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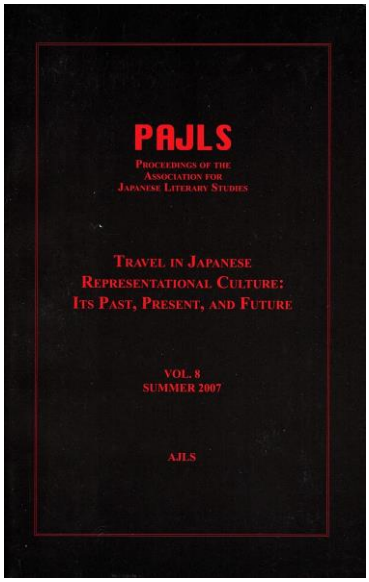

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OBSERVING RITUAL: NAMAHAGE, TOSHIDON, AND THE TOURIST GAZE

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During the first half of the twentieth century, Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), Orikuchi Shinobu (1887–1953), Oka Masao (1898–1982) and other scholars dedicated to the recording and theorization of folk practices, began to take note of a particular series of rituals found scattered throughout the Japanese archipelago. These rituals were linked by a common trope in which a god-like visitor from far away would periodically enter the village community. Orikuchi developed this notion of a "visiting deity" (*raihōjin*) into his now famous concept of the *marebito*, the rare and sacred visitor, the supernatural guest who arrives seasonally bringing good fortune, forecasting the upcoming harvest, blessing the villagers and proffering advice for the coming year. The original marebito, Orikuchi explains, "was a deity who came for attendance at a given time. It was a deity who the villagers believed would come from the sky or from across the sea to their particular village, effecting a certain amount of good fortune such as wealth, longevity, and the like."[1]

Embedded in the marebito concept is a complex set of associations: the marebito is an Other who possesses magical and transformative powers, a mystical outsider who gains temporary admission into the community and whose presence serves to alter its structure in some way. The marebito is a provocative and somewhat problematic concept, one which, as Komatsu Kazuhiko has noted, Orikuchi himself never "strictly defines."[2] In one sense, however, it is this very vagueness, the abstract and historical nature of the marebito as an archetypal representative of another world, that makes it an effective heuristic with which to consider more concrete and historical this-worldly phenomena. In particular, as a traveler from afar who temporarily visits a given community, the

[1] See Orikuchi Shinobu, "Kodai seikatsu no kenkyū: minzokugaku hen ichi," *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha, 1955), 33.
[2] Komatsu Kazuhiko, "Ijin, ikenie kaisetsu," *Kaii no minzokugaku 7: ijin, ikenie*, ed. Komatsu Kazuhiko (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 2001), 382. Scholars have explored the marebito identity as a deity, an incarnation of a sacred ancestor, a monstrous presence, or any number of other godlike figures. See Suwa Haruo, "Kisetsu ni raihō suru kami: marebito-ron, ijin-ron saikō," *Shisō* 4 (1992), 48.

marebito is in some ways akin to the contemporary tourist, and thus serves as a lens for viewing modern notions of tourism and sightseeing.

This paper briefly examines two ritual performances that fit within the visiting deity rubric, paying special attention to their relationship with domestic tourism in Japan. In particular, I explore the role of vision and the tourist gaze in these rituals by invoking, along with the marebito concept, a related Orikuchi construct called the *manekarezaru-kyaku* or "uninvited guest." Succinctly put, in Orikuchi's informal hierarchy of deific visitors, the manekarezaru-kyaku is inferior to the marebito; the manekarezaru-kyaku is, as it were, a sort of rubbernecking passerby, an uninvited guest who insists on spying on the festival. While my comments here are exploratory and inconclusive, one objective is to consider Orikuchi's ideas about performance with the hope that they might be helpful for theorizing broader questions concerning authenticity, tradition, and the instrumental role played by vision—of seeing and being seen—in contemporary cultural practices of tourism.

