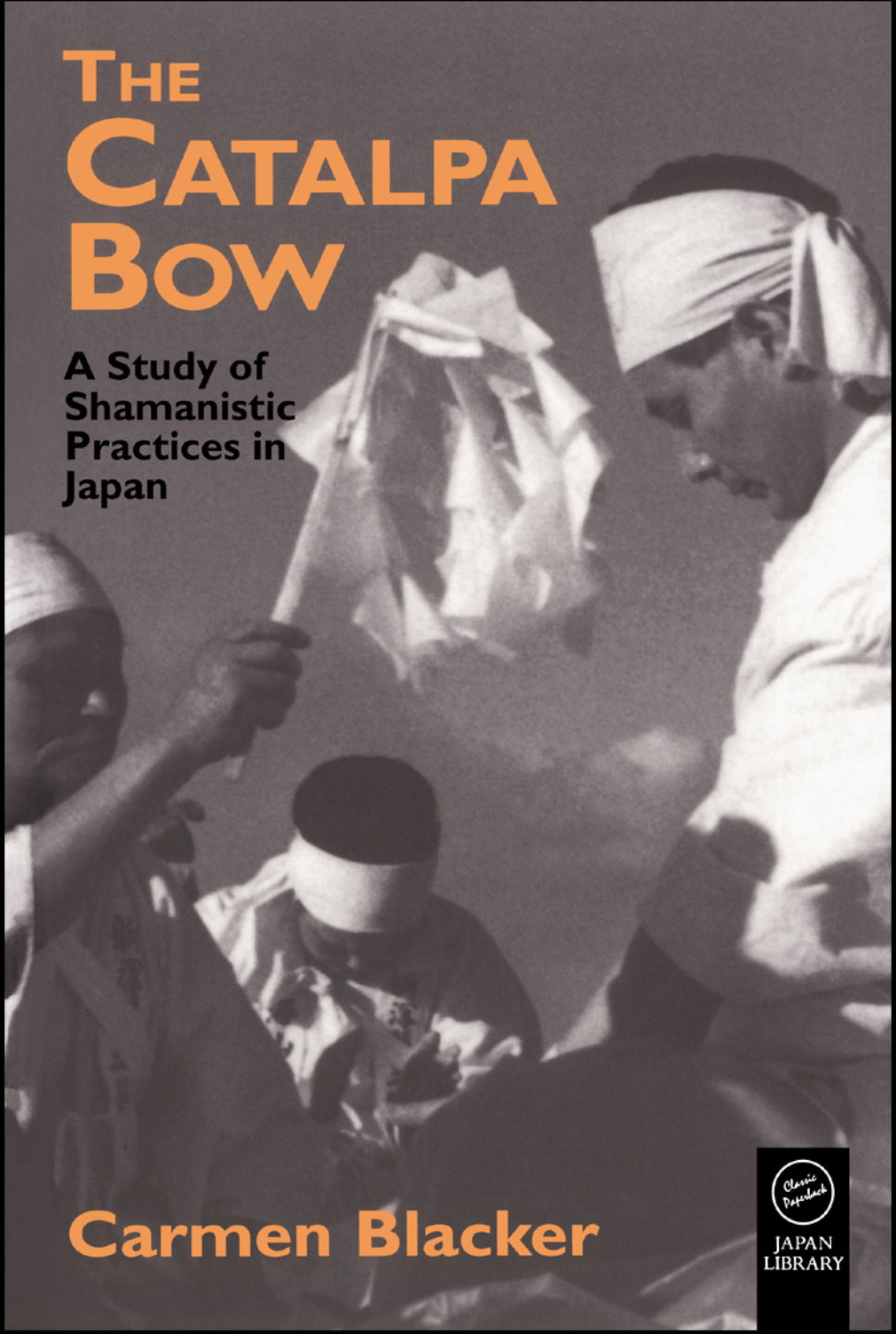
The Catalpa Bow

A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan



Carmen Blacker

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THE CATALPA BOW

For Ishibashi Hiroko
in affection and admiration

THE CATALPA BOW

A Study in Shamanistic Practices in Japan

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Former lecturer in Japanese
at the University of Cambridge, England

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A STUDY OF SHAMANISTIC
PRACTICES IN JAPAN

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Preface to the Third Edition

In 1986 when the second edition of this book appeared, I recorded that during the previous ten years the subject of shamanism had burst into life in a manner scarcely predictable when the book was first written. Now that a third edition is promised I must record a similar expansion, not to say explosion. In the West, that is to say in England and America, the shaman has ceased to be the concern only of anthropologists and historians of religion. He has now entered the New Age. Workshops, institutes, groups, even Faculties of Shamanics are now dedicated to proving that this ancient figure holds the secret solutions for all our modern problems. The shaman is now a saviour for the twenty-first century. Anyone, it is claimed, can now learn the necessary skills to acquire a 'power animal', to sing a 'power song', or to embark on the shamanic journey to the upper and lower worlds. There are even accredited shops which will sell you the shamanic tools, drums and rattles, necessary for the journey.

In Japan the scene is rather different. No comparable New Age movement seems to have arisen there, despite what was labelled the 'occult boom' of the 1980s. But the rituals, beliefs and cosmologies described in this book have not disappeared, as seemed likely twenty-five years ago. The trances, the powers to save lost spirits, to contact local numina, to heal sicknesses caused by angry ghosts, have all survived in the context of the New-new Religions which appeared during the late 1970s. Some of the *kyōsosama* or Founders of the groups in this second wave of postwar new religions can be seen to deploy in their powers and prophecies the ancient patterns described in this book. The old

figures thus survive, though often in guises so new as to be difficult to recognise.

The myths, symbols and beliefs in other worlds, however, remain valid. They may often be forgotten in the modern age with its lowered spiritual ceiling, its easy means to gratify fleeting desires and its rejection of ascetic practices as ways to special knowledge. But they are not so deeply lost that they may not be rediscovered. A crisis, as Yanagita Kunio found, may drive a tap-root down into buried strata of the mind, releasing ancient symbols which awake and are recognised. It is good to know also that certain rituals are still preserved without any withdrawal into the state of a *deus otiosus*. The Akinomine ritual described in Chapter 11, for example, is now apparently so oversubscribed that people must book a place weeks in advance. Skilful media advertising has brought an amazing response. Men and women with no prospect of becoming a professional *miko* or exorcist flock to experience the rigours of the week, in the hope of finding something more than they can find in modern life. Other Shugendō rituals too, thanks to media advertising, now attract crowds as never before. These are not the young people who in the West are the stuff of the New Age, but people nearer middle age, who experience an *akogare* for something beyond material needs.

The bibliography has been selectively updated (the new entries appearing separately on pp 336–7 for ease of reference). To attempt to list all the works, in Japanese and English, relevant to the subject of shamanism in Japanese religion that have appeared during the last fifteen years would be to lengthen the book unconscionably. I have added, however, a good many items that seemed appropriate.

