

The Localisation of Kumano Gongen Cult and Mountain Beliefs: From *engi* to *kagura*

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Abstract This paper discusses the Kumano Gongen cult, which played an important role for Japanese religious beliefs and mountain beliefs. The first part is the analysis of the *engi* of Kumano in comparison with that of Hikosan in medieval times. The second part focuses on the localisation of Kumano Gongen cult tracing and explaining the shift from *engi* to *kagura* in medieval and modern times. This paper analyses the contents of the *Kumano Gongen gosujaku engi* focusing on three themes: 1) mountain beliefs found in *engi* narratives; 2) the concept of *kami*; and 3) the diffusion and localisation of religious concepts about Kirime no Ōji, showing how the shift from Gongen to Ōji occurred.

Keywords Mountain beliefs. Pilgrimage. Ritual. Kagura. Engi. Shugendō. Kumano.

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1 Introduction

This paper discusses the Kumano Gongen 熊野権現 cult, which played an important role for Japanese religious beliefs and mountain beliefs. The first part is the analysis of the *engi* 縁起 (accounts of sacred origins) of Kumano 熊野 in comparison with that of Hikosan 彦山 in medieval times. The second part focuses on the localisation of Kumano Gongen cult tracing the movement from *engi* to *kagura* 神楽 (ritual drama and dance) in medieval and modern times.

According to the original ground and traces (*honji sujaku* 本地垂迹) theory, which developed after the mid-Heian period (794-1192), Japanese deities (*kami* 神) appeared as the incarnations of buddhas and bodhisattvas to save the people (*suijaku*), and, conversely, the buddhas and bodhisattvas were the original form (*honji*) of the Japanese deities. Many mountain *kami* were given the title of *gongen* 権現 (avatar), and *engi* were written to transmit the legends of sacred origins about these *gongen*. The oldest *engi* text of Kumano Gongen is the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* 熊野権現御垂迹縁起 (in *Chōkan kanmon* 長寛勘文, Chōkan 1, 1163), which is regarded as the primary *engi* for the Kumano deity. This *engi* focuses on the Hongū 本宮, one of the Three Places of Kumano (*Kumano Sansho Gongen* 熊野三所権現). The origin legends of the other two sacred places, Shingū 新宮 and Nachi 那智, differ from that of Hongū. In this study the oldest and fundamental text about Hongū is investigated.

This paper analyses the contents of the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* as a starting point and focuses on three themes: 1) mountain beliefs found in *engi* narratives by the comparison of *Kumano* and *Hikosan engi*; 2) the concept of *kami* (including local tutelary deities *jinushigami* 地主神, mountain deities *yama no kami* 山神 and fierce deities *kōjin* 荒神) in representations of nature; and 3) the diffusion and localisation of religious concepts about Kirime no Ōji 切目王子; this will entail an examination of the localisation of Kumano Gongen cult, the ox-bezoar talismans (*goōhōin* 牛玉宝印), the role of Kirime no Ōji performed by *kagura* and its relationship with hot water rituals (*yudate* 湯立) and mountain asceticism (Shungendō 修験道). I will show how the shift from Gongen to Ōji, and from *engi* to *kagura*, occurred.

2 Kumano and Hikosan *engi*

2.1 *Engi* Similarities

Comparing the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* (1163) about Kumano and the *Hikosan ruki* 彦山流記 (Kenpō 1, 1213), an *engi* about the Mount Hiko in Western Japan, I analyse the transformation of the mountain beliefs from the Heian to the Kamakura period (1192-1333).

The plot of the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* is as follows (Hanawa 1960, 242-3).

In the year of the tiger wood-yang (*kinoe tora* 甲寅), Kumano Gongen flew from the original place associated with Prince (*ōji* 王子) Shin 信 (also written 晉) to Mount Hiko 日子山 (also written 彦山) in Japan. He took the shape of a crystal octagon. After five years, in the year of the horse earth-yang (*tsuchinoe uma* 戊午), he moved to Mount Ishizuchi 石鎚 in the Iyo 伊予 province. After six years, in the year of the mouse wood-yang (*kinoe ne* 甲子), he transferred to Mount Yuzuruha 遊鶴羽 in the Awaji 淡路 province. After six years, in the year of the horse metal-yang (*kanoe uma* 庚午) he went to Mount Kiribe 切部山 in the Kii 紀伊 province. After fifty-seven years, in the year of the horse metal-yang, he reached Mount Kannokura 神蔵山 in the same province. After sixty-one years, in the year of the horse metal-yang, he moved to the Iwabuchi valley 石淵谷. Here the deities Musubitama 結玉 and Ketsumimiko 家津美御子 were venerated in two shrines. After thirteen years, in the year of the horse water-yang (*mizunoe uma* 壬午), he took the shape of three lunar discs and flew on the tops of three chestnut oaks (*ichii* 欒) at Hongū Ōyunohara 大湯原 (also written 大齋原). After eight years, in the year of the tiger metal-yang (*kanoe tora* 庚寅), a hunter called Chiyosada 千与定 from Minamikawachi 南河内 in the Kumano area went up to the Iwata River 石多河 pursuing a large wild boar and arrived at Ōyunohara. The hunter ate the wild boar that he found dead by the side of an oak and planned to spend the night under this tree. When he saw the three lunar discs on the top of the tree he wondered why it had left the heavens and was told, "I am the Gongen of the Three Places of Kumano. The first shrine is Shōsei Daibosatsu 証誠大菩薩. The two moons are the Ryōsho Gongen 兩所権現".

The plot of *Hikosan ruki* is reported below (Gorai 1984, 463-5).

Hikosan Gongen vowed to save human beings (*rishō* 利生) in the east and, starting from the Yuèzhī 拋月氏 (Jp. *Hōgesshi*) land in China, moved east. He threw five swords from the country of Magadha in India. In the year of the tiger wood-yang (*kinoe tora* 甲寅) he crossed the sea from an ancient place associated with Prince Shin 晉 on Mount Tiantai 天臺山 (Jp. Mount Tendai) and arrived by boat at Ōtsu 大津 in the district of Tagawa 田河 in the province of Buzen 豊前.

Hikosan Gongen asked the local tutelary deity Kawara Myōjin 香春明神 for lodging but was refused. So he ordered Kongō Dōji 金剛童子 to eradicate all the trees on Mount Kawara and transformed it into a huge rock. Hikosan Gongen climbed up Mount Hiko and stopped at its middle reaches to negotiate with the local tutelary deity Kitayama 北山. Finally, Kitayama moved to Konomiyama 許斐山. In Konkō 金光 7 (587) year of the monkey fire-yang (*hinoe saru* 丙申), Hikosan Gongen descended in the Hanñya cave 般若窟 in the shape of an octagonal crystal. There he discovered the first of the five swords. After eighty-two years, in the year of the horse earth-yang, he went to Mount Ishizuchi and found the second. After eighty-six years, in the year of the mouse wood-yang, he moved to Mount Yuzuruha 楡蘂羽山 in the Awaji province and found the third. After six years, in the year of the horse metal-yang, he arrived at Mount Kiribe in the Kii province and found the fourth. After sixty-one years, in the year of the year of the horse metal-yang, he discovered the fifth at the Iwabuchi valley. After two-thousand years, on the day of horse wood-yang (*kinoe uma* 甲午) in the year of the horse wood-yang he returned to Mount Hiko.

