen with Hachizo.

Gongenmai

Gongenmai

Gongenmai is the final dance of Kagura. It is said that making teeth-biting sound by a

Gongensama head is to expel demons, having bite by a Gongensama head's teeth after entering the inside of the Gongensama's body is to get divine favors for a perfect state of health. In private houses, it is thought the ritual called "Hibuse" at a fireplace and kitchen using fire is especially wonder-working. Besides the above-mentioned in Gongenmai, there are programs specified for a new house and celebration.

Manual to appreciate Kagura

Let's go and see Kagura!

Well, let's go and see Kagura!... But what should I bring? What is the manner? In this section, we will tell you how to get ready to appreciate Kagura and mental preparation.

What should you bring for Kagura performance?

You are supposed to see Kagura dances for many hours, whether inside or outside, and you often feel chilly. So it is convenient for you to bring a small cushion, lap robe, disposable pocket warmer, coat, muffler, gloves and something to protect from you the cold. A plastic bag to put your shoes in is necessary because shoes are often taken by others. In seeing Kagura very often outside in summer, it is convenient for you to have an insect repellent spray, ointment, hat, waterproofing sheet to sit on, folding chair and portable light when it gets dark.

Regardless of seasons, drinks, food, writing implements and camera are always useful. It takes more than two hours to perform Kagura, so you can see the dances relaxing until the end when you have tea to quench your thirst, candies and snacks to stave off your hunger. Also, it is sometimes useful for you to have a business card with you when you are acquainted with someone.

More, brochures for the Kagura programs to be performed are sometimes handed at the venue that day, but they are seldom distributed in shrine festivals, so you can enjoy Kagura when you bring a guidebook with you for the event.

Let's keep the parking manner!

Kagura is performed at various places such as a shrine Kagura theater, community center, gymnasium and event venue. There is no problem in an event venue which has a large parking lot, but Kagura is very often performed at shrines and community centers which have narrow parking lots. In that case, a nearby empty space or parking along

the road are allotted to park. Please be careful about preventing traffic and illegal parking.

Let's appreciate Kagura in the front area!

Seats for Kagura in festivals are usually nonreserved. Rather, there are no seats in Kagura, so each of the spectators secures a suitable spot at a favorite place. It is good for you to see and experience Kagura as far front as you can sit in order to know the real goodness of Kagura. In seeing Kagura at a shrine Kagura theater, you might want to sit down a little far away from the stage to see the dancers' toes because the Kagura theater is higher. You can see the dances fully. It is thought to be impressive to see Kagura in an angle to look up a little.

Let's pay attention to photography!

In bringing a camera or video recorder, it is important for you to check if you are allowed to take pictures at the place and to bother the spectators around you. A tripod takes up considerable space, so you can take pictures without hesitation when you place your camera at the spot which is in front of the wall or pillar. Naturally, spare batteries are indispensable. Recently, it is common for you to take pictures by your cell phone. It is unknown when your cell phone rings, so you might want to put your cell phone into silent mode all the time.

How should I offer "Ohana" or offerings?

It is free of charge for you to see Kagura in shrine festivals, so everybody can see it freely. However, some spectators offer "Ohana" (Mihana, i.e., flower) or enveloped money donations and sake drinks to appreciate wonderful performances. On the average, donations are 2,000 yen to 3,000 yen, but you might want to consult with your wallet when you want to offer. Also, when you see Kagura with your friends or acquaintances, it may be good for you to offer money in your joint names. These funds are useful to protect and succeed the tradition of the festivals and Kagura.

When you offer "Ohana," it is natural for you to write down "Ohana" or "Ohatsuho"(the first harvest) on the surface of the gift envelope. Of course, it is also all right for you to put down "Oiwai" (celebration) or "Sunshi" (with compliments). Under the

above-mentioned, you are supposed to write down your name, but when your name is difficult to pronounce, you might want to write kana characters as well. It is because contributors' names are announced between the Kagura dances.

In offering "Ohana," you can go to the dressing room and hand it to the Kagura dancers directly when there is no receptionist. When it is difficult for you to go to the dressing room or to feel shy, you can place it next to the drummers and cymbalists choosing good time in the break between the programs.

Let's enjoy Kagura!

Recently it becomes common for you to see Kagura silently, because Kagura is sacred to be dedicated to the gods. As a matter of fact, Kagura has divine elements such as expelling evils and praying for good health and harvest, but it has been commoners' entertainment with food and drinks since those days. So sacred sake is sometimes served during the break. It is out of the question for you to make a fuss drinking sake and to bother others, but when you don't have to drive your car and you think it is okay with you, it is enjoyable to have food and drinks in order to fully be satisfied with the wonderful dances.

Let's clap hands!

It is natural for you to clap your hands at the end of each program, but is also good for you to do so in order to let the dancers know your feelings such as "Great!" or "Wonderful!" when the dancers are performing. It is said the dancers' spirits is different when they receive many claps. In an especially furious dance, the atmosphere gets exciting when the claps clash with the right time to stop the drums and dance. Also, enthusiastic shouts from the audience are helpful to liven up the atmosphere. For instance, you are thought to be magnificently familiar with Kagura if you can yell like "Iyah!" or "Yosshi!" at the exquisite timing.