To the names already mentioned in previous prefaces of those to whom my gratitude is due I must add those of Professor Miyata Noboru, whose learning and advice have always proved invaluable, of Professor Rodney Needham, whose encouragement and counsel have been constantly helpful, and of Dr Gaynor Sekimori whose help over bibliographical and Shugendō matters has likewise been hugely helpful. To all the others previously named I must reiterate my grateful thanks for continued advice and support. I am only sad to record the death of Professor Gorai

and of Mr Harold Stewart, both of whom were teachers and companions on the way.

I regret, too, that I can no longer climb the steeper slopes of the holy mountains of Japan as I used to do thirty years ago, and cannot see for myself what changes have been wrought by modern technology in areas where the rules of the sacred temenos used to be observed.

Any omissions or mistakes which remain in the text, needless to say, lie at my door alone.

CARMEN BLACKER
Cambridge 1999

Preface to the Second Edition

Since the appearance of this book ten years ago the subject of shamanism has burst into extraordinary life. A decade ago a surprising number of English friends complained that my title was incomprehensible to them, since neither the word *shaman* nor the word *catalpa* found any place in their vocabulary. Now the shaman is an 'in' subject, both for anthropologists and for historians of religion not to speak of private seekers after spiritual truth.

In both England and America conferences, symposia and lecture series have been organised round the figure of the shaman, while books about him now take their place in popular series. In France likewise there have been *collogues scientifiques* on the subject of *chamanisme, transe et possession,* to which distinguished anthropologists from the Musée de l'Homme, from Italy, Belgium and Hungary have met to discuss the phenomena of shamanism in different parts of the world.

In Japan too the same explosion of interest has occurred on no less notable a scale, and the number of publications pertaining directly and indirectly to the subject of *shamanizumu* is now so large that the additions I have made to the bibliography, in an effort to bring it up to date, have necessarily had to be selective. There too symposia and conferences have been organised in several universities, at which it was a privilege to be present. During the last ten years, moreover, the area of space devoted in Japanese bookshops to the subjects of religion and folklore, *minzokugaku,* has increased out of all recognition. The narrow strip of shelving, which a decade ago was all that one could hope to browse in, has now expanded to whole walls, while tables

display the newest popular additions to the literature of the subject, lavishly illustrated.

Despite these advances in the subject, I have not felt that I wished to make any major revision to the text, further than correcting the errors that people have been kind enough to point out to me.

I must however record a deep debt of gratitude to two people who by their personal guidance and friendship have immeasurably enriched my understanding of the subject. To Professor Gorai Shigeru my gratitude is overwhelming for his unfailing kindness and patience, for allowing me to join his seminar during my visits to Kyoto in 1977 and 1981, and for innumerable hours of private instruction on other occasions. His writings, as my revised bibliography attests, cover the entire area of my researches, and his insights into Japanese religion, folklore, literature and history, as well as the rigorous 'method' he assigns to the study of *minzokugaku,* have been an inspiration and a stimulus.

To Dr Anne Marie Bouchy likewise my lasting gratitude goes for the inspiration and guidance which her friendship has brought me since 1977; for taking me twice to the Kunisaki peninsula in Kyushu, twice to the sword-climbing celebration in Honjō which I describe in my Appendix, and on an unforgettable climb to the Shōno-iwaya cave on Mt Ōmine. Her intuition and imagination, combined with her tireless research, have given a special insight to her work with which it has been a true privilege to be associated.

I should like also to record my gratitude to several friends for continued advice and encouragement: to Professor Miyake Hitoshi, Dr Hilda Ellis Davidson, Mr Harold Stewart, and once more to Professor Ishibashi Hiro, who is now President of Ueno Gakuen College. And again to Dr Michael Loewe for more than can be specified. There will still remain errors of fact and interpretation, however, which lie at my door alone.

Cambridge, 1985.

Preface to the First Edition and Acknowledgements

More than ten years ago my interest began to be aroused by the places in Japan which were held to be projections of the other world. In the depths of certain mountains, the legends and place-names testified to an ancient belief in paradise. In certain valleys vestiges of entrances to hell were to be discovered in the pools of hot mud which bubbled up from sulphur springs. In some of these mountains there must have existed an 'other world' even older than the Buddhist heavens and hells, for it was from these steep wooded slopes, which leapt up so precipitously from flat green rice fields, that the ancestral dead were believed to return for the annual visit to their old homes. In yet other holy hills the supernatural denizens were not the dead, but the mysterious numina known as *kami*.

From the places it was natural to turn to the people. There were still to be found in Japan, though fast disappearing, men and women who were believed capable of communicating with this other world. By means of trance, they could see the supernatural inhabitants of the other world, speak to them and hold colloquy with them, Some of them could, in a discarnate, out-of-the-body state, travel to paradise and the underworld. Others could summon the beings to come to our world and speak through their mouths. Others again, though they had lost the gift of mantic travel, nevertheless performed the other-world journey by means of a ritual ascent of the mountain and a symbolic mimesis of the adventures to be expected there. They claimed to return from their journey gifted with the powers of healing and clairvoyance that contact with the sacred often bestows. These men and women,

following the custom of Japanese ethnologists, I have called shamans.

It was apparent that these specialists were the survivors of a very old stratum of Japanese religion. Some of them derived from spiritual ancestors which antedated Buddhism. Others had been absorbed by Buddhism. But it was clear that no thorough understanding of Japanese Buddhism was possible without some comprehension of this older contact with the sacred world. The ancient cult was like a strong background colour which 'showed through' the rituals and practices of the various Buddhist sects. It was also like a subtle network hidden beneath the ground, but throwing up from time to time an indication of its presence—a legend, a place-name, the odd remnant of a ritual.

This book is the result of investigations into the cult and practice of these people carried out during several summers and one autumn in Japan. It is also the result of literary research. Much of the cult had already died out, even when my investigations started, and it was fortunate that the picture could be filled in by the written evidence of those who had seen and heard more than I had myself. My book will possibly irritate anthropologists, who may find it too 'merely descriptive', and lacking in analysis of the kind they find conducive to truth. I offer it nevertheless as a contribution to the study of religion in Japan, and as a memorial to an ancient cult fast vanishing as machines, organised tourism and aggressively secular thinking destroy the intuition of the other world and its spiritual inhabitants. Less and less is the temenos surrounding the sacred space able to seal off the profane forces invading from outside.

None of my investigations could have been possible or meaningful without the help of Japanese friends and teachers. My friend Ishibashi Hiroko, to whom I dedicate this book and whose poetry is full of the magic of this old half-hidden world, has given me help of a kind which is apparent in almost every chapter. My lasting gratitude goes to her for taking me to the north of Japan, to Osorezan and Iwakisan, for arranging for me to perform the *kaihōgyō* on Mt Hiei, for innumerable introductions to exactly the people who could usefully help and advise me.