The contents in the *Kumano* and *Hikosan engi* suggest that these two documents might have influenced each other. Taking into account the similarities between their plots, these two *engi* reveal common features of the origin of deities and beliefs in those deities. And these deities played a pivotal role in Japanese religious beliefs about mountain.¹

2.2 Direction. Eastward from the Origin Place

There is an eastward movement from China (or India) toward Japan, Kyūshū, and Kii province. Foreign deities become native deities by following the route of Buddhist transmission through the three areas of India, China, and Japan (Sangoku-Denrai 三国伝来). The starting point is located in India, which is imagined as an origin place of Buddhism in the West.

2.3 Caves and Rocks

In mountain beliefs, caves and rocks are the most important origin places. The Hanñya-cave on Mount Hiko is extremely important and is regarded as the Jewel-room Cave (Tamaya-kutsu 玉屋窟) in which resides the spirit of Hikosan Gongen. It is probable that the stone pillar located inside the cave was venerated as a manifestation of the crystallised octagonal body of Hikosan Gongen. The history of the

¹ See the general explanation on the mountain beliefs in Japan in Suzuki 2015.

beliefs about this cave reveals a progression from water belief, via dragon worship, to the appearance of the jewel.

2.4 Reversal Between Centre and Periphery

The Gongen moves from India (centre) to China and eventually to Japan (periphery). While in Japan, he proceeds from the periphery toward the centre: Mount Hiko, Mount Ishizuchi, and Mount Yuzuruha are transfer points that direct one toward Kumano in Kii peninsula, which is the centre in the system of beliefs about mountains. But Hikosan Gongen do not goes to Kumano and comes back to his origin place located at Kyūsyū 九州. This is the dynamic reversal between centre and periphery.

2.5 Points, Lines, Area

Points, lines, and areas unify sacred landscapes and contribute to the sacralisation of the land. Kumano and Hiko Gongen arrive in the Kii province in the same year and proceed from West to South following 'lines' (Mount Kiribe → Mount Kannokura → Iwabuchi valley). After sixty years they transform these 'points' into an 'area', which is conceived of as a sacralised territory. There is a sort of qualitative transformation from 'points' (mountains), to 'lines' (pilgrimage routes), from 'lines' to 'area' (sacred territory).

2.6 Sacred Places as a Representation of Nature

The natural landscape of Kumano is a representation of a sacred place. Mountains, valleys, and forests such as Kiribe, Kannokura, and Iwabuchi, which gained significance due to their status as locations through which Kumano Gongen passed, constitute the essential elements of Kumano and are regarded as numinous sites. At Kannokura and Iwabuchi there are also traces of the cult dedicated to Shingū and Asuka 阿須賀, who were enshrined along riverbanks and seashores as the liminal place. These places testify to an early stage in the sacralising process of the Kumano landscape.

2.7 Water Belief

Water belief is central to *engi* narratives. Thanks to the divine power of Hikosan Gongen, a spring gushes from the Hanñya-cave on Mount Hiko. In the same way, as soon as Kumano Gongen appears,

water starts flowing at Ōyunohara. Water belief suggests the purifications and renewal of life (*saisei* 再生) and remind us of the pivotal role played by springs in mountain beliefs.

2.8 Moon Belief

Kumano Gongen appears in the guise of the moon at Ōyunohara. The shape of the moon of the twenty-third night (*nijūsan-ya* 二十三夜) resembles three bodies that progressively manifest themselves in the middle of the night starting from the East. This narrative corresponds to the visible figure of Kumano Gongen as the Three Places (Sansho Gongen 三所権現). The day in which Hikosan Gongen returned to Mount Hiko was the fifteenth day of the first month when the first full moon of the year appears in the sky. This day is thought to be a moment when the universe regenerates. The nocturnal landscape lit by the moon's glow as well as mountains are also important elements in Pure Land belief (*jōdo shinkō* 浄土信仰).

2.9 Four Stage Composition

These *engi* display a fourfold structure: 1) arrival of the foreign deity from abroad, 2) encounter with the local tutelary deity (*jinushigami*), 3) buddhification of the local deity and removal, and 4) indigenisation processes on the territory. At the end of these four stages the narration of the origins is concluded.

2.10 Logic of Place

A central element is the amalgamation of folk believes (*minkan shinkō* 民間信仰) (e.g., veneration of mountains) with Buddhism. What really matters are not doctrinal teachings, but rather the semiotic links that tie together different locations. Mountains are particularly suitable environments for connecting and merging different cultural discourses.

3 *Engi* Differences

There are also structural differences between the two *engi*.

3.1 Difference of Quality and Aim of the Text: Cosmology and Ideology

The *Kumano engi* was intended to serve as textual proof of the origins of the land in legal disputes over control of the fiefs. It is for this reason that it displays a strong administrative flavour, in which Ise 伊勢 and Kumano are described as two halves of a single territorial and intellectual body; it thus reflects the intentions of the aristocratic elites who sponsored the creation of this *engi*. On the other hand, *Hikosan engi* focuses on the legitimisation of Mount Hiko, which had been emerging as a centre for mountain beliefs in western Japan. Competing with Kumano for the status of 'centre', the *Hikosan engi* emphasises the independence of Mount Hiko. This text was probably composed by Buddhist monks and its historical approach is based on the 'original ground and traces' (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹) theories. The *Kumano engi* prioritises ideology, while the *Hikosan engi* emphasises cosmology.

3.2 Narrative Differences About Sacred Places: Indigenous Assimilation and Continuity of Foreignness

Kumano Gongen's origin is in China, while Hikosan Gongen's origin is in the Indian country of Magadha. In the concluding part of the *Kumano engi*, a hunter arrives at Ōyunohara, where he is ordered to stop killing, starts serving the Gongen, and organises rituals on his behalf. On the other hand, the research of the five swords that Hikosan Gongen threw from India does not conclude at Kumano but at Mount Hiko. The act of throwing swords from China to Japan is a recurrent theme in the foundation stories of temples associated with eminent monks such as Kūkai 空海 (774-835) and Saichō 最澄 (767-822). The legend of the sword-throwing is also reported in the *Shintōshū* 神道集 (14th century) edited by an Agui 安居院 monk on Mount Hiei 比叡山 (*Shintō Taikei Hensan-kai* 1988, 35). After describing the return of Hikosan Gongen to Mount Hiko, the *engi* focuses on the relationships between Hōren 法蓮, the third founder, who saved Mount Hiko from decline, and the sacred place of Usa 宇佐. According to the *Chinzei Hikosan engi* 鎮西彦山縁起 (1572) (Gorai 1984, 474-7), the monk Zenshō 善正 arrived in Japan from the Northern Wei dynasty 北魏 in China and met with the hunter Fujiwara Kōyū 藤原恒雄. After this encounter, Kōyū repented for killing, received ordination, and became the first monk in Japan. The historical background

of these events is the third year of the reign of Emperor Senka 宣化天皇 (538), which is the same year that Buddhism was introduced to Japan, where it was initially perceived as a foreign element.