NAMAHAGE

The most famous of all the visiting deity rituals, and one invoked by Orikuchi as he developed the marebito concept, is the Namahage of the Oga Peninsula in Akita Prefecture. Every New Year's Eve, groups of young men transform themselves into Namahage, wrapping themselves in straw coats, donning horned demon masks made from painted wood, and taking up wooden knives and long staffs. They then stamp through the dark snowy streets, from house to house, banging noisily and demanding entrance. In each household they search for children, roar and threaten them, often frightening them to tears. The Namahage then receive offerings of food and *sake* from the residents and continue on to the next house. Such rituals in which older, usually male, members of society frighten children can be found in various communities throughout Japan and have been analyzed in terms of initiation rituals and rites of passage. For various reasons, not the least of which is its early recognition by Yanagita and Orikuchi, the Namahage has achieved paradigmatic status as the visiting deity ritual of record, and scenes of the ceremony are broadcast nationwide on the news almost every New Year's holiday.[3]

[3] My description here is based primarily on observations of the event as performed in the Yumoto district of Oga, where I conducted fieldwork from December 1998 through January 1999 and again in February 2000. For ethnographic accounts of Namahage, see Yoshiko Yamamoto, *The Namahage; A Festival in the Northeast of Japan* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human

Not surprisingly, in recent years the image of the Namahage has been richly commodified: in the Oga region you can find Namahage masks for sale, Namahage key chains, Namahage bobble-heads, mugs, toys, even "Namahage sushi" and a bar called "Snack Namahage." The image and name of the Namahage are ubiquitous throughout Oga: the figure has become iconographic of the region, and by extension, all of Akita Prefecture. Strictly speaking, however, the actual Namahage ritual as it is performed on New Year's Eve is not an easily accessible tourist attraction. The fact that it is enacted within private households all but precludes the visitation of more than one or two persistent tourists or ethnographers willing to follow the Namahage from house to house through the snow. So how does a community respond to the desire of outside visitors to observe a local ritual? (Or, rather, how does a community make a local ritual into an event *observable* by outside visitors?) In considering this question, it is critical from the outset not to think of Namahage as a static, authentic ritual, but rather as a loose set of procedures constantly and fluidly adapting to the changing socio-economic needs of the community. The particular adaptation necessary here is one which responds to the tourist gaze—that is, to the desire of people from outside the Oga community to witness the Namahage roaring and chasing children.

It is here that Orikuchi's notion of the manekarezaru-kyaku or uninvited guest is helpful. In theorizing the origins of the performing arts or *geinō*, Orikuchi posits a distinction between ritual and more formalized manifestations of performance. Simply put, in Orikuchi's framework, ritual is oriented inward, exclusively for the participants, while performance takes into consideration the gaze of others. Critical to the advent of performance is the existence of an audience, witnesses to the ritual who are not directly involved with its enactment. As Hashimoto Hiroyuki has noted, for Orikuchi the dynamic of "seeing / being seen" is the "condition" necessary for the performing arts (*geinō*) to occur.[4] It is the spectators, then, the outside observers (and the awareness of their observation on the part of the ritual participants) that create the

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Issues, 1978) and Ine Yūji, *Namahage* (Akita-shi: Akita bunka shuppansha, 1985). For an overview of ritual events similar to Namahage, see Ine, 92–123; Yamamoto, 37–45, 136–139; and Oga no namahage hozon denshō sokushin iinkai ed., *Namahage shinpojiumu: Oga no Namahage—sono denshō to kiban o saguru* (Oga-shi: Oga no namahage hozon denshō sokushin iinkai, 1997), 33–81.

[4] Hashimoto Hiroyuki, "Geinō no jōken: 'manekarezaru-kyaku' saikō," *Geinō* (February 1994), 14–16.

performance event. Orikuchi articulates the transformation from ritual to performance through the incursion of these uninvited guests:

> …there are visitors who are not treated (*taigū*) as guests (*kyaku*). I label these the "uninvited guests" (*manekarezaru-kyaku*); when there is a festival (*matsuri*), unavoidably there will be those who are envious and come to watch. That is, because only particular deities are invited, other lower-level deities will be envious and come to peek in at the festival banquet.[5]

In other words, strangers curious about or envious of the events going on at a community festival will visit, uninvited, to observe the proceedings. Recognizing the inevitability of such an intrusion by "lower-level deities," community members will eventually create a forum through which these visiting strangers, these uninvited guests, can themselves be received. By Orikuchi's reckoning, the uninvited guest becomes the necessary catalyst for the advent of performance. As Hashimoto puts it: "When the 'seeing / being seen' relationship (*miru/mirareru kankei*) is established, then regardless of the time or place, the performing arts (*geinō*) are created. However, without the visitation of the 'uninvited guest,' the 'seeing / being seen' relationship itself will not be established."[6] For Orikuchi, then, the performing arts develop through a process by which the economy of ritual is gradually opened up to, and altered by, the gaze of outside visitors.