Professor Hori Ichirō was never too busy, even at the height of the 'troubles' in Tokyo University, to give me advice and

encouragement. I thank him now for his constant kindness, for the talks which so often made sudden order out of what had previously been a jumble of unconnected ideas, and in particular for making the necessary arrangements to enable me to join the autumn retreat on Mt Haguro, an invaluable experience which proved conclusively that one seeing is better than a hundred hearings. My grateful thanks are also due to Mr Togawa Anshō, who was an inspiring and invaluable guide during the entire event, explaining symbolism which would otherwise have been incomprehensible, putting his unrivalled knowledge of the religious practices of the Dewa Sanzan region at our disposal, and conducting us, after the end of the retreat, on a tour of the mummies of the Senninzawa valley. Dr Miyake Hitoshi, who studied and participated in the event at the same time, was also unfailingly generous in giving of his unrivalled knowledge of Shugendō ritual.

During my stays in Kyoto Mrs Nakagawa Kyōko was of valuable assistance in introducing me to the ascetic healers known as *ogamiyasan* living in the district, and in guiding me to the temple of Hōkōji in Kanazawa. My grateful thanks are due to her. Also to Mr Suzuki Shōei of the Osaka Museum for many kindnesses during the autumn of 1963 and in particular for taking me to the Hayama *matsuri* in Fukushima prefecture. Also to Dr Tanaka Yoshihiro of the Matsuri Society, whose indefatigable energy in uncovering the lost religious life of Japan and in preserving and recording what survives, is infectious to all who come within his orbit. His kindness in allowing me to join the party, which included several notable folklorists from Okayama prefecture, to observe the Gohōtobi festival at Ryōsanji and Ichinomiya Hachiman, was unforgettable. Also to Mr Miyagi Tainen for his particular kindness and thoughtfulness on the four occasions when I joined the Shōgoin *yamabushi* for the annual ascent of Mt Ōmine, and for instruction in Shugendō doctrine and practice on many other occasions. Also to Mrs Hiroshima Umeko for lending me the manuscript diary of her celebrated ascetic mother, and her hospitality at the foot of Mt Miwa. Likewise to her son for guiding me to the summit of Mt Miwa. Buddhist priest though he was, his careful homage to the Shinto numina whose trees and rocks we passed on the way remains vividly in my

memory. Also to the Ajari Enami Kakushō of Mudōji on Mt Hiei for permission to perform the *kaihōgyō* in 1961. Acknowledgements should also be made to Mr Haga Hideo for his photograph of the *namahage,* to the Tankōsha Publishing Company for the photograph on Plate 13 by Inoue Hiromichi; to the Matsuri Society for Plate 17 by Shibasaki Kōyō; to the Sansaisha Publishing Company for the photograph of Enkū's Kannon, and to Messrs Tuttle for the haniwa *miko;* to the Cambridge University Library for Plate 1.

A special expression of gratitude must go to the Oka family, whose house in Sugamo was a second home to me during most of my stays in Japan, and who received me with unfailing warmth and imaginative kindness. I thank in particular Oka Akira who accompanied me on my first climb of Mt Ontake and my first visits to Kumano and Mt Haguro, and Oka Takako whose friendship and cheerfulness sustained me in low moments. A similar special thanks must go to Mrs Osaragi Jirō for the generosity with which she and her late husband allowed me to stay in their small house in Kamakura, amongst their exquisite collections of scrolls and inkstones and large books. Both these houses in their different ways were the background against which my investigations were conducted, and perhaps in a deeper sense the 'frequented house' which is so potent a symbol on the shaman's journey.

Finally I must thank those western friends who have in so many ways given me invaluable advice and help. Joan Martin for her friendship and companionship on various journeys, including the climb of Mt Ontake in 1967, for the photograph of Zaō Gongen and for reading the manuscript; Professor Nathan Sivin for unforgettable summer seminars and for valuable comments on Taoism and the manuscript; Professor F.J.Daniels for lending me his unique collection of snake stories; Dr H.Byron Earhart for his friendship and advice during the week on Mt Haguro and on many occasions since; Mr Harold Stewart for inspiring discussions and helpful criticism on hot evenings in Kyoto; Dr D.E.Mills, Dr Stephen Morris, Dr Hilda Ellis Davidson, Dr Edith Schnapper and Dr Irmgard Schloegl for their kind and helpful comments on all or part of the manuscript; Dr Fosco Maraini for his excellent photograph of the ascetic and his fire ritual; Miss Rosina

Talamonte for doing the firewalking with me at Tanukidani; the Spalding Trust for the grant which enabled me to spend the summer in Japan in 1961; and Dr Michael Loewe for more than can be specified. Finally, much of Chapter 3 has already appeared in *The Witch Figure*, edited by Venetia Newall, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, to whom acknowledgement is made. It goes without saying, however, that the shortcomings in this book are no one's responsibility but my own.

NOTE: Japanese personal names are given with the surname first. The photographs are my own unless otherwise stated.

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1
The Bridge

In the Nō play *Aoi no Ue* we are shown, limp and enigmatic in the middle of the stage, a single folded robe. It represents the prostrate form of the Princess Aoi, lying mortally sick of a malignant possession. To cure her condition two figures are summoned. The first is a woman called Teruhi, a sibyl gifted with the power of causing the spirits of both the living and the dead to manifest themselves and speak. She beats on a small drum, twangs her bow of catalpa wood, and recites the summoning spell:

Ten shōjō chi shōjō
Naige shōjō rokkon shōjō
Yoribito wa
Ima zo yorikuru
Nagahama no
Ashige no koma m
Tazuna yurikake.

'Pure in heaven and pure in earth. Pure within and pure without. Pure in all six roots… You who draw near, loosen now the reins of your grey horse as you gallop to me over the long beach.'

Compelled by the magic words and by the sound of the bow string, the spirit molesting the sick woman appears at the far end of the bridge which gives access to the stage. She wears the serene white mask of the Nō woman. Further compelled by the twanging of the catalpa bow, she begins to speak and to name herself. She is the angry apparition of the Lady Rokujō, superseded and disgraced by the woman on whom she is now revenging herself. Overcome

with hatred, she crosses the bridge, creeps towards the prostrate figure and strikes it with her fan.

Though the sufferer immediately grows much worse, the sibyl is now at the end of her resources. She can summon a spirit and cause it to speak, but she cannot banish it, nor can she remove its malice. For this task a second source of power is needed. This, they remember, can be be found not far away in the Saint of Yokawa, a holy man celebrated for the austerities he has performed in mountains. Reluctantly he leaves his hermitage and confronts the spirit. Her aspect is now fearfully changed. Gone is the tranquil white mask with its archaic smile. A mallet in her hand, she now reveals the face of a demon with horns, golden teeth and long black hair. Rubbing his rosary of red wooden beads, the Saint recites the Lesser Spell of Fudō Myōō:

Namaku samanda basarada.

He then invokes the Kings of the Five Directions, and intones the Middle Spell of Fudō:

Namaku samanda basarada.
Senda makaroshana
Sowataya untarata kamman.

