

CHAPTER 4

HIDDEN BUDDHAS AND INVISIBLE GODS: THE LOGIC AND STRUCTURE OF TWO NARA OBSERVANCES

1. