

# 神楽について

## *Kagura Theatre in Japan and Gammaduwa in Srilanka*

クラティラカ・クマーラシンハ

Kulatilaka Kumarasinghe

スリランカ・キャラニヤ大学人文学部

Senior Professor, Faculty of Humanities, University of Kelaniya

### 〈要旨〉

日本の最初の民俗芸能といわれる神楽は、音楽と踊りから成る演劇である。これがいつしか神楽と言われるようになった。神を招き、祈りを捧げながら、神人一体となって共に宴を楽しむ催事である。神楽は神々に捧げる歌舞という意味で、飲酒も神楽の席では一般に行われていた。夕方に神を招魂し、暗くなってから歌舞が始まり、夜を徹して明け方まで延々と続けられる。スリランカにも、日本の神楽に類似したガムマドゥワという民俗芸能がある。その地域の神やパッティニ女神に捧げる舞と音楽で、人々の繁栄や豊穡を祈る催事である。パンティス・コムラという、パッティニ女神の生涯を 35 の場面に構成して描いた物語を夜通し演じるのである。

本報告は、本田保次氏の神楽研究をベースとし、神楽とスリランカのガムマドゥワとを比較し考察したものである。

### Introduction

As stated by the art critique Prof. *Honda Yasuji*, there are three major types of folk drama.

1. *Kagura* drama intended to enliven the human and the divine life
2. *Dengaku* drama aimed at the agricultural development
3. *Furyu* drama performed to avert the diseases and destruction

The meaning of the term *Kagura* is the process of action including sacred dancing and music. On the

other hand *Kagura* is the prototype of ancient *Shamanic* rituals in Japan<sup>(1)</sup>. It could be considered a variety of drama, a blend of music and dancing which is performed on behalf of the gods of *Shinto* religion. *Kagura* is a form of *Amano-Uzume-no Mikoto's* basic dancing style. This is performed in order to relieve the anger of the sun Goddess. The word *Kagura* literary denotes music and has come to mean, by usage any dance offered to console or placate the gods. It is now an integral part of *Shinto* religion a peculiarly Japanese form of worship<sup>(2)</sup>, this folk drama is originally and primarily a performance related to

*Shinto* rituals. *Kagura*, the origin of which is tied to that of *Shinto* rites, became differentiated into various types under the influence of the changing views of the deities and of the *Geino*. A term that refers to drama and such fragmentary arts in its fringe as songs, dances and mimicry<sup>(3)</sup>, this was the representative theoretical art of the period when people's life was centered on *Shinto* rites. It remained representative of Japanese drama even in the seventh century and later. *Kagura* that started in the first half of the ancient period saw the development of such types as were combined with the customs and events of the year and with the progress of life and culture. Thus *Kagura*, which is sacred entertainment, expresses sacred mood that may sometimes be awesome, frightening and solemn, but are more often happy, joyful and comic. The Gods often appear as warm and unthreatening, as close to the people. Essential elements of the ceremony are singing, dancing and drinking *Sake*<sup>(4)</sup>. *Kagura* is one of the folk performing arts of *Shinto* origin in which such rituals as *Kiyome*, or ablution, *harai*, or purification, and *chinkon* which means literally to quieten or pacifies a spirit, are held to prolong and revitalize man's life. This is not only the most ancient Japanese ritual but Japan's most ancient performing art form. *Hoff*, a European critique says that masked dancing is a significant characteristic. The nature of such performance is to pray for gods either by dancing or singing or by using both items.

In each *Kagura* drama, a dance related to the opening of the Divine cavern is performed to

remind us the origin of *Kagura*.

*Kagura* is a kind of an evening entertainment beginning normally in the twilight and closing in the morning when the cocks crow.

## Performance

Before the performance, a heap of wood is collected in front of the *Shinto* shrine. It is called *Niwabi* or *Achime*. Prior to the commencement of the show, singers and musicians and the director of the drama take seats on the right side of the shrine while flutists and violists are on the left side. Chief singers on the left side are called *Motokata*. Supporting singers on the right side are called *Suekata*. When all, who are engaged in the performance, take seats, the director orders to fire the heap of wood. This is the approach of a *Kagura* drama. Some critiques called this, the evening scene of the performance.

Trained dancers, actors and singers are included in a *Kagura* drama which is organized as a feast. They are considered a special group.

*Kagura* drama consists of two sections i.e. *Maiko* and *Kagurao*. While virtuous young women are engaged in *Maiko*, men are engaged in *Kagurao*.

Second section of the *Kagura* is called *Tori mono Uta* which expresses the idea of dedication of songs. Here the songs are dedicated to the gods. Songs with two verses are included in the *Maiko*.

## Major Types of *Kagura*

In each *Shinto* shrine, a group of *Kagura* drama could be found. According to Prof. *Honda*'s observations, there are four major types of *Kagura*.

1. *Miko Kagura*
2. *Ise Kagura*
3. *Izumo Kagura*
4. *Shishi Kagura*

Influence of *Shugendo* could be detected in all types except in *Miko Kagura*. Even today, women perform this type of *Kagura* in folk festivals and *Shinto* shrine. *Kagura* is performed in a slow but an elaborate manner. *Ise Kagura* is a variety which consists of a system of traditional customs. It is also called *Yudate Kagura*. This type of *Kagura* is performed as a patronage to the devotees who worshiped *Ise* shrine until *Meiji* be rehabilitated. It includes all kinds of customs such as boiling water. It was also named as *Shimotsuki Kagura* by *Honda*. That means 11 months' *Kagura*. This is performed at the end of the year.

*Kagura* performed at the *Sada* shrine in *Izumo* was named as *Izumo Kagura*. This is the most popular type.

Performances done by lion masked actors are called *Shishi Kagura*. It is an essential necessity to wear a mask which depicts a head of a lion. The ears of the mask could be shaken.

Significance of *Yamabushi Kagura* is its religious background and the inclusion of traditional customs. It has several varieties such as;

1. *Kuromori Kagura*
2. *Tono Kagura*
3. *Enmanji Kagura*
4. *Hayachine Kagura*

*Yamabushi Kagura* is performed in order to get rid of natural disasters such as wild-fires, to bless the people and also to increase the growth and prosperity. It is intended to bring gods' blessings to the rural folk by disguising as a lion.

It is unable to comprehend *Kagura* performance without having knowledge on the religious traditional background in Japan. As mentioned by some scholars, present structure of *Hayachine Kagura* has been built at the beginning of the *Edo* era. There is a mountain range called *Hayachine* in *Iwate* District in the North East of Japan. The name of the mountain is given to this variety of *Kagura*. *Kagura* may have influenced the development of *Noh* as dramaturgy. Until the middle of *Shōwa* era, *Kagura* has been performed during the period in between November and February. The actors go house by house performing *Kagura*. Even today *Kagura* is performed in drama festivals. *Hayachine Kagura* has been influenced by *Shugendo* (the impact of Buddhism) in its style and the purpose. It is popular in an area of 40 – 50 km around the mountain *Hayachine*.

In *Kagura*, water is also blessed. It is because water is an essential need for agriculture. Prosperity of human beings is also expected from *Hayachine Kagura*. The dancers are frequently

requested by the rural women to wear *Kimonos* and *Obi* for the performance. They expect that they can achieve their future betterment and some relief at labor. They also believe that it would be beneficial to affirm the peace and unity within the family. Accordingly, prosperity of family is also expected.

### **Significance of *Kagura***

Since *Kagura* is a ceremonial performance<sup>(5)</sup>, it provides gaiety and amusement. Its educational and artistic value has caused to become popular among the people. Watching *Kagura* was the sole medium of enjoyment of the Japanese people before the commencement of other media i.e. television, cinema and baseball. *Kagura* performances and drinking *Sake* are bound together. *Sake* is drunk as a ritual done on behalf of the gods and often drunk on the festive dates. Drunkenness is considered a divine act. *Kagura* provides a various types of activities to enjoy. It presents music, singing, drum beating and dances related to martial activities.

### ***Kagura* Stage**

Three sides of the stage are opened to the audience. The drum beater and the cymbal players sit in the front of the stage facing towards the stage. The stage is divided as right and left from the corner where the drum beater sits. The left stage is called *Hidaribachi* or left drumstick while right stage is called *Migibachi* or right drumstick. The flutist and the narrator stay behind the screen.

*Kagura* stage is also comprised with rituals. It is

believed that the gods would look at it. The women are not allowed to enter the place due to the fear that the place would be impure. The stage symbolizes the worldly life and gods arrive at the place.

The stage equipment is also created to affirm the beliefs symbolically.

Music is given a prominent place in the *Kagura* performances. Music is used as a way by which gods are encouraged to present their performance. *Kagura* music is generated with the use of both music instruments and oral method. The dancers take use of bells and steps to create the music effect. The major instrument played in *Kagura* music and dancing is the drum. Entire performance goes around it. The drum beater kneels down in front of the drum. The drum is played from both sides. He uses two drumsticks for playing it. Generally the drum beater is the one who handles the *Kagura*. He uses a secret knowledge of magic. The drum beater chants psalms while playing the drum. Some psalms are specific to some dances. However most of the time drum beater is the one who selects the psalm which is to be chanted. *Kagura* flute decides the rhythm of the performance. It is a flute with six holes. Only four of them are used for *Kagura* music. Two simple cymbals are also used. *Kagura* music is a kind of religious worship specific to regions.

The *Kagura* crew worships each and every *Kagura* shrine in the area before the performance.

Prologue of *Hayachine Kagura* is called *Shamon*. It is considered a mispronunciation of the term *Saimon* (customs). Prof. *Honda* says that it may have derived from the term *Saimon*. It means Buddhist priest. The narrative style is a method of singing. At that time it is called chanting. The narrator always stays behind the screen to be invisible to the audience. It is the normal procedure to introduce the god to be presented on the stage by him before the commencement of the drama. One of the instruments used in the *Kagura* dance is sword. The sword is usually on the stage in *Hayachine Kagura* performances and it is used in horrible events. Earlier it was used actual swords but now artificial wooden made swords are used. Wand is also one of the equipment used and it is believed that it has a magical power. Some equipment is reserved for particular gods. In *Yamabushi* customs, bow and arrows are among significant equipment.

### **Gammaduwa in Srilanka**

It can be stated that *Gammaduwa* in Sri Lanka, an indigenous ceremonial dance is far more similar to the form of *Kagura* Theatre. Two types of ceremonial dances could be found in the *Sinhala* society. One type of such ceremonial dances is performed with the purpose of evacuating perils of an individual or of a family. For example *Maha Sohon Samayama*, *Rata Yakuma* and *Sanni Yakuma* can be mentioned. In addition, there are also ceremonial dances performed to invoke blessings to the individuals. They are *Gammadu*, *Devolmadu*, *Kirimadu*, *Geemadu* and

*Malyahanmadu*, etc.

Moreover, there are two groups of unearthly creatures i.e. gods and devils who do evil deeds against the human kind. The one who works as the intermediate support between the devils and the human beings is called *yakadura*, *yakdessa* or *kattandiya* while the one who works with gods is called *kapurala*.

### **Performance**

*Gammaduwa* is a ritual performed by the villagers in rural areas in order to invoke blessings to the village as a whole<sup>(6)</sup>. *Gammaduwa* is significant because it performs the way the god *Devol* was proceeded to Sri Lanka. In comparison to *Devol Madu*, the significance of *Gammaduwa* is that walking on fire could not be found. However, *Gammaduwa* is performed in favor of the gods in wishing prosperity and fortification. On the other hand, *Kagura* which is based on the religion called *Shinto* is a folk ritual blended with sacred music and dancing. The purpose of performing the *Kagura* is also same as of the *Gammaduwa*. Accordingly, a similarity between *Kagura* and *Gammaduwa* could be observed. Generally, *Gammaduwa* is performed, after harvesting the paddy as an offering to the gods. In the same manner, *Kagura* is also performed in Japan after getting the paddy harvest and the harvest of the other crops. It is to pay their gratitude to the god *Shinto*. It is believed that then their lives will be comfortable with peace until the following harvest. *Gammaduwa* is often performed in fallow paddy fields and in the same manner, fallow lands