At the sound of the holy words the phantasm shrinks, drops her mallet and retreats across the bridge to a realm where, we are given to understand, her hatred will be transformed to compassion and she will achieve the salvationary state of Buddhahood.[1]

The bridge over which the apparition has come and gone represents the tenuous joining of two divided worlds. Our familiar human world is no more than a narrow segment of the cosmos which now confronts us. Beyond it lies a further realm, altogether 'other', peopled by beings non-human, endowed with powers non-human, whose whole order of existence is ambivalent, mysterious and strange. Between these two worlds there is no ordinary continuity. Each is contained, like a walled garden, by its own order of being, and separated by a barrier which represents a rupture of level, a break in ontological plane. This barrier the ordinary man or woman is powerless to cross. They cannot at will

make the passage to this other perilous plane, nor can they see, hear or in any way influence the beings who dwell there.

The spiritual beings on the other side are not so confined. To them access from one world to another is virtually free and unrestricted. Not only can they visit our world without let or hindrance, but they hold within their control a large sphere of our lives. This sphere was believed to be roughly that over which we ourselves have no control. The fertility of the rice crop, the due onset of the rains, the occurrence of storms, sickness, fire and accident, all these lay in the gift of the inhabitants of the other world beyond the barrier. Even today, although in intellectual circles in Japan an aggressive secularism tends to be the rule, the belief still persists among many sections of the community that the causes of all calamity in human life lie in the spiritual realm. Sickness, accident, drought or fire are the work either of angry ghosts or of offended numina. To discover the causes of these misfortunes we must therefore look into the other dimension where these beings live and enquire what spirit is responsible and the reason for his anger.[2]

On the goodwill of these non-human beings, therefore, depends the prosperity of the community. Treat them correctly with the right rituals and offerings, summon them correctly with the right spells, and they will leave their own world to visit ours and will exercise their superior power for the benefit of man. But once offend or neglect them and they will irrupt uninvited and furious into our world, to blast the offending community with curses.

Ordinary men and women are powerless to deal with these perilous and ambivalent forces. Certain special human beings, however, may acquire a power which enables them to transcend the barrier between the two worlds. This power bears no relation to the physical strength or mental agility with which we are ordinarily endowed. It is of a different order altogether, acquired by means which often weaken a man's bodily health and strength, and which appears from time to time in boys who are virtual halfwits. It is a special power to effect a rupture of plane, to reach over the bridge and influence the beings on the other side.

I use the word 'shaman' in the following chapters to indicate those people who have acquired this power; who in a state of dissociated trance are capable of communicating directly with

spiritual beings. These people in Japan appear in two complementary forms. The first, whom I shall call the medium or the *miko,* is exemplified by the sibyl Teruhi. She can enter a state of trance in which the spiritual apparition may possess her, penetrate inside her body and use her voice to name itself and to make its utterance. She is therefore primarily a transmitter, a vessel through whom the spiritual beings, having left their world to enter ours, can make their communications to us in a comprehensible way.

The second and complementary source of power, whom I call the ascetic, is exemplified by the Saint of Yokawa. He is primarily a healer, one who is capable of banishing the malevolent spirits responsible for sickness and madness and transforming them into powers for good. To acquire the powers necessary for this feat he must accomplish a severe regime of ascetic practice, which should properly include, besides fasting, standing under a waterfall and reciting sacred texts, a journey to the other world. Whereas with the medium, therefore, it is the spiritual beings who leave their world and come to ours, with the ascetic the passage is in the opposite direction. It is he who must leave our world and make his way through the barrier to visit theirs. This journey he may accomplish in ecstatic, visionary form; his soul alone travels, his body left behind meanwhile in a state of suspended animation. Or he may accomplish the journey by means of symbolic mimesis; the other world projected by means of powerful symbolism on to the geography of our own, he can make the journey through the barrier in body as well as soul.

Corresponding with each of these figures is a particular kind of trance.[3] With the medium, infused or possessed by a spiritual being, a number of physical symptoms are commonly found. These include a violent shaking of the clasped hands, stertorous breathing or roaring, and a peculiar levitation of the body from a seated, cross-legged posture I have seen both men and women propel themselves some six inches into the air from this position, again and again for several minutes on end. A violent medium is always considered more convincing than a docile one, the non-human character of the voice and behaviour indicating more vividly the displacement of the medium's own personality by the entry of the divinity. This kind of trance, we shall later see, can

either be self-induced, or can be stimulated by a second person, usually the ascetic.

The second type of trance is entirely different. It is a deep, comatose state of suspended animation. This is the condition into which the ascetic's body must fall if his soul is to leave it in order to travel to other realms of the cosmos. His body remains behind, an empty husk, while his soul traverses barriers through which it cannot follow. We shall find that today this trance occurs only rarely. The capacity for this kind of dissociation, and for the visionary journey which goes with it, seems to have diminished in recent centuries, and today the magic journey is most commonly accomplished by symbolic action in full waking consciousness.

I have said that both the medium and the ascetic are shamans because each in their particular manner of trance acts as a bridge between one world and another. Let us at this point pause for a moment to consider what exactly are the characteristics of the shaman which differentiate him from other 'specialists in the sacred'. How does he differ from the healer or medicine man, for example, from the prophet or from the magician?

Certainly, as Eliade warns us, the word is often used with regrettable vagueness to designate almost any person possessing magic power in a 'primitive' society. More meaningful and authoritative definitions have been drawn up, however, which present the shaman in a clearer light. All base themselves on the shaman as he appears, or used to appear, in Siberia. 'Shamanism in the strict sense is preeminently a religious phenomenon of Siberia and Central Asia.' Siberia is the *locus classicus,* the long home of the shaman, and it is from observation of his activities among such peoples as the Tungus, the Mongols, the Samoyedes, the Eskimo and the Altaians who inhabit this vast area that the prototypal image of the shaman has been built up. The very word derives from the Tungus *saman,* which in its turn derives ultimately from the Sanscrit *ramaná* (Prakrit *samana*) through the Chinese *sha-men*. This Tungusic name was applied by the Russians to similarly gifted people among the Turks and Mongols, and later came to be adopted by historians of religion and anthropologists to persons possessing similar powers all over the world.[4] Thus shamanic persons among the North American Indians, for example, or the Australian aborigines, in Indonesia, China, Tibet or Japan, have

all been so designated because to a greater or lesser extent they share the peculiar characteristics of the Siberian prototype. These can be briefly enumerated.[5]

The shaman is, first, a person who receives a supernatural gift from the spirit world. The gift is bestowed usually by a single spiritual being, who afterwards becomes his guardian and guide, sometimes even his spiritual wife. Before this critical moment in his life, the future shaman suffers for months or even years from a peculiar sickness, sometimes loosely called arctic hysteria. The symptoms range from physical pains—racking headaches, vomiting, aches in the joints and back—to more hysterical or neurasthenic behaviour of wandering off into the forest, falling asleep or fainting for long periods, or hiding from the light.

These symptoms usually disappear, however, at the critical moment of initiation. This violent interior experience often takes the form of a vision, in which a single supernatural being appears to him and commands him to abandon his former life and become a shaman. Thereafter his soul is snatched out of his body and carried off to another realm of the cosmos, either above or below the human world. There he undergoes the fearful experience of being killed and revived. He sees his own body dismembered, the flesh scraped or boiled off the bones to the point when he can contemplate his own skeleton. He then sees new flesh and new organs clothed over his bones, so that in effect he is remade, resuscitated as a new person.