3.3 Narrative Differences About Sacred Places: Revelation or Hiding of the Deity's Name

How is it possible to narrate a sacred place? Kumano Gongen spent five years on Mount Hiko, six years on Mount Ishizuchi, and went to the Kii province after six years. Here the name of the deity is revealed to forests, rivers, and specific locations such as the Iwabuchi valley and Ōyunohara. The deities of mountains and forests venerated by the hunter communities are included within the *honji suijaku* system under the general name of local tutelary deities (*jinushigami*, 地主神). This is the reason why the hunter becomes a religious practitioner for Kumano Gongen. In the *Kumano engi* the revelation of the deity's name plays a pivotal role. On the one hand, Hikosan Gongen spent eighty-two years on Mount Hiko, six years on Mount Ishizuchi, and moved to the Kii province after six years. In his quest for the five swords, the Hikosan Gongen passed from mountain to mountain, but his name is never revealed, and after spending two-thousands years at Iwabuchi valley, he returned to Kyūshū. The main point of this narrative is to reveal a process, not an end. The climax of the *Hikosan engi* is the self-seclusion ritual (*sanrō* 参籠) performed by Gagen 臥驗, a disciple of Hōren, in the forty-nine caves that resemble the internal court of the Tuṣita Heaven (Jp. Tosotsuten, 兜率天) or the empowerment (*genriki* 験力) of Hikosan Gongen that transforms Kongō Dōji 金剛童子 as his messenger. The focus of this text is on Buddhist ascetic practices and the revealing of his name is not important. It exhibits a strong Tendai esoteric influence. The *Kumano engi* emphasises the importance of the last sacred place, Ōyunohara, while the *Hikosan engi* emphasises the Han'ya cave, that is the starting point of the narrative. Even if the vector of narrative is opposite, water becomes a connecting and shared element between riverbeds and caves.

3.4 Differences in the Integration of the Indigenous Deities

In the case of the encounter between Kumano Gongen and the tutelary deity of that sacred territory, the clash is not intense. On the other hand, the encounter between Hikosan Gongen and the tutelary deities such as Kawara Myōjin 香春明神 or Kitayama 北山 is firstly characterised by strong opposition, which is later transformed into a permission. Kumano Gongen is represented flying in the sky from China to Japan, while Hikosan Gongen realistically arrives by boat,

which echoes the historical contacts between Japan and the continent. The *engi* of Kumano integrates different elements through imagination, while the *engi* of Hikosan combines them through logic.

3.5 Differences in Textual Form

The narrative content of the *Kumano engi* is simpler than that of the *Hikosan engi*, which adds many details about Hikosan Gongen's eastward movement. The time divisions of the *Hikosan engi* are based on exact calculations of the sexagesimal system (*eto* 干支), while the *Kumano engi* is more approximate and reports mistakes, such as the name of Prince Shin written with 信 instead of 晉. Generally speaking, the *Hikosan engi* is more accurate. The *Kumano engi* is usually thought to be the earlier of the two *engi*, but it may in fact be the later in some elements.

3.6 Historical Background

The sacred landscape, which is described in the *Kumano engi*, is limited to Hongū and does not include Shingū and Nachi, both of which are mentioned in the *Kumanosan ryakki* 熊野山略記 (Eikyō 永享 2, 1430) in which Ragyō Shōnin 裸形上人 is presented as the patriarch of the “Three Mountains of Kumano” (Kumano Sanzan 熊野三山) (Chiho-shi Kenkyūjo 1957, 425). The *Kumano engi* includes different narrative from other *engi* and illustrated stories (*otogizoshi* 御伽草子), such as the *Kumano no honji* 熊野の本地. In Kanji 寛治 4 (1090), a monk of Onjōji Temple (園城寺 Jimon-branch 寺門派), Zōyo 増誉 (1032-1116), became the superintendent (*kengyō* 檢校) of Kumano Sanzan after serving as a guide (*sendatsu* 先達) for Emperor Shirakawa 白河 (1053-1129) in a pilgrimage (*gokō* 御幸) to Kumano. The alliance between Onjōji Temple and high aristocracy members marked the golden age of Kumano pilgrimage. On the other hand, an episode dated Kanji 8 (1094), which is reported in the *Chūyūki* 中右記, describes an uprising of the monks of Mount Hiko and the powerful coalition between Hiko and Usa. In Eireki 永曆 1 (1160) Emperor Goshirakawa 後白河 (1127-1192) dedicated a protective shrine to Kumano Gongen at Higashi-yama 東山 in Kyōto; it appears that Mount Hiko was an auxiliary fief under the control of Kumano. In Ōho 応保 2 (1162) there were tumults in the fiefs of Kumano Hongū in the Kai 甲斐 province, and a petition recorded in the *Chōkan kanmon* 長寛勘文 (1163) makes an explicit reference to the *Kumano engi*. It is probable that the *Kumano engi* was composed after the construction of the new Kumano Shrine on Higashi-yama, and after information about the situation on Mount Hiko was collected. It seems that the *Hikosan ruki* (1213) was writ-

ten in order to escape from Kumano's yoke, stressing as it does the fact that Hiko's tradition was older than Kumano's. Mount Hiko is associated with the Pure Land of the bodhisattva Miroku 弥勒 as the same as Mount Yoshino 吉野山 and Mount Oomine 大峯山 in the centre of mountain beliefs. At Hikosan some elements of Kumano influence are remained, such as the construction of *sūtra* mound (*kyōzuka* 経塚), the ritual invitation (*kanjō* 勧請) of a deity called Imakumano 新熊野, the engraving of the bodhisattva Seishi's 勢至 Sanskrit letter, main statue for the twenty-third night vigil (*nijūsan-ya*) in a cave. Moon belief (*tsuki shinkō* 月信仰) and Pure Land belief (*jōdo shinkō* 浄土信仰) exhibit a Kumano influence. The historical background had an important impact on the narrative structures of these two *engi*.

4 Kirime no Ōji

4.1 Positioning Kirime no Ōji

I will now focus on Kirime no Ōji to clarify the transmission and localisation of the *Kumano engi*. In both the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* and *Hikosan ruki*, Mount Kiribe is the first place reached by the Gongen in Kii province. The *Kumano engi* reports that the Gongen's abode was "a pine tree over the deep pool called Tamanagi 玉那木 on the northern marine coast and the west side of Mount Kiribe". Similarly, the *Hikosan ruki* reports that the Gongen established his residence "over the deep pool of Tamanagi at Mount Kiribe". The term *tamanagi* echoes the belief that divine spirits (*shinrei* 神靈) reside on *nagi* 椰 leaves (Podocarpus trees), which were also regarded as the sacred tree (*shinboku* 神木) of Kumano. Mount Kiribe was later called Kirime no Ōji, one of the five *ōji* who were selected as important place among the ninety-nine *ōji* shrine, the retainers and messengers for Kumano Gongen.