are used for *Kagura* performances too. For these performances, they get ready for a long time. During that time, they prepare all the necessities. Even in Japan, *Kagura* is performed after such an organizational process. It takes a long period for practices because it is believed that the standard of the performance would also cause for obtaining god's blessing. Village folk who perform *Gammaduwa* also prepare in the same way. This period is considered to observe higher precepts. The situation is similar to that of Japan too. During this period they try to stay away from evil deeds. Many of the characteristics specific to *Gammaduwa* could be found in *Yamabushi Kagura* which is a variety of *Kagura*. *Gammaduwa* is generally considered a special offering to the goddess *Pathhini*. Similarly, *Kagura* which is called by different regional names is a ritual performed on behalf of the god *Shinto* who safeguards the region. There are several dramatic scenes related to *Gammaduwa*. One of them is the offering called *Halan Vadeema*. Here, proceeding of the jewelry of the goddess *Pathhini* is done and then the patients and the folk are blessed. The distinctive feature of *Halan Vadeema* is that the *Kapurala* disguises as the goddess *Pathhini*. In *Kagura* theatre also a similar activity is performed. There, a bachelor who lives in *Shinto* monastery having adorned with elaborate dresses prays for the god. He demonstrates each instrument used for the dance to the audience one by one. In *Kagura* performance, an instrument similar to the anklet used in *Gammaduwa* is used to produce the tintinnabulation. It is started after praying several

times. During the pray, this instrument is shaken several times to produce the tintinnabulation. This prompts the people who are being at home due to the cold to be active. All lend a hand in this actively. They believed that they would be able to gain prosperity. Each villager provides his/her contribution in a way or other to organize the *Gammaduwa* in order to make it a success. Moreover, rural folk believe that each family should be blessed by the goddess *Pathhini*.

### **Significant Scenes in *Gammaduwa***

A significant scene of the *Gammaduwa* is the bringing into life back after killing. In *Gammaduwa*, when the prince *Palanga*, the husband of goddess *Pathhini* is assassinated, he is given life back. Similarly, in *Kagura* also, some folk stories are performed. They are also with a religious background same as in the *Gammaduwa*. The assassination of *Rama* is also another scene performed in the *Gammaduwa*. Even though this does not have a direct relationship with the birth story of the goddess *Pathhini*, it presents a story of killing and after that bringing into life back. This is a scene which evokes humour with comic dialogues. In some *Gammadu* ceremonies, two scenes called *Athbandanaya* and *Meebandanaya* are performed under the *Dolaha Pelapali*. This is considered as an offering made on behalf of the god *Mangara*, the chief god of cow and the twelve gods. This is stated as a dialogue between the drum beater and the *Kapurala* and it develops up to an act.

As observed, it is revealed that even though the

*Gammaduwa* is performed as an offering to the goddess *Pathhini*, it also intends to evoke the enthusiasm of the villagers towards dramaturgy. Even in *Kagura*, in addition to the offering made to the chief god *Shinto*, it is expected to please the audience through the comic performances of the legendary stories. Since there are various varieties of the *Kagura* drama, differences could be found as per the variety. Cymbal and the flute are the mostly used music instruments. Performances of gods are presented in a charming manner with the psalms. At the end of the scene which continues 10 – 20 minutes, the dancer represents the god who is blessing the audience and leaves the stage. For the villagers, *Kagura* theatre is a precious occasion where the gods are also be pleased together with them. At the end of each *Gammaduwa*, a devil dance is performed i.e. a dance of *Garayaka*. For such dance, a lathe is built with two branches of a *Goraka* tree planted and a pestle kept on the two branches horizontally. *Garayaka* climbs to the top of the lathe and dances swinging the two branches until one of them breaks down. *Garayaka* is the symbol of cleansing the unpurified places. During the conversation between the *Garayaka* and the *Kapurala*, plantains and oil cake (*kawum*) are used as symbols of gender. Sacrament done on behalf of the *Garayaka* is called *Maha Garayakun Yagaya*.

The ceremony is ended by giving milk rice and oil cake (*kawum*) to the whole gathering and blessing the gods. In the same manner, a repast is organized in the hermitage at the end of *Kagura*

performance. All should participate in the occasion. After the offerings are made to the gods, the people are allowed to have them. Drinking *Sake* is one of the major customs carried out here.

## Notes

- (1) Irith Averbuch, *The Gods Comes Dancing*, U.S.A. Cornell University Press, First Print, 1995, p.3
- (2) Faubian Bowers, *Japanese Theatre*, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Tokyo, 1953, p.5
- (3) Arnott Peter, *The Theatres of Japan*, Great Britain, 1969, p.17
- (4) T.G.C.D., p.7
- (5) Kato Shuichi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, Kōdansha International, Japan, 1979, p.19
- (6) Sarachchandra Ediriweera, *Sinhala Gemi Natakaya (The Folk Drama Of Ceylon)*, Government Press, Colombo-Sri-Lanka, 1968.