From this terrifying but characteristically initiatory experience he emerges a changed character. His former oddity and sickliness give way to a new dignity and assurance of personality, strengthened by special powers conferred by the guardian spirit who calls him to his new life and which thereafter enable him to render special services to his community.

Foremost among these powers is the ability to put himself at will into altered states of consciousness in which he can communicate directly with spiritual beings. He can fall into the state of trance, for example, in which his soul separates itself from his body and travels to realms of the cosmos inaccessible to the physical body. By travelling upwards to the multiple layers of heavens, for example, he can acquire from the spiritual inhabitants there useful knowledge of hidden things. By travelling downwards

to the underworld he can rescue the souls of sick people, kidnapped and taken there by spirits. From his knowledge of the topography of these other worlds, moreover, he can act as guide to the souls of the newly dead, who without his help might well lose their way along the unfamiliar road.

The shaman does not carry out this special work unaided. He is given indispensable help in his task, first by a retinue of assistant spirits and secondly by a panoply of magic clothes. The helping spirits, which often take the form of bears, wolves, eagles or crows, are given to him by his guardian at the time of his initiation. They appear at once at his behest, ready to act as messengers or guides. The magic clothes and instruments, of which the drum is the most important, embody in their shape, in the materials of which they are made, in the patterns and figures engraved upon them, symbolic links with the other world. Thus his drum, made from the wood of the World Tree, his cap of eagle and owl feathers, his cloak adorned with stuffed snakes and an immense weight of metal plaques and tubes, all resolve into means whereby his passage from one world to another is facilitated.

The shaman's work also requires a cosmos of a specific shape. For most Siberian peoples, the cosmos appears in three superimposed layers or tiers. In the middle lies the human world. Above it lie seven layers of heavens, a number to which a Babylonian origin is usually assigned. Below it lies a dark underworld, sometimes also disposed in seven levels, in the nethermost of which stands the palace of Erlik Khan, the Lord of the Underworld, and where sometimes nine underground rivers have their mouths. Joining these various cosmic levels at the very centre of the universe is a marvellous giant Tree. With its roots in the lowest underworld and its crown of branches in the highest heaven, this Tree in all its splendour is at once the axis of the cosmos and the source of ever-renewing life. Thus the shaman, as he travels either upwards to heaven or downwards to the underworld, to planes sealed off from ordinary ungifted persons, follows the 'hole' made through the universe by this Tree. His journey is therefore made at the very centre and core of the cosmos.

The trance in which the soul leaves the body is not the only condition of altered consciousness which the shaman can assume

at will. He must also be capable of offering his body as a vessel for possession by spirits. Eliade, it is true, considers the faculty of possession to be secondary and derivative from the 'out of the body' consciousness. Other authorities, however, such as Dominic Schröder, accord it importance equal and complementary to the 'out of the body' trance.

Lastly, we may mention the power which Eliade considers particularly characteristic of the shaman, and closely connected with his ecstatic condition; mastery of fire. The shaman is impervious to heat and cold, to burning coals and arctic ice alike. This power he achieves by rousing within himself the interior heat known to mystics in various parts of the world, and which signifies that the heated person has passed beyond the ordinary human condition. He now participates in the sacred world.

Such is the special complex of powers by which the shaman is usually defined. He is thus a gifted person of a distinctive kind. He is at once a cosmic traveller, a healer, a master of spirits, a psychopomp, an oracular mouthpiece. These various powers, however, are combined and organised round the central faculty of trance; of so altering his consciousness at will that he can communicate directly with the inhabitants of the supernatural world.

We shall see in the following chapters that the medium and the ascetic in Japan can on this definition justifiably be called shamans. We shall find examples of initiation sickness, of the supernatural call, of the 'out of the body' trance in which the soul travels to heaven and hell. We shall find assistant spirits, magic clothes and instruments, and abundant evidence of the interior heat which produces mastery of fire. The cosmos in Japan, it is true, is somewhat differently shaped, with no evidence of the wondrous giant Tree at the centre of the world. It is true too that among the initiatory visions of the medium and the ascetic few have so far come to light which describe the dismemberment of the body, reduction to a skeleton and resuscitation with new flesh on the bones. In place of the Tree, however, we shall find an almost equally splendid Mountain; and in place of the dismemberment and remaking of the body we shall find other symbolism which equally unequivocally points to the initiatory schema of death and rebirth.

We shall find too that it is not meaningful to treat either of these figures in isolation from the other. Complementary though they may at first appear, the medium and the ascetic are closely bound together. Both, we shall find, must undergo the same ascetic practice before their particular kind of power can be acquired. Both must be present at certain rituals in order to achieve the necessary communication with spirits. Sometimes both kinds of power seem to be present, or at any rate overlapping, in the same person. During the feudal period it was common to find marriages between the two kinds of people, an ascetic husband married to a female medium. Clearly we have two mutually dependent functions, which it is convenient to treat under the same nomenclature.

The phenomena of shamanism in Japan are further complicated by the fact that they do not derive from a single homogeneous source: like the Japanese race, language and mythology, shamanism in Japan is of mixed origin. Japanese ethnologists usually relate the instances of shamanism in their country to two broad streams of culture which intermingled in prehistoric times. A northern stream, deriving from Altaic or Tungusic practices on the Asian continent and spreading throughout Korea, Hokkaido and the Ryūkyū islands, mingled with another stream deriving from a southerly source, Polynesia or Melanesia.

Hori, for example, stresses the close relationship which he believes existed between the early *miko* in Japan and similar shamanic women in Korea, among the Ainu and in the Ryūkyū islands. This ancient mantic woman, references to whom may be found scattered throughout the early chronicles, and clay representations of whom have been unearthed from the great tumuli of the fifth century, was evidently a superior and poweful figure in late prehistoric Japan. The account of Japan in the Wei chronicles includes a description of a queen, Himiko or Pimiko by name, who bears all the stigmata of the shamanic ruler. She remained unmarried, rendered service to deities which conferred upon her a special power to bewitch people, and remained secluded in her large, solemn and heavily guarded palace, only one man attending upon her and transmitting her words. The *Kojiki* too, compiled in the early eighth century, contains a description of the consort of the Emperor, later to become the Empress Jingo, who by means of

a ritual became possessed by several deities, transmitting their warnings and instructions through her mouth. These ancient *miko,* whom Hori envisages as exercising influence not only in the court of late prehistoric Japan but in virtually every village community with its own tutelary deity, bears a strong resemblance to similar sacral women in other parts of north-east Asia. The Korean *son-mudang,* the Ainu *tsusu,* the Ry ūkyū *yuta,* all testify to a wide area where once a feminine shamanism of a northern, Siberian type was dominant, where sacral power was believed to reside more easily and properly in women, and where in consequence women were recognised to be the natural intermediaries between the two worlds.[6]

To this northern, Siberian stream can be traced many of the names for shamans which are commonly used in Japan to this day. The word *ichiko* or *itako,* commonly used in the north-east of the main island to designate a shamanic medium, is believed to have cognate forms in the Ryūkyū *yuta,* the Kalmuck and Yakut word for shaman, *udagan,* the northern Tungus *idakon* and the Mongol *idugan.*[7]

Evidence of an entirely different and more southerly stream of cultural diffusion is to be traced, however, in certain motifs of myths, folktales and legends, in the widespread cult of possession by dead spirits, and in the remnants of a belief in a horizontal cosmology, according to which, as we shall later see, the benevolent dead return in boats at certain seasons from a marvellous land beyond the horizon of the sea.