In the *Shozan engi* 諸山縁起 (c. 1192) there is an interesting passage about Kirime no Ōji (Sakurai, Hagiwara, Miyada 1975, 102-3). It reports that during a pilgrimage from Ōmine 大峰 to Mount Aitoku 愛徳山, En no gyōja 役行者 met with an old man at Hosshinmon 発心門. According to the old man there were three sites at the foot of Mount Kumano where ascetics who climbed and descended the mountain were robbed of their getting merit by supernatural powers (*genki no rishō* 験気の利生). The three places were Hosshinmon, Taki no moto 瀧本 (瀧尻?), and Kirime. This was due to the fact that the tutelary deity of Kumano always opposed virtue. The old man explained to En no gyōja that during the ascetic practices on Mount Kumano it was possible to dispel this obstacle-deity (*kōjin*) by throwing soybeans, applying *nagi* leaves on the cap, and reciting the appropriate spells

near pine trees. He said that the *nagi* tree corresponds to the symbolic form (*sanmaya-gyō* 三昧耶形) of Kongō Dōji 金剛童子. After accomplishing ascetic practices on Mount Kumano by En no gyōja 役行者, his disciple Jugen 壽元 succeeded the position of ascetic practitioner after nine ascetic retreats on Ōmine, and then moved to Mount Hiko in Kyūshū. According to the *Shozan engi*, Kirime no Ōji corresponds to one of the Kumano obstacle-deities that prevent people's passage at three specific places. The *Ryōbu mondō hishō* 兩峯問答秘鈔 reports that the violent-deities (*soranshin* 夔乱神) residing at Haraidono 祓殿, Hosshinmon, Takijiri 滝尻, and Kirime "could be blinded by throwing the scent of soybeans at their eyes" (Nihondaizōkyō Hensankai 1985b, 610). Haraidono was a place for ritual ablutions before entering Hongū, Hosshinmon was the site where pilgrims exchanged their old pilgrimage walking stick (*kongō-tsue* 金剛杖) for a new one, Takijiri was the entrance of the sacred territory and corresponded to the confluence of the Tomita 富田川 and Iwabune rivers 石船川, and Kirime was a veneration place (*haisho* 拝所) on the west coast of the Kii peninsula. Because all these places were important liminal points inhabited by tutelary deities, ascetics had to pacify (*ibu* 慰撫) the *kami* and make abstinence (*kihi* 忌避) to accomplish their ascetic practices. Kirime was regarded as a point of contact between the Kii peninsula and the other world (*takai* 他界).

4.2 Legends about Kirime no Ōji

According to the *Kumano mōde nikki* 熊野詣日記 of Jūshin'in jitsui 住心院実意 (Gorai 1976, 422), on the sixth day of the tenth month of Ōei 応永 3 (1427), before passing in front of the Kirime no Ōji shrine, the author made up his face with soybean flour, disguising his human form and imitating the sound of a fox's cry: "kō-kō". Thanks to this trick he could escape the peril. In the *Hōzō Ekotoba* 宝蔵絵詞 (Bun'an 文安 2, 1446) (Ishizuka 1970, 77-81) there is the story of a monk who was at a service for Kirime no Ōji (*Kiribe no Ōji* 切部王子 in the original text). Because the Ōji began to dislike the monk, an old pilgrim suggested that he "cover his body from the top of the head with bad smelling sardines (*iwashii* 鰯) and rotting *nagi* leaves" (Ishizuka 1970, 81). The Ōji could not stand the stink, flew into a rage, and cut the nose of the monk, who died immediately. When the Ōji returned to Kumano Gongen and reported the death of the monk, the Gongen immobilised the Ōji, cut his right foot, and exiled him to Mount Kiribe. Nevertheless, the Ōji started stealing the religious benefits (*fukusaiwai* 福幸) of the people who passed by his mountain during the Kumano pilgrimage. Seeing the sorrow of the pilgrims, Kumano Gongen summoned Inari Myōjin 稲荷明神, who decided to send his friend deity Akomachi あこまち to talk with Kirime no Ōji.

Akomachi told the Ōji that those people who made up their faces with soybean flour (*mame no ko* まめのこ) were his followers, and he made Ōji promise to not steal the pilgrims' religious benefits. Then Inari Myōjin reported to Kumano Gongen that Kirime no Ōji could not stand the smell of the soybean flour and from that moment all the Kumano pilgrims smeared their faces with soybean flour when passing by Mount Kiribe in order to avoid the attacks of the Ōji. From these narratives it is possible to understand that Kumano pilgrims imitated the cry of the fox because this animal was the emissary of their protective deity (*shugojin* 守護神), Inari Myōjin. Mount Kiribe is "the point of contact between the faith in Kumano and Inari", who agree to protect pilgrims (Nanami 1988, 91). Nevertheless, Kirime no Ōji obeys the words of the local deity Akomachi rather than Inari Myōjin. On the other hand, even if the monk who practiced asceticism at Kumano received divine protection (*kago* 加護) from Kirime no Ōji, in the end he was killed because he harmed a sacred tree of *nagi* leaves and used smelly foods, such as sardines. These legends seem to emphasise the negative attributes of Kirime no Ōji. Nevertheless, it is important to take into account that even Kumano Gongen was offended by the monk's behaviour and consequently punished him. Kirime no Ōji should be regarded as the original tutelary deity of Kumano, who has the power to pacify the fierce deities of nature (*araburu shizen no kami* 荒ぶる自然のカミ) and realise the ascetics' vows.

The visual representation of Kirime no Ōji in the *Kumano mandara* conforms to the legend, as the deity is depicted without the right foot while leaning on a stick (Yamamoto 2012). His external appearance is similar to Seitaka Dōji 制陀迦童子 in the retinue of Fudō Myōō 不動明王. Like Kirime no Ōji, Seitaka Dōji has the ability to control evil influences and transmits the rough nature of the mountain recesses. The single-foot image of Kirime no Ōji reminds us of the appearance of the mountain monster standing on one leg called *Ippon datara* 一本ダタラ, who is known in the Western and Southern parts of the Kii Peninsula, the upper part of the Kumano River, and the Totsukawa river 十津川 village in the Yoshino 吉野 province. In a valley close to the area of Kirime no Ōji there is a legend about an ascetic who saved an anthropophagous fierce spirit called *oni* 鬼 by chanting magic spells. According to the *Ryōbu mondō hishō* (Nihondaizōkyō Hensankai 1985b, 610), an ascetic was making a pilgrimage to a valley close to the abode of Kirime no Ōji in order to purify his body when a blue demoness approached the ascetic and confessed to him that she had accumulated a terrible karmic debt because of her habit of devouring human beings. The demoness begged for help from the ascetic, who recited the *Ōnakatomi no harae* 大中臣祓 purification formula and saved her by weaving a big sacred hemp (*ōnusa* 大幣) over her body.

In the vicinity of Kirime no Ōji there was a constant presence of various types of evil creatures. According to the *Shozan engi*, the tu-

telary deities of Kumano were violent deities (*soranshin*) with a rough temperament who transformed various places into dangerous spots. Nevertheless, the mountain ascetics who were empowered by performing ascetic practices had the ability to control these local deities, transforming them into protective spirits (*shugorei* 守護靈) and using them as tutelary servants, Dharma protectors (*gohō dōji* 護法童子). On Mount Kiribe ascetics obtained divine powers from Kumano Gongen and Inari Myōjin thanks to which they smashed the obstacles created by local deities and forced them to become protectors of the Dharma at the service of human beings.