This process affords particular insight into contemporary phenomena of tourism and sightseeing—especially so-called "folk" or "heritage" tourism in which outsiders travel to certain sites in order to observe (and experience) "traditional" culture.[7] By focusing on the importance of the uninvited guests' desire to see as well as the ritual participants' awareness of being seen, Orikuchi allows the phenomenon of tourism to be inserted into the folkloric discourse on ritual and performance:

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[5] Orikuchi Shinobu, *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū*, vol. 18 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha, 1967), 359.
[6] Hashimoto, 15.
[7] Until recently, Japanese folklorists and anthropologists have generally viewed such tourism in a negative light, as something that corrupts "authentic" folk culture, and should be avoided as an explicit subject of study. Saitsu Yumiko, "'Nanpō' kei toiu katari: minzoku geinō no kankō shigenka to kigen no katari," *Ōsaka daigaku: Nihongakuhō* 18 (March 1999): 1.

> We might say that the performing arts that emerged from the banquet were not intended to be shown to anybody. But, when it came to be the objective [of some people] to see [these events], the position of the viewer came to be considered. I think it is correct to say that the position of the uninvited guest gradually gave birth to sightseeing (*kenbutsu*).[8]

So what happens when, inevitably, the uninvited guests are recognized for their profit potential and are, as it were, *invited* in their own right? In order to fete the uninvited guests, a related but distinct festival is *created*, one that takes place in a separate place and at a separate time, functioning explicitly to entertain the visiting strangers.

In Oga this separate event is called the Namahage Sedo Matsuri (Namahage sedo festival). Taking place every year on the second Friday, Saturday and Sunday of February at the Shinzan Shrine in Oga, it is chronologically and geographically distinct from the New Year's Eve ritual. An impressively theatrical affair, climaxing with the descent from the mountains of more than a dozen Namahage holding fiery torches, the Namahage Sedo Matsuri was created in 1963 when the Namahage motif was combined with an already existing shrine festival to produce an event "for the purpose of winter season tourism."[9] Advertised widely, it represents a creative and proactive interaction between the local community and the rest of the country, an interaction that comes about because Oga residents have acknowledged the uninvited guests and responded to them. As anthropologist Michel Picard says of such situations, "the native populations are not passive objects of the tourist gaze, but active subjects who construct representations of their culture to attract tourists."[10] Fittingly, the Namahage Sedo Matsuri does *not* occur on New Year's Eve—in other words, it is not a festival into which the uninvited guest might have happened to stumble, but one developed specifically to *invite* the uninvited guests during a season in which they otherwise would not come. And come they do, amply and eagerly; in the year I observed the festival (2000), there were approximately one thousand participants each night (for three nights), including local

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[8] Orikuchi, vol 18, 354–5.
[9] Nihon kaiiki bunka kenkyūjo ed., *Namahage: sono men to shūzoku* (Akita-shi: Nihon kaiiki bunka kenkyūjo, 2004), 18.
[10] Michel Picard, "Cultural Heritage and Tourist Capital: Cultural Tourism in Bali," *International Tourism: Identity and Change*, ed. Marie-Françoise Lanfant, John B. Allcock and Edward M. Bruner (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 46.

residents, visitors from all over Japan, and even a group of American exchange students studying in Akita City.[11]

The festival itself is highly orchestrated, continuously narrated over loudspeakers, and features numerous events, most pertaining in some way to the Namahage theme.[12] In the center of the shrine grounds, a huge bonfire (*sedo*) lights up the snowy night sky. Among other events, there is the Namahage Daiko, a long and energetic taiko drumming concert with performers, dressed in straw raincoats and large Namahage masks, punctuating their rhythms by occasionally roaring at the crowd. The drumming is followed by Namahage Odori (dancing)—consisting of a pair of Namahage dancing in front of the raging *sedo* bonfire, pausing in photogenic poses at opportune moments while tourists with tripods and massive sophisticated lenses vie for position. Eventually, the "climax" of the festival is announced, and the spectators clamor into position, this time facing toward a mountain rising up behind the shrine. At the top of a ridge, silhouetted against the night sky, more than a dozen Namahage stand holding fiery torches—another perfect photo opportunity. The Namahage run along the ridge, down the hill, finally bursting onto the snowy shrine grounds, where for a good fifteen minutes they proceed to roar and chase around members of the audience. The tourists, laughing and shrieking, appear to enjoy themselves immensely. All the while, the distinctive Namahage roaring sound is blasted over the loudspeakers.