Let's take part in "Naorai"!

"Naorai" is a banquet held after Kagura dances are over. When "Naorai" is held after a festivity, it is difficult for anyone besides the locals, but in Kagura, "Naorai" is a form of a social gathering between the audience and Kagura dancers, so you can take part in it

relatively freely. When you offered “Ohana” or money in the meantime of the Kagura performance, you could participate in it without hesitation.

Kagura sidebars

Getting divine favors

There are some dances customs that give you divine favors besides Gongenmai dances. You may get divine favors if you know them in advance.

(Sodeoroshi or lowering a sleeve)

It is called “Sodeoroshi” or lowering a sleeve that a dancer performs wearing a woman’s new long-sleeved kimono. This is to pray for the woman’s perfect state of health and to bring good luck.

(Sannokami or San’s God)

In Yamanokamimai, the dancer spreads rice on a tray in all directions. It is said those who have the rice are in their perfect state of health. It is also said the rice becomes your talisman when you have it with you. Also, if you hand the obstetrical binder from a pregnant woman before the Yamanokamimai dance, the dancer performs the dance tying the binder. “Yamanokami,” or Mountain God, is regarded as Childbirth guardian, because “Yama” out of “Yamanokami” is also pronounced “San,” which means childbirth. This dance is believed to pray for a safe delivery.

Staying at Kagura inn

When you climb Mt. Hayachine or see the annual festival of the Hayachine Jinja Shrine, why don’t you stay at an inn in the Kagura hometown? In the Take Community which is on the way to an entrance of Mt. Hayachine, there used to be mountain priest inns called “Takerokubo” “ At present, there are some available inns, and you can recognize the afterglow of those days when you hear the names of the inns named after ancient mountain priests’ names. Take Kagura is handed down in the Take Community. The inn owners are related to Kagura in some ways, so why don’t you enjoy seasonal meals cooked with food from the land, along with a lively conversation about Kagura?

Facilities related to Kagura

Ohasama Local Culture Preservation Center

In Hanamaki City, there are many kinds of Kaguras that were handed down with long history. This facility was built in 1981 to succeed Kagura to the next generations and to let many people experience near the Hayachine Jinja Shrine where Take Kagura was succeeded. In the center, there is a hall where Kagura dancers practice and a showcase that displays Kagura outfits, costumes and important materials from the Takesenmyoji Temple enshrining the Hayachine Daigongen Statue.

(Open Period) May 1 to October 31, 9:30 to 16:00

(Holiday) Every Monday (Closed November to April in winter)

(Admission) 210 yen per adult, 100 yen per junior high or high school student, 50 yen per elementary pupil

(Mailing address) 1-2 Uchiakawame, Ohasamamachi, Hanamaki, Iwate

(Telephone) 0198-48-5864

Kagura no Yakata or Kagura Mansion

“Kagura no Yakata” is originally a private house built in the Meiji Era. Being relocated from the original location, this mansion is used to practice Kagura and to open to the public. This building used to be a common shape-bending house in the Nanbu clan fief, but it was put back in the original straight shape. This center stands in the area where Otsugunak Kagura is handed down, so you can enjoy Kagura at the nostalgic private house. At this mansion, the first dance, spring dance, dedicated dance to the annual festival of the Otsugunai Jinja Shrine and final dance are open to the public.

(Mailing address) 39-37-2 Uchikawame, Ohasamamachi, Hanamaki, Iwate

(Seeing) Seeing Kagura is free.

Kagura Calendar

First dance of Otsugunai Kagura: January 2 at Kagura no Yakata

First dance of Take Kagura: January 3 at Hayachine Jinja Shrine Gathering Place

Spring dance of Otsugunai: late April at Kagura no Yakata

Eve of Annual Festival of Hayachine Jinja Shrine: July 31 at Hayachine Jinja Shrine
Kagura Theater

Annual Festival of Hayachine Jinja Shrine: August 1 at Hayachine Jinja Shrine Kagura
Theater

Annual Festival of Otsugunai Jinja Shrine: middle of September at Kagura no Yakata
Final dance of Otsugunak Kagura: Third Sunday of December at Kagura no Yakata
Final dance of Take Kagura: December 17 at Hayachine Jinja Shrine Gathering Place

Kagura Day

On every second Sunday as “Kagura Day,” Take Kagura, Otsugunai Kagura and Yagimaki Kagura of Hanamaki Ohasamamachi are performed alternatively every four months, except December and January

(Place) Ohasama Exchange Promotion Center (Hayachine Hall) 3-161 Ohasama, Ohasamamachi, Hanamaki, Iwate

(Admission) 800 yen for selling ticket in advance, 1,000 yen for a ticket sold on the day

(Information) Ohasama Kagura Executive Committee (in Ohasama General Branch Office) Tel:0198-48-2111

Information on Kagura

For the newest information on Hayachine Kagura, please visit the official website of Hanamaki City: <http://www.city.hanamaki.iwate.jp>