4.3 Transformation to Dharma Protector

The whole Kumano pilgrimage was a ritual. Ablutions (*kori* 垢離) and purificatory rituals (*misogi harae* 禊祓) were diligently conducted at five important five place, Gotai Ōji 五体王子. Ritual drama and dances such as *kagura* 神楽 and *nareko-mai* 馴子舞 were dedicated to the deities. The goal of Kumano pilgrimage was not limited to obtaining rebirth in Amida (Amitābha)'s Pure Land (*gokuraku ōjō no jōdo iri* 極樂往生の浄土入り); it was also to purify oneself of misdeeds (*metsuzai jōka* 滅罪浄化) (*Ryōbu mondō hishō*, first volume, thirty-ninth chapter). Because of the progressive influence of the Shugendō tradition, elements of hard ascetic practice on mountains and in forests (*saririn tosō* 山林抖擻) became fundamental to the Kumano pilgrimage. A Shugendō text (*Ozasa hiyōroku* 小笹秘要録) explains that the Kumano pilgrimage imitate the funeral ritual and enact the baby born ritual at the same time. It is also said that the Kumano pilgrims were constantly protected by Dharma protectors, Gohō Dōji (護法童子). In the sixth chapter of the *Keiranshūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集, which is dedicated to protective deities (*shinmyōbu* 神明部), it is reported that “in the Kumano pilgrims’ language (*michi kotoba* 道詞) men were [called] *sao* サヲ, women *ita* イタ, nuns *soki* ソキ, and monks *sori* ソリ”. The term *sao* referred to male shamans (*otoko miko* 男巫), *ita* to female shamans (*miko* 巫女), and even lay pilgrims were said to walk during the pilgrimage to Kumano in a state of possession (*hyōi* 憑依) because Gohō Dōji descended on their bodies in order to protect them. On the other hand, nuns and monks were called *soki* and *sori* because they had shaved (*teiatsu* 剃髮) and round heads (*enchō* 円頂) that were not suitable for possession.

On their way back to the capital, pilgrims stopped at Fushimi Inari 伏見稲荷 on the southern side of Kyōto, where they performed the ritual of the “Dharma protector dismissal” (*gohō okuri* 護法送り). The chapter “Yasuyori’s pilgrimage to Kumano” (*Yasuyori Kumano mōde* 康頼熊野詣) in the *Engyō-bon* 延慶本 version of the *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 reports that “after offering paper streamers (*hōhei* 奉

幣) to the *kami*, [Yasuyori] greatly rejoiced, replaced the *nagi* leaves of Kirime no Ōji with the *sugi* 榎 (*Cyptomeria*) branches of Inari, and obtained the *kurome* 黒目". The changing from the *nagi* leaves to the *sugi* branches symbolised the obtainment of a rebirth in Amida's Pure Land after death and the shift to Inari Myōjin's protection for returning to the capital. The chapter "Kumano pilgrimage" (*Kumano sankei bon* 熊野参詣品) explains that the word *kurome* "refers to the lower upper birth (*jōbon geshō* 上品下生)" level in Amida's Pure Land. The character *me* 目 means 'eye' and, at the same time, a liminal point that marks the contact zone between the visible and the invisible world. Kirime no Ōji represented the entrance from a foreign country to the Kii peninsula, the starting point for approaching the sacred land of Kumano, the liminal point between sea and mountains, the forests where Dharma protectors and Inari Myōjini met and a multileveled extra-ordinariness that produced a variety of legends.

4.4 *Nagi* and *goōhoin*, Ox-bezoar Talismans

At Kirime no Ōji the *nagi* tree was considered a sacred tree. Both the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* and the *Hikosan ruki* make references to the *nagi*. In the *Shozan engi* the *nagi* leaves are regarded as bodily transformations (*hengeshin* 變化身) of Kongō Dōji that opposes the fierce spirits of the mountain. The term *sanmaya* 三昧耶 (Skt. *samaya*) means the symbolic forms that embody the vows of buddhas and bodhisattvas to save human beings and originally were sacred objects and ritual hand marks related with various buddhas and bodhisattvas. The interpretation of the *nagi* leaves as the symbolic form of Kongō Dōji had a special development of tree worship in the Kii peninsula. In the medieval period Kumano pilgrims used *nagi* leaves in their sleeves and hats as protective talismans (*gofu* 護符) for a safe trip (*dōchū anzen* 道中安全), and warriors did the same with their armour and helmets to dispel adversities (*sainan yoke* 災難除け).

The *nagi* leaves were believed to bring harmony between husband and wife (*fūfu enman* 夫婦円満). Because this leaf is narrow and full of parallel veins, it is easy to tear it horizontally, but it is difficult to do the same vertically. Therefore, it is called "power grass" (*chikara shiba* チカラシバ). Because the word *nagi* echoes the flat calm on the sea (*nagi* 凪), the same leaf was used to protect ocean voyages (*kōkai anzen* 航海安全). Itinerant female preachers (Skt. *bhikkhuni*) of Kumano (Kumano *bikuni* 熊野比丘尼) spread the belief in Kumano by distributing ox-bezoar talismans, *goōhoin* and *nagi* leaves. In the *Kii zoku fudoki* 紀伊続風土記 (1839) it is written that Kumano *bikuni* had their headquarters at Kirime no Ōji (Niita 1970).

It is highly probable that the belief in *nagi* leaves originated in the Kirime no Ōji area and subsequently spread to Kumano. At Hongū the

pilgrims were given ox-bezoar talismans together with *nagi* leaves to protect them during the trip. The ox-bezoar talismans displayed the characters of the issuing temple's name in the guise of crows, snakes, hawks, pigeons, or scolopendra, which were seen as emissaries of the Gongen, and were printed on rice paper using charcoal and wooden blocks. The red seal (*shuin* 朱印) of the ox-bezoar talisman was a source of incantatory power and reproduced the shape of a Sanskrit seed-letter (*shuji bonji* 種子梵字), in which resided the spirit of a specific deity. The ox-bezoars, which were melted in the ink, were thought to be powerful healing substances that protected against diseases. *Nagi* leaves and ox-bezoar talismans formed a sort of talismanic set that originated in the religious beliefs focused on the trees of the Kii peninsula. This type of talisman was not simply apotropaic or protective but was also a material representation of the emissaries of Kongō Dōji, Gohō Dōji, and other tutelary deities that contributed to spreading faith in the *ōji* of Kumano as Gongen's divine messengers (*shieki rei* 使役靈).

I would now like to turn to the transition from the Gongen cult to the *Ōji* cult, and from *engi* to *kagura*.

4.5 Kirime and Kakko-Kirime: The Localisation of Kirime no Ōji

Sacred dances such as *Nareko-mai* 馴子舞 are performed at Kirime no Ōji and the *Kii zoku fudoki* describes the top of the hill close to the old shrine dedicated to Kirime no Ōji as the 'residence of the drum' (*taiko yashiki* 太鼓屋敷). There was a deep connection between Kirime no Ōji and the drum, which reverberated in the place name where the ritual and festivals (*matsuri* 祭) on the behalf of this deity were held. Nevertheless, the *kagura* dedicated to Kirime no Ōji are few in number.