The Namahage Sedo Matsuri represents a transformation of the uninvited guest, the tourist, into a deity as privileged as the marebito. As Scott Schnell notes about Japanese festivals in general, a "commonly mentioned feature is that the deity, after being summoned into the society of humans, is treated in the manner of an honored guest. This includes the offering of food and drink as well as lively entertainment."[13] Perhaps it is no coincidence then that after the Namahage descend theatrically from the mountains to chase around the tourists, they proceed to distribute *mochi* rice cakes to all the visitors. In the New Year's Eve version of the ritual, food and drink are distributed *to* the Namahage—

[11] I am grateful to Akiyama Makoto of the Oga City Tourist Board for sharing these unofficial statistics with me.

[12] The description here is derived primarily from my own observations of the festival in the year 2000. For more details see Saitō Toshitane, "'Oga no Namahage' kō," *Namahage kenkyū kiyō*, ed. Oga no namahage hozon denshō sokushin iinkai (Oga-shi: Oga no namahage hozon denshō sokushin iinkai, 1998), 63–84.

[13] Scott Schnell, *The Rousing Drum: Ritual Performance in a Japanese Community* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 14.

they are the marebito, the special guests who bring good fortune for the year. In the Namahage Sedo Matsuri, the relationship has come full circle and now it is the Namahage who distribute mochi to the guests, these visiting deities who, by staying in local hotels, eating at local restaurants, and buying local products, do indeed bring a modicum of economic fortune to this remote area in the dead of the winter.

TOSHIDON

By way of comparison, I would like to briefly introduce a similar visiting deity ritual, one which contrasts distinctly with Namahage in that it has experienced very little touristic influence. The Toshidon ritual occurs every New Year's Eve on the island of Shimokoshiki-jima off the west coast of Kagoshima Prefecture. Similar to Namahage, Toshidon also features men dressed as deity/demon figures who make the rounds from one household to another, scaring and disciplining children. The islanders who practice Toshidon emphasize the very specific function of the ritual as a disciplinary procedure through which children—from infancy to age nine or ten—are both praised and scolded for their behavior throughout the year. The impact of this disciplinary procedure is powerful; it is not uncommon for children to burst into tears and seek the comfort of their parents as the Toshidon enumerate their specific infractions throughout the course of the previous year.

Given the emotionally intense nature of Toshidon, as well as its location on a warm and pleasant island, one might expect the ritual to become an icon of the Kagoshima region, or at the very least, a tourist draw for the small community of Shimokoshiki-jima. But in both years I observed the ritual, the only visitors other than myself were friends or relatives of the islanders; there were no tourists visiting out of curiosity or pleasure, that is, no uninvited guests clamoring for a view of the performance.[14] I do not wish to oversimplify the differences between Namahage and Toshidon with regard to tourism—clearly, for instance, local politics plays a factor here as does the relative inaccessibility of the island. I would also suggest, however, that to a certain extent the very different trajectory of the Toshidon is a function of the relationship the islanders have with notions of seeing and being seen.

[14] My comments here are based on observations of the Toshidon ritual in the Fumoto district from New Year's Eve of 1999 and 2000; I conducted fieldwork on the island from December 1999–January 2000 and December 2000–January 2001 with follow-up visits and interviews in June 2002 and July 2004.

On the island, there are no signs displaying pictures of Toshidon, no Toshidon key chains for sale, and nothing named after the Toshidon. It turns out, in fact, that the lack of visible Toshidon iconography is a conscious decision. In the district of Fumoto, where I observed the ritual, it is expressly forbidden to take photographs of the Toshidon. Several reasons are proffered for this prohibition. First, since the ritual takes place at nighttime, the flash of the camera would interfere with the concentration of the young men performing as Toshidon, and also be a distraction for the children and the family members. Implicit in this is the sense that the event is a private ceremony, enacted exclusively for the participants and the community, but not for tourists. Permitting photographs would alter the orientation of the performance: the Toshidon would be made aware of the cameras and act for the visitors rather than for the children, and the ritual would transform into performance.