Oka Masao, for example, sees the Japanese race in prehistoric times as composed of no less than five ethnic components, three southern and two northern, at least three of which brought with them some kind of shamanic practice. Two southern groups of people, one from Melanesia and one from south China, arriving in Japan in the course of the later Jōmon period, brought with them a matrilineal system, rice cultivation and a system of female shamans with a horizontal cosmology.

With these southern elements Oka believes were mingled two Altaic groups of people who brought with them shamanism of the Siberian type. One a north-east Asian group of Tungusic origin, the other an Altaic-speaking tribe from southern Manchuria or Korea arriving as late as the third or fourth century A.D., they

brought with them a vertical cosmology according to which deities descended from a higher realm on to trees, mountains or pillars.[8]

Hori too sees shamanism in Japan as deriving from two different sources. What he terms the 'arctic hysteria type' of shamanic woman is to be found in Hokkaidō and in the Ryūkyū islands as well as among the foundresses of many of the religious cults newly arisen in the course of the last hundred years. From this is to be distinguished a 'Polynesian' type of shamanism, of which the blind mediums called *itako* in the north of the main island, to be described later, are the principal examples.[9]

We are therefore in authoritative company if we accept that by the late prehistoric period, the fifth or sixth century A.D., shortly before the coming of Buddhism, Chinese ethics and institutions and the system of writing by which they were recorded, Japanese shamanism was already a complex intermingling of two broadly different streams—northern and vertical with southern and horizontal.

To this fusion must be added the further powerful influence exerted by Buddhism. It would seem that the ascetic as we know him today is primarily a Buddhist figure. No reliable evidence of his activities is to be found before the coming of Buddhism to Japan, or indeed before the eighth century. The mutual dependence in which we see the medium and the ascetic existing today is hence a relationship which developed during the centuries immediately succeeding the introduction of Buddhism, the seventh and eighth, until by the ninth century, as we shall see in a later chapter, the ascetic rises to real prominence in the wake of the widespread terror of malevolent ghosts which reigned at that time among the elegant inhabitants of the capital.

To the introduction of Buddhist and Chinese ideas must also be attributed the decline of the Shinto *miko*. In 645 occurred the Taika Reform, by which the old system of clan government in Japan was reorganised on the model of T'ang China. Under the new regime the appearance of mantic queens such as Pimiko and the Empress Jingo became impossible. Under the new system too the *miko* in the large shrines began to lose her mantic gift, and to become before long the figure she is today. Decorative in her red trousers and silver crown, she now dances, sings, assists in ritual, but no longer prophesies. The mantic power with which this

ancient sibyl was endowed passed from the large shrines to the level of what Robert Redfield called the 'little tradition', the largely unrecorded, orally transmitted folk religion of the villages. The mantic gift of the ancient *miko* survived in a variety of humbler folk—in the travelling bands of women such as the Kumano *bikuni,* who like strolling minstrels walked the countryside offering their gifts of prophesy and divination, and in the blind women in the north who, without the music and dance so essentially a part of the older *miko's* shamanic performance, transmit the utterances of numina and dead spirits.

With shamanic practices surviving for so many centuries in this unrecognised, virtually hidden manner, what materials are available to the student today who wishes to record the remnants of this fast-disappearing cult and to try to reconstruct what has already vanished? Broadly two types of evidence present themselves. First, there are the living practitioners. Both the medium and the ascetic may still be encountered today. The medium, it is true, survives only sparsely and in somewhat dilapidated form in certain districts of the north-east, certain islands off the Izu peninsula and in certain village rituals where her gifts are combined with those of the ascetic. The ascetic however, is still to be found in many districts of Japan. Living alone or in enclaves, such men and women may be met in the Nara district, in the environs of Kyoto, in Shikoku and Kyūshū, along the coast of the Japan Sea, in the north-east and even occasionally in Tokyo itself. These people still employ techniques of trance and exorcism which bear the authentic stamp of an ancient origin. Wherever possible in the following chapters I have drawn on my own observations of such people made over the past ten years.

Second, the investigator has at his disposal certain kinds of written evidence. Shamanic practices may have survived chiefly on the folk level of religion, orally transmitted from one generation to another. He will find nevertheless that certain kinds of literature are an indispensable help. The collections of popular Buddhist tales, in the first place, in which Japanese literature is so rich from the tenth until the fourteenth century, contain invaluable information about the early ascetic. In works such as the *Konjaku Monogatari,* the *Uji Shūi Monogatari* and the *Nihon Ryōiki,* tales

of these men may be found which tell us much about their austere disciplines and the powers which they acquired thereby.

In the Nō plays too may be found an enigmatic but illuminating aid. Many of these plays, I believe, particularly those in which a supernatural being is manifested, are in themselves concealed shamanic rituals. They contain sounds and symbols which were in former times used to call up a ghost and cause it to speak, or to cajole a divinity to descend, to dance and to deliver blessings. In these plays we may still hear the flutes and drums whose sounds were believed capable of resonance in another world, and the mantic howls and wails which were once calls to the dead and the local divinity.

In the body of recorded folk literature, myths, folktales and legends, may also be found invaluable hints. The great ethnologist Yanagita Kunio demonstrated how much, in the absence of direct descriptions, can be learnt from the motifs and types of folktales and legends. In their structure, in their symbolism, in the juxtaposition of their component elements, they convey much to us that would otherwise be lost.

Here, however, as in the Nō plays and in some of the medieval Buddhist tales, we are confronted by the language of symbols. In Japanese religion an intricate network of symbols exists, like mycelium beneath the ground. From this subtle fabric is thrown up, like scattered rings of mushrooms in a meadow, a legend here, a myth there, a place name, the name of a deity, the remnant of a rite. From these scattered appearances we must try to discover the subterranean network below, a task all the more baffling since the symbols, as is their wont, are many-faced. They are like the jewels in Indra's Net, each of which, lying at the intersections of the mesh, reflects at the same time all the other jewels. In the language of folktales one symbol melts into another, is identified with another, is substituted for another. To interpret the stories aright, therefore, we must learn the grammar of their signs.

Less baffling material, however, is also available for the study of Japanese shamanism in the shape of the works of the Japanese scholars in this field. It was only during the last forty years that Japanese ethnologists and historians of religion recognised that elements of shamanism were to be found in their own religion, and that the ancient *miko* was in fact a shamanic woman. Our debt to

Yanagita Kunio, however, goes back to the beginning of the century. The extraordinary breadth of vision with which this illustrious scholar brought the rituals, iconography, nomenclature and oral literature of the folk tradition to bear on his almost religious quest for the origins of the Japanese race and culture, has left us with some thirty volumes of collected works. These books and essays are beyond question of fundamental importance to the study of shamanism in Japan.