In the *Ōmoto kagura* 大元神楽 performed at the Ochi 邑智 district (present day Gōtsu 江津 city) in Shimane 島根 Prefecture there is a *kagura* dance called the *kakko-kirime* 鞆鼓切目 (刹面). In the Genna 元和 1 (1615) record of the *Ōmoto mai jukusho no koto* 大元舞熟書の事 the name of Kirime is written with the homophonous characters *kirime* 切女 (literally, 'cutting woman') (Ōchigun Ōmotokagura Hozonkai 1982, 175). In the present *Ōmoto kagura* the person who performs the role of Kirime no Ōji is called *ichi* 市, which indicates a female shaman (*miko*) that reveals her true identity while narrating the origin of the five elements (*gogyō* 五行). The drum (*kakko* 鞆鼓) descends from the sky to bestow harmony, while Kirime no Ōji, together with a celestial nymph (*tennyo* 天女), softly rings bells (*su-zu* 鈴) and performs a dance to spread peace on earth (*tenka taihei* 天下泰平). A sacred poem (*kami-uta* 神歌) reads: "Stroking the bow's string (*tsuru oto* 弦音) of Tamaki no miya 玉置の宮 at Kumano, de-

mons (*akuma* 悪魔) draw back". This lyric refers to the purificatory function attributed to the sound of the bowstring's vibration. In the *Iwami kagura* 石見神楽, which is performed at the Hamada 浜田 city in Shimane Prefecture, a female shaman at the service of Kirime no Ōji explains the origin of the *kakko* drum that descended from the heavenly plain (*Takamagahara* 高天原) and became the Kumano treasure. When Kirime no Ōji appears, the female shaman dedicates some sacred poems to him and the deity reveals that his name is "trace deity" (*suijaku*). Striking the drum with a drumstick, Kirime no Ōji performs a dance for peace on earth, for the stability of the country (*kokka annon* 国家安穩) and puts a *nagi* leaf in a talisman. The sections dedicated to Kirime in the *Ōmoto kagura* and *Iwami kagura* can be regarded as ballads (*tan* 譚) about the origin of the first Japanese drum, the feminisation of Kirime (whose name is written as *kirime* 切女, 'cutting woman'), and sacred dances for the realisation of the vows (*gan jōju* 願成就) thanks to the drum percussion performed by female shamans. Even if the *kakko* was a Chinese percussion instrument played in Japanese court music (*gagaku* 雅楽), in the *Iwami kagura* 石見神楽 it is depicted as an ordinary drum. The peculiarity of the *Iwami kagura* ballad is that the origin of the drum is revealed by Kirime no Ōji. This feature points to the creative transformations of the Kumano Gongen cult that took place when it spread by various activities of nuns called *bikuni* and male preachers (*oshi* 御師).

4.6 Kirime and Mirume: The Localisation of Kirime no Ōji

Every year in November in the Okumikawa 奥三河 area (Aichi 愛知 Prefecture) there is a ritual (*Hana matsuri* 花祭) called 'kagura of the eleventh month' (*Shimotsuki kagura* 霜月神楽).² The most important deities in the *Shimotsuki kagura* are Kirime no Ōji and Mirume no Ōji 見目王子. In this area the name of Kirime has slightly changed into Kirume. *Hana matsuri* were probably produced by Shugendō practitioners who came from Kumano and Suwa 諏訪 areas in the late medieval period. The model for the present *Hana matsuri*, which lasts for one day and one night, was the early Edo-period (1600-1868) *Ōkagura* 大神楽, which performed on four days at the special village involving various areas. It seems that the Shugendō practitioner Manzōin Suzuki family 万蔵院鈴木家 from the Toyone 豊根 village and his disciple Rinzōin Moriya family 林蔵院守屋家 were involved in organising *Ōkagura* (Yamamoto 1993, 98). The *Ōkagura*'s aims were the realisation of vows, the divine protection of newborns during growth (*umareko* 生まれ子), gratitude for reaching adult age

² The concept of *shimotsuki kagura* is discussed in Suzuki 2011.

and becoming a member of the ritual group of the village (*kiyomari* 清まり), entrance into the sixty years old class-age, and pray for rebirth in the Pure Land (*jōdo iri* 浄土入り). *Ōkagura* was an important rite of passage for individuals through these three initiation-stages (Yamamoto 1993, 174).

Kirume plays the role of chief-deity (*shushin* 主神) in the *Ōkagura* and *Hana matsuri*. The first two written sources that mention Kirume in relation to these sacred representations are “Kirume Ōkami no inori” きるめ王神祈 section in the *Mikagura nikki* 御神樂日記 (Tenshō 天正 9, 1581) (Toyone-mura Kyōiku Iinkai 1985, 15-20), and the *Kagura goto* 神樂事 (Keichō 慶長 12, 1607) (Toyone-mura Kyōiku Iinkai 1985, 20-32). During the *Hana matsuri*, cutting-paper ritual decorations (*yubuta* 湯蓋; *byakkai* 白開) are placed over a cauldron (*kama* 竈) in the middle of the dancing stage (*maidō* 舞処) where the religious practitioner (*hanadayū* 花太夫) makes a hot water ritual (*yudate*) in order to offer hot water to the deities. Various dances take place around this cauldron and at the end purification and rebirth (*umare kiyomari* 生まれ清まり) are achieved, with hot water being sprinkled on the people. In the first moments of the ritual performers purify their bodies under a waterfall and collect the water for the ceremony. Before entering the ritual lodge (*hana no yado* 花宿) religious practitioners make purificatory rituals such as the *Takane matsuri* 高嶺祭り and the *Tsujigatame* 辻固め outside to dispel evil influences and, once inside, the sequence of sacred dances follows this order: *Kami-iri* 神入り; *Kirume no Ōji*; *Ama no matsuri* 天の祭り; *Shime oroshi* 注連おろし; *Yamadate* 山立て; *Shima matsuri* 島祭り; *Narimono* 鳴物; *Kamado harai* 竈祓い; *Yudate*. The Shintō priest (*negi* 禰宜), nowadays the *hanadayū*, brings masks and a staff with sacred strips of cutting paper (*gohei* 御幣) to the ‘deities’ room’ (*kanbeya* 神部屋) where he presents offerings, makes magic gestures for protecting the body (*kuji goshinbō* 九字護身法), and invites *kami* and buddhas to descend (*kami oroshi* 神降ろし) reciting invocatory formulae (*saimon* 祭文). The first deity that is invited to take a place within the paper strips for lodging the *kami* (*kamiza* 神座) during the *kami-iri* ritual is Mirume. The second is Kirume, who stands in opposition to the first one (Hayakawa [1930] 1971, 103). The deities that are considered to be particularly important for the *Hana matsuri* are the Mirume of the Sakauba 坂宇場 village, the Dragon King (Ryūō 龍王), and the mountain ascetics called *hijiri* 聖 of the Futto 古戸 village. Mirume is not only enshrined on *kagura* sites but also in front of few shrines specifically dedicated to his cult (Suzuki 2018, 85).

After inviting Kirume to descend to the *kamiza*, the paper strips are soaked in a sake cup and used to sprinkle sake on the bodies. In the past this ritual was performed after placing a white cotton curtain along the three corners of the *kamiza*, keeping the open side facing the northwest (*inui* 戌亥) (Hayakawa [1930] 1971, 109). Kirume

is understood to be a deity who comes from outside and protects the *kagura* performers as a supreme deity. On the other hand, Mirume lodged within the five-coloured paper strips (*goshiki hei* 五色弊) dangling from the ceiling of the *kagura* site and watched over the accomplishment of the entire ritual. Kirume is an invisible deity that is invited thanks to the magic power of invocatory formulae, while Mirume is visible thanks to the five-colours paper strips in which he resides. Kirume has the authority of a visiting deity (*raihōjin* 来訪神) coming from abroad, while Mirume manifests his omnipresence inside as well as outside the village. The *kiru* 切る and *miru* 見る parts of their names refer to the capability to cut (*kiru*) demons and visualise (*miru*) deities. They both constitute the centre of the *Hana matsuri* because of their enormous magical powers.