But there is another reason for restricting photographs that is even more emphasized and reflects the importance of the Toshidon as once-a-year visiting strangers. If photographs were allowed, explained several island residents, then children would be able to see the Toshidon at *any* time of the year simply by looking at a picture of them, and the impact of their New Year's Eve visitation would be diffused. That is to say, when the Toshidon can be readily seen throughout the year and the children come to be familiar with their image, then their ability to frighten is attenuated. The very fact that one cannot gaze on the Toshidon except during the emotionally intense ritual in which they enter your home to scold you, makes them all the more powerful. Toshidon cannot be possessed through vision.

Inversely, the Toshidon themselves are endowed with a powerful and pervasive gaze. Rising up behind Fumoto, and visible from almost everywhere in the community, is a mountain called Katsu-yama. The Toshidon are said to live in the sky, descending down Katsu-yama on New Year's Eve. The children are told that all year round—even when they think they are alone—the Toshidon are watching from their vantage point in the sky, carefully noting both good and bad behavior. Furthermore, Katsu-yama, the Toshidon's entranceway to the community, is visible at all times from anywhere in the village, like a constant, panoptic threat of surveillance. Indeed, internalizing this surveillance, the children come to believe that throughout the year they are being watched, and they modify their behavior appropriately. Toshidon are always present, indeed, but it is their *invisible* presence which gives them cachet. Photography would destroy this invisibility, and with it the imbalance of power that makes the ritual meaningful. In a

sense, I would suggest, the islanders recognize the gaze as an instrument of control; by restricting its use by "lower-level deities" or uninvited guests, they preserve its power for the higher-level deities, the Toshidon themselves.

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In Japan, as elsewhere, the heritage or cultural tourist attraction resides at the heart of a paradox in which exploitation and preservation (and exploitation for the sake of preservation) go hand in hand. Namahage and Toshidon are at opposite ends of the contemporary tourism spectrum. The Namahage enjoy a national reputation and frequent exposure on television and in other media. A creature remarkably similar to the Namahage even makes a cameo appearance in Miyazaki Hayao's *Spirited Away* [*Sen to Chirhiro no kami-kakushi*, 2001]. Toshidon, on the other hand, is staunchly resistant to the tourist gaze and inhospitable to the uninvited guest; it remains all but unknown outside Kagoshima Prefecture. This is not to say that Toshidon is any more "authentic" or "pure" or "real" than Namahage. Rather there is more to be gained by considering these differences in terms of their "value" within the community. Toshidon performs a number of practical functions—disciplining children and reaffirming a sense of community for the participants—through exercising a certain religious or magical role, what Walter Benjamin would call its "cult value," as a celebration of the mythical marebito and the yearly renewal of village life. The Namahage Sedo Matsuri, on the other hand, commodifies such ritual for what Benjamin would call its "exhibition value"; it becomes a secular event, enacted for feting Orikuchi's uninvited guests and benefiting economically from their interest in observing the performance.[15]

If, as John Urry and others have suggested, the tourist gaze represents a form of consumption,[16] then the Toshidon's refusal to accommodate the uninvited guest is not necessarily a resistance to the commodification of its cultural resources for the sake of preserving them, but rather a resistance to attenuating the "cult value" of its ritual by permitting its visual consumption. Alternately, a festival such as the Namahage Sedo Matsuri capitalizes on the "exhibition value" of the ritual and demonstrates the way in which the gaze of the tourist not only consumes but can also itself be consumed. By taking advantage of the

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[15] See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 223–226.

[16] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

uninvited guest's desire to observe ritual, the community transforms tourist into marebito, and converts the uninvited guest's visual acquisitiveness into economic renewal. Whether for cult or exhibition value, for ritual or performance, at the heart of both Toshidon and Namahage is the transformative power of vision. As the growing prominence of digital photography and other forms of new media continues to alter the ways in which tourist sites (and sights) are seen and consumed, Orikuchi's notions of the marebito and the uninvited guest, as old as they are, may help us to theorize and articulate in fresh ways the dynamics of ritual and its observation in Japan and elsewhere.