Another pioneer of giant stature must be recognised in Origuchi Shinobu. The works of this scholar too, though occasionally branded as fanciful, are richly gifted with the intuitive insight and imagination that the task demanded. In the wake of these two pioneers have come a small but dedicated band of men devoted to the task of discovering, recording and interpreting the surviving remnants of this rich but fast-disappearing culture. In the works of Hori Ichirō, Sakurai Tokutarō, Togawa Anshō, Takeda Chōshū, Ishida Eiichirō, Miyake Hitoshi and many others, the most sophisticated techniques of observation, interrogation and recording have been brought to bear on the living phenomena of Japanese shamanism.[10]

Besides these celebrated scholars, however, the student of shamanism has reason to be grateful to a lesser-known but equally dedicated band of people—the local doctor, the local schoolmaster, the incumbent of the local Buddhist temple—who have recorded rites and practices in their district which without their vigilance would certainly have been lost.

One final preliminary observation. The area in which our investigation will take place makes nonsense of that conventional distinction hitherto observed by most western writers on Japanese religion, the separation of Shinto from Buddhism. Shinto, with its liturgies, rituals and myths, has been usually treated in isolated purity, unadulterated by Buddhist elements. The Buddhist sects have likewise been described according to doctrines respectably based on scriptures with their proper place in the Buddhist canon. The large area of religious practice common to the two, in which the worshipper is scarcely aware whether the deity he is addressing is a Shinto *kami* or a bodhisattva, has been either ignored or relegated to various snail patches with pejorative labels such as superstition, syncretism or magic.

This area, however, is the very one in which most of our researches will be conducted. We shall try to show the nature of the supernatural beings, whether they appear in Shinto or Buddhist guise, with which the shaman communicates. We shall try to locate the realm where they live. We shall try to define the means whereby the shaman acquires his special powers to traverse the bridge into their world. And we shall try to demonstrate how thereby he provides the human community with an invaluable lifeline into the realm from which so many forces emanate which affect their lives, and without which they would be desperately vulnerable, wide open through ignorance and weakness to attacks by these invisible powers.

2
The Sacred Beings

The angry spectre which we saw make its way across the bridge on to the Nō stage is not the only type of supernatural being with which the shaman in Japan is called upon to deal. Four broad categories of spiritual entity exist whose nature and mode of activity fall within the scope of his powers. Two of these are accounted superior to man; in power, knowledge and status they transcend the human condition. These may allow themselves to be summoned by the shaman, cajoled, persuaded or petitioned, but never coerced. The other two categories are altogether different. They comprise entities whose state has fallen below that of man, who are in one way or another inferior, unregenerate, fallen or merely malevolent, and who stand in need therefore not merely of persuasion and summons, but also of forcible exorcism and restitution.

Of the two superior types of spiritual being the most important and powerful are the *kami*. These numinous presences have been the principal objects of worship in the Shinto cult since pre-Buddhist times. They are difficult to describe, because they are elusive, enigmatic, heterogeneous. They are best understood perhaps as hierophanies, manifestations of sacred power in the human world. Motoori Norinaga, the great eighteenth century scholar of the Shinto Revival, remarked that anything which was beyond the ordinary, other, powerful, terrible, was called *kami*. Thus the emperor, dragons, the echo, foxes, peaches, mountains and the sea, all these were called *kami* because they were mysterious, full of strangeness and power. *Kami* may thus be descried in certain people, in certain trees and stones, mountains and islands; in the excellence which overshadows the practice of

certain crafts, in the continuity and protection which attends a family stemming from a remembered ancestor. In all of these things there shows through, as though through a thin place, an incomprehensible otherness which betokens power.[1]

Sometimes this manifestation of power goes unnamed, supine, scarcely recognised except by the occasional passer-by with second sight. More often it gathers itself together, is given a name, attaches itself to a particular group of human beings. It is no longer simply a window indicating another world beyond, but a being endowed with power, impinging closely on human life and requiring treatment of an elaborately special kind if it is to remain friendly. It is conceived to dwell in a world or dimension of its own, hazily related in a geographical way to ours.

Elusive, shadowy, largely formless though these beings may be, in their disposition and status they are many and variable. Some are great *kami,* with names recorded in the mythical chronicles, who exercise power over a wide area of man's life. Sickness, fire, seasonal rain and marital happiness may all lie in their gift. Others of humbler status confine themselves to narrower spheres, specialising in easy childbirth, good fishing catches or cures for diseases below the navel. Some are remote, static, slow to take offence. Others impinge closely upon our world and are quick to react to the treatment they receive here. Some may exist in a close tutelary relationship with a particular village. Others exert the same protection over a particular family or a particular individual. Others again are prepared to consider in a benevolent light anyone who takes the trouble to make the pilgrimage to their shrine. Despite this variety of nature and potency, however, all *kami* possess certain characteristics in common which enable the shaman, with his special powers, to communicate with them.

In the first place they are able, freely and voluntarily, to cross the barrier which divides our world from theirs. This they may do of their own accord, irrupting suddenly and unexpectedly into our lives from another plane. Or they may come in response to due summons. Certain musical sounds—a koto twanged, a bowstring tapped, a drum thumped—certain songs or certain dances will cause them to leave their own world and visit ours.

Once here, in our alien dimension, how do they manifest themselves? A variety of forms and shapes have been recorded as

seen by the clairvoyant eyes of the shaman. The testimony of these people is apt to vary a good deal, but the shapes most commonly reported are those of a snake and of an old man dressed in white, with long white hair and beard.

Miss Ishida, however, a clairvoyant medium practising in Tokyo, told me in the summer of 1972 that for her the appearance of a *kami* was usually preceded by sounds. She would hear the sound of footsteps approaching with long strides, or the sighing reedy music of the *shō* or the *hichiriki* or sometimes the harp. Then the *kami* himself would appear and speak. Sometimes she could see only his feet or the hem of his robe, sometimes only his mount, the animal on which he rode. The rest of him was hidden in mist.

Miss Ishida went on to say that certain kinds of flowers, trees, birds, stones or metals were more *reiteki* or 'spiritual' than others. These things were closer to the *kami,* partaking more easily of the *kami's* nature, than the rest of their kind. Among birds, for example, white birds like the seagull or shiny black birds like the crow were more spiritual than others. Among trees, the cryptomeria was the most spiritual, and among stones, the agate and lapis lazuli.

Mrs Hiroshima Umeko, an experienced ascetic living in the Suishōji temple at the foot of Mt Miwa, also declared that *kami* appeared to her clairvoyant eyes in many forms. She had seen them in the likeness of flowers, of animals, or human beings. And Mrs Jin, an ascetic based on Mt Iwaki in Aomori prefecture, told me that most of the ascetics in the area, including herself, had seen a vision of the deity Akakura Daigongen. This numen was apt to appear in a variety of forms. His *shōtai* or true form was that of a tall man with long black hair, hairy all over and carrying in his hands a flute and a staff with jingling metal rings. But he also frequently appeared in dragon form, and in the form of a white-haired old man.