4.7 *Ama no matsuri* and *Yudate*: Ritual of Heaven and Hot Water

A feature of the *Hana matsuri* is that the ritual invitation of Kirume no Ōji and the *Ama no matsuri* dance take place at the same time. During the invitation of Kirume no Ōji in the Kobayashi 小林 village, a *negi* climbs up to the inner space between the ceiling and the roof of the *hana no yado* holding a five-coloured paper strip and a long-handled spear (*kenboko* 劍鉾). In this place he performs the *Ama no matsuri* and presents to the deity a set of seventy-five offerings (*shichijūgozen* 七十五膳) together with a sacred torch (*tōmyō* 燈明). Until the following day, when the ritual ends, these two *negi* take care of the fire in turn. In the past, the man who watched over the fire behind the ceiling during the night was often possessed by the deity (*kamigakari* 神がかり) due to the smoke and scarcity of oxygen. The *Shichijūgozen* ritual serves to venerate the mountain spirit, which is portrayed as a long-nosed goblin (*tengu* 天狗), providing offerings to all the mountain deities. On Mount Akiba 秋葉山 in the Enshū 遠州 province (present-day Shizuoka 静岡 Prefecture) during the night of the fifteenth day of December a secret ritual is performed in order to present *shichijūgozen* offerings to Sanjakubō Daigongen 三尺坊大権現 and all his retinue. When the last offering cup is donated to the deity, the wind starts blowing from the mountain. All the violent deities of the mountain are tamed thanks to the offerings on the behalf of the *tengu* that take place during this Shugendō ritual. Seventy-five (75, *shichijūgo*) is a symbolic number referring to the multitude of deities in the mountain area and to the concentration of mountainous forces. The *Shichijūgozen* ritual shows that the terrific power of nature still manifests itself through Kirume no Ōji and the seventy-five deities of the mountain that are venerated on this occasion.

After the ritual invitation of Kirume no Ōji during the *Shime oroshi*, the names of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the five directions

(Yakushi 薬師, Kannon 観音, Amida 阿弥陀, Shaka 釈迦) are invoked and a sacred rope (*shime*) is symbolically set up. The term *shime* has the important meaning of ‘protective deity’ (*shinmei* 神明). Then, five Cleriya trees (*sakaki* 榊) are placed at the five cardinal points of the site. This ritual is called ‘creation of the mountain’ (*yama tate* 山立て) and serves to transform the ritual site into an imaginary mountain. The sacred dances continue from the ‘purification of the cauldron’ (*kama barai* 竈ばらい) to the hot water ritual (*yudate*) during which hot water is offered to all the deities and for purificatory purposes. At this moment the hot water is humanised and after this it is called hot water father (*yu no chichi* 湯の父) and hot water mother (*yu no haha* 湯の母). This hot water ritual, which brings purification and rebirth (*umare kiyomari*), also has strong ties with Kumano. The invocatory formulae (*saimon*) of Kumano Gongen and Kirume no Ōji are recited during the *Yudate* ritual. During the *Yudate* performed in the *Ōmoto kagura* at Iwami and the *Izanagi-ryū* いざなぎ流 tradition at Tosa 土佐 specific invocatory formulae and divine poems are recited in order to create a conflation (*mitate* 見立て) between the hot water used in the ritual and the hot water of Kumano (Suzuki 2012, 247-69). Originally Kumano was called *yuya* ユヤ (literally, ‘hot water field’) and the sacred place at Hongū was called Ōyunohara 大湯原 because of the geographic and semiotic connections with the thermal springs (*onsen* 温泉) in the area. In the term *yu* there is also the meaning of ‘preserving purity to serve the deities’ (*itsuku* 齋) that underlines its sacred nature. Thanks to the diffusion of the *Yudate* ritual and its various meanings, the Kumano Gongen cult spread far.

4.8 Mt. Shirayama: The Pure Land Entrance

The term *kirume* キルメ is deeply related to the origins of the *Hana matsuri*. According to the description of *Ōkagura* in *Mikagura nikki* (1581), the “room entry” (*heya-iri* 部屋入り) ritual was repeated three times during which the invitation of Kirume no Ōji took place. The *Heya-iri* consisted of “entering the room holding a wooden staff with pendant strips of cutting paper (*gohei*) to pray toward the five directions”. Thanks to the supernatural power of the *negi*, Kirume no Ōji was induced to escort the souls of the devotees (*ryūgansha* 立願者) toward the Pure Land of bliss (*hana no jōdo* 花の浄土). In the description of “Heya-iri” section in *Kagura goto* (1607), the *negi* stood in front of the people who prayed for rebirth in the Pure Land. He recited invocatory formulae and invited all the deities of the five directions while chanting the name of Kirume no Ōji as a specific ceremony to praise this deity (*tonozuke* 殿付). After the last *Heya-iri*, there was the ritual of ‘bridge veneration from afar’ (*hashi no haiken* 橋の拝見) during which the souls of the devotees crossed the Sanzu River

(Sanzugawa 三途川, river between this world and other world) and entered the Pure Land in Mount Shirayama 白山 (literally, ‘white mountain’). The invocations say:

Behind a screen of golden characters [*konji* 金字] the admirable ascetic called Matashirō 又四郎 descends from the sky and enters the room of a monk called Kegyō Shōnin 加行上人 [ascetics under practice] to take care of Matashirō, to take care of Matashirō.

Villagers entered Mount Shirayama as the imaginary Pure Land. Kirume no Ōji descended from Heaven with majestic forms after being ritually invited, and Kirume no Ōji faced Matashirō. But who was Matashirō? He can be interpreted as the supreme guide to escort the souls of the devotees to the Pure Land entrance or a visual representation of the religious concept of becoming a buddha in this actual body (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏) among lay people. According to the invocatory formula of *Hana no hongen* 花のほんげん (Hayakawa [1930] 1972, 437), the devotee who wants to be reborn in the Pure Land takes the seventy-five offerings (*shichijūgo zen*), overcomes all the obstacles and sufferings, safely crosses the Sanzu River, and gives these offerings to a buddha called Matashirō who is waiting in the central court of the golden *maṇḍala* (*ōgon no mandara* 黄金の曼荼羅). Yamamoto Hiroko 山本ひろ子 supposes that anointing rituals (*kanjō* 灌頂) such as the *Jingi kanjō* 神祇灌頂 or the *Kechien kanjō* 結縁灌頂 were performed in the recesses of Mount Shirayama. Nevertheless, Mount Shirayama had various meanings. It could be an abode for buddhas and *kami*, a mandalised territory, the other world, or the source of everything. The *kagura* stage was symbolically equated with a mountain (*yama* 山) and in the *Ōkagura* there was a sequence of sacred dances such as the *Yama odate* 山を立て, *Yama wo matsuru beshi* 山をまつるべし, *Yama wo tazune* 山をたづね, or the *Yama wo urikai koto* 山を売買事 in which *oni* (fierce deity of mountains) came out of the mountain (see the text of *Kagura goto*). Nature, and in particular rough mountains, were represented as the fundamental source of the *oni*'s power. For the Shugendō practitioners the *kagura* site represented a mountain for performing Shugendō ascetic practices who were empowered and could control multitudes of spirits and deities as well as bring believers' vows to fruition.

Kirume and Mirume were personifications of fierce deities in mountains. They were transformed into serving spirits (*shieki rei* 使役霊) that cut (*kiru* 切る) evil influences (*mamono* 魔物) and look (*miru* 見る) new worlds. Kurume and Mirume became the complementary deities with the functions of cutting and looking. The foreign deity Kirume no Ōji arrived at Kumano and formed a whole with the local tutelary deity realising the vows of the devotees. Kirume no Ōji combines the power of Buddhism with the power of nature. This herme-

neutic discourse favoured a transition toward a different worldview that reconstructed the fierce power of nature through a Buddhist lens (Suzuki 2018, 9-10).

4.9 Transformation of Ox-bezoar Talismans

Ox-bezoar talismans (*goōhōin* 牛王宝印) are intimately related to Kumano. Toward the end of the Heian period Kumano pilgrims received ox-bezoar talismans and *nagi* leaves as protective talismans for safe voyage (*dōchū shugo* 道中守護). The text of “Kumano Gongen no Koto” 熊野権現事 in the *Shintō shū* (Shintō Taikei Hensankai 1988, 35) reports that “the supernatural power (*gen* 験) is the jewel (*hōin* 宝印) for the pilgrimage”. Therefore, ox-bezoar talismans were material proof of the Kumano pilgrimage that absorbed its force. The site for distributing these talismans was called Yuko 油戸 (‘oil door’) and was close to Hongū. This place was also called ‘turtle’s tail’ (Kame no o 亀の尾). The *Ryōbu mondō hishō* reports that Yuko was the site where the turtle poured oil from its tail. It is possible that Kame no o was regarded as the place from which the essence of the mountain emanated. Ōyunohara at Kumano Hongū corresponded to the diamond altar (*kongō dan* 金剛壇), where the Buddha reached enlightenment in India, and Mount Ōmine was Vulture Peak (Ryōjusen 靈鷲山), where the Buddha preached the Dharma and which flew from India to Japan. The entire territory of Ōmine was compared to a turtle of which Yoshino was the head and Kumano the tail. The ox-bezoar talismans condensed the sacred authority (*reii* 靈威) of Ōmine and Kumano, which were equated to the land of the original Dharma in India, and which spread to various regions and resulted in multiple interpretations.

As protective objects, the ox-bezoar talismans dispelled evil influences, cured diseases, brought prosperity to the crops, and were used as writing paper for religious oaths (*kishōmon* 起請文). In the Shugendō tradition, the two first characters (Goō 牛玉, 牛王) of the ox-bezoar talismans are visually disassembled as 牛 + 王 = 生 + 土 to form the word *ubusuna gami* 産土神 (‘local deity’) (*Shugen hiyō gi* 修験秘要義, in Nihondaizōkyō Hensankai 1985a, 675-6). Therefore, the ox-bezoar talismans served to transform violent local deities (*ubusuna gami*) into protectors of the Dharma and allies of the Shugendō practitioners, who used them as possessing deities to deliver oracles (*takusen* 託宣). According to this process, the local obstacle-deities took refuge in the teachings of the Buddha and became the Dharma protectors (*gohōshin* 護法神) or guardians of temples (*garanshin* 伽藍神).

In the *Hana matsuri* of Okumikawa there is a different development of the ox-bezoar talismans. Concerning this, it is interesting to take into account two invocatory formulae, *Goō watashi* 牛玉渡し and *Shime no goō* 注連の牛玉, of the *Ōkagura* that were performed

until Ansei 安政 2 (1855). According to the text of *Kagura goto* (1607), the first day was dedicated to the ritual construction of the mountain, which was followed by the *Umareko* 生子 ritual for childbirth. In the end there was the *Bukki ryō no shime* ぶつきりょうのしめ ritual that served to finish the mourning (*bukki* 服忌) period and marked the birth of new children. The *Bukki ryō no shime* invocatory formula revealed the reason of the entire ritual. At the end of the second day the *Wakago no shime* 若子の注連 invocatory formula is chanted again and the *Shiki no goō watashi* しきの牛玉渡し ritual concluded the performance. During the distribution of the ox-bezoar talismans (*goō watashi*) the performers chanted these verses three times:

Prostrating myself in homage, I make penitence for the harmful behaviour of the six faculties. I request the divine empowerment of Hachidai Kongō Dōji [*namu kimyō chōrai zange zange rokkan shōjo Hachidai Kongō Dōji shintō kaji sanpen* 南無帰命頂礼懺悔懺悔六根清浄 八大金剛童子 神道加持].

We can suppose that the first day of the performance corresponded to the *Umareko* ritual (or ‘placement of the child under divine protection’, *miko iri* 神子入り) and the second day to the *Kiyomari* 清まり ritual (or ‘initiation to adulthood’, *seinen kai* 成年戒) (Yamamoto 1993, 168). The chanting of the *Goō watashi* 牛玉渡し is the same of the recitation “*Oshime ni Hachidai Kongō Dōji* 御注連に八大金剛童子”, which the Shugendō practitioners chanted while climbing mountains with special surplices (*kesa* 袈裟) made of sacred ropes of twisted paper (*kamikoyori no shime* 紙縊の注連). Thanks to the divine protection of Hachidai Kongō Dōji, which resided in the sacred rope, the Shugendō practitioners performed the symbolic mountain climbing as a process at the end of which they would be purified and united with Buddha. Yamamoto Hiroko analyses the songs of the *Shime no goō* 注連牛玉 ritual, which are reported in the *Shoshin kanjō dan* 諸神勧請段 of *Suwa kagura* 諏訪神楽, and supposes that the term “ox-bezoar” (*goō*) was referred to the paper surplice (*koyori-kesa* 紙縊袈裟) of the Shugendō practitioners (Yamamoto 1993, 169).

During the *Hana sodate* 花育て ritual of the *Hana matsuri* at Yamauchi 山内 (Aichi prefecture) two people appear to bring flowers with ritual wigs (*kōkazura* 神鬘) on the head and a paper strip with the writing “hanging sash” (*kake-obi* 懸け帯) around the neck; this symbolic use of paper strips to symbolise other items of clothing seems to echo the use of the word *goō* as a substitute for *kesa*. In the opening the *Shime wo hiraku* 注連を開く ritual, pollution (*kegare* 穢れ) is purified and the person who performs the ritual of the sacred rope is possessed. In the end he performs ascetic practices on the mountain – like a Shugendō practitioner – in order to obtain new powers and regenerate life (Suzuki 2020, 33-59). *Kagura* is

a *mise-en-scène* of the mountain ascetic practices during which the practitioner is protected by ox-bezoar talismans (*goō*), which correspond to Dharma protectors (*gohō*) and also to Kongō Dōji. After the mountain entry (*yama-iri* 山入り) ritual the practitioner performs once again the *Hana no jōdo* ritual to underline his future achievement of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land. All these cases show that a great variety of meanings are attached to the ox-bezoar talismans.

5 Conclusions

The Kumano cult presents various streams. A continuous creative power, which started with *engi* and developed to *kagura*, linked the Kumano cult with the Shugendō tradition and spread it to different areas. The Kumano cult developed different characteristics according to different localisation, and it has a unifying logic that brings together heterogeneous elements, *kami* and buddhas, foreign and local lands, female shamans and Shugendō practitioners, *engi* and *kagura*. It embraces multiple and complex combinations as well as different hermeneutic discourses. The most important way to analyse Japanese culture is to focus on the imagination of hybridity.

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