It is relevant to note here that in the Nō plays, many of which we should rightly regard as mystical literature deriving from rituals for calling up a numen or a ghost, overwhelmingly the most frequent form in which the *kami* appear is that of an old man. In *Awaji,* for example, the god Izanagi appears as an old man. In *Hakurakuten,* Sumiyoshi Myōjin appears as an old fisherman. In *Shiga,* Shiga Myōjin appears as an old woodcutter. Sometimes a pair

of gods may appear as an old man and an old woman, as in *Ema, Gendayū, Kuzu* and *Takasago*. It is possible that we see here some confirmation of Yanagita's theory that most *kami* had their origin in the figure of the divine Ancestor, of which the prototype is the beaming figure of the *okina* or old man.

More often, however, it is to the sleeping eye rather than to the waking one that the *kami* reveal themselves. Dream is apparently an easier medium than waking consciousness for the *kami* to manifest themselves to the human mind. In a *reimu* or divine dream, the *kami* may himself appear in the guise of an old man or a beautiful woman, often delivering an answer to a problem perplexing the dreamer. Indeed, it seems to have been a widespread custom in medieval times for a man beset by trouble and anxiety to pass a vigil in a shrine in the hope of having the answer to his problem vouchsafed to him in a dream. In such dreams the deity, in the manner of the Greek incubatory oracle, appears and speaks, sometimes bestowing on the dreamer an object— a jewel, a dagger, a wooden spoon—which is invariably to be found by the dreamer's pillow when he awakes.

Many tales of such dreams occur in the medieval collections of Buddhist tales. Sometimes a figure, in the guise of an old man, a tall priest or a 'strange visitor', appears to the sleeping pilgrim. Sometimes the dreamer sees no figure at all; he only hears a voice of terrible and awe-inspiring resonance reciting a poem in the classical metre. Thus Taira Munemori passed a seven-night vigil in the Usa Hachiman shrine in Kyūshū. At last he was vouchsafed a dream in which he saw the door of the shrine burst open and heard from within an awful and hair-raising voice chanting the thirty-one syllables of a poem. Terrified though he was, Munemori was able to summon up the wit and courage to murmur a suitable old poem in reply.[2]

Again, the dreamer may see not the *kami* himself but his *tsukawashime* or messenger. These spirits, who may take the form of animals, birds or boys, are the intermediaries whom the *kami* employs to visit our world when he is disinclined to traverse the barrier himself. Thus Taira Kiyomori, passing a vigil night in the Itsukushima shrine in the year 1178, dreamt that the door of the shrine flew open and that there appeared two boys, their hair neatly dressed, who delivered a message from Itsukushima

Daimyōjin, the deity of the island. They gave him as a sign a silver dagger, which he found on his pillow the next morning when he awoke. A similar dream is recorded as coming to Sashōben Yukitaka. He too saw the door of the shrine burst open and two boys emerge who delivered to him an important message from the god Hachiman. Other messengers frequently encountered in dreams, and sometimes seen even in waking life, are the fox sent by Inari, the deer sent by Kasuga Daimyōjin, the doves sent by Hachiman. Fudō Myōō too has a large retinue of thirty-six boys whom he employs as messengers to our world in a variety of ways.[3]

The belief that the *kami* have any permanent or 'true' form which they can manifest to human senses is, however, late and derivative from Buddhist iconography. In the early cult a *kami* had no shape of his own, his occasional visionary appearances being temporary disguises only. In order to manifest himself in our world he must rather be provided with a suitable vessel or vehicle. This vehicle he could be persuaded by magical sounds to enter and 'possess', and through it to communicate with the human village.

These vessels, seats or temporary abodes of the *kami* were sometimes known as *kura*. Thus the place-name Iwakura, rock-seat, is even today commonly found on sites at the foot of holy mountains. The deity had, it is thought, to be lured down from his abode at the top of the mountain to the rock-seat below, where he could temporarily reside for the duration of the ritual. Again, the old word *mitegura,* hand-seat, represents an object held in the shaman's hand to induce divine possession, as a branch, a wand or a marionette.

The term *yorishiro* also describes a wide variety of objects used as temporary vessels for the *kami*. Many *yorishiro* were long and thin in shape—as a tree, a banner, a wand—as though the numinous presence, like lightning streaking down a conductor, could be induced by such means to descend from his higher plane to ours.

Thus trees, particularly pine trees, have always been a favourite vehicle for the *kami's* descent. Tall pine trees are constantly found in the neighbourhood of a shrine, and innumerable place-names survive which associate trees with a numinous presence. Stones, too, frequently served as *yorishiro,* stones of the invitingly long thin shape, impressively huge rocks, boulders of suggestively

phallic form. The peculiar outcrops of rock on the slopes and summit of Mt Miwa, for example, known as Nakatsu-iwakura and Okitsu-iwakura, which suggest a sudden volcanic explosion spewing gobbets of rock into clearings in the forest, contain a good many such holy boulders. To judge from the archaeological finds of ritual tools at these sites, these have been the object of cult attention since prehistoric times.

An extraordinary conglomeration of stone *yorishiro,* artificially worked, may likewise be seen on the summit of Inariyama at Fushimi and in the hamlet of Fukakusa at the foot of the hill. These strange regiments of oval stones, each inscribed with the name of the deity dwelling therein, each girt with the belt or cravat of tasselled straw, were set up, I was told, at the request of the deities themselves, transmitted through dreams, to be worshipped in that particular vessel.

Honda Yasuji believes one of the oldest forms of *yorishiro* to be a combination of these two forms: a pole, flag or spear standing upright on a rock or mound. Many place-names, he avers, survive to suggest the antiquity of such sacred sites: *hoko-iwa*. spear rock, *hatazuka,* flag mound, or *hokotateiwa,* rock with a standing spear. On a smaller scale the same pair of shapes, which Honda recognises as representing the joining of two sexual symbols, may be found in the rice-cake or sack of rice impaled by a bamboo or willow frond. The same image on a magnified scale may be seen when an entire mountain or island becomes the vehicle of the *kami,* its conical or thickly tree-covered appearance being seen to invite the numinous descent.[4]

Artefacts used as *yorishiro* included banners, pillars and wands, while the earliest dolls and puppets were made not for decoration or amusement, but for the sacred purpose of housing the divinity. Mirrors, swords and the mysterious curved stone called *magatama,* found in profusion in the great tombs of the third and fourth centuries, also served as temporary vessels for the divinity. The *Kojiki,* for example, tells of a *sakaki* tree with its branches hung with strings of *magatama* beads, lengths of blue and white cloth and a large mirror. A tree decked in this manner became, by manifold inducement, the temporary abode of a deity.[5]

In the early stage of the cult the *kami* remained inside his tree, stone or wand for no longer than was required for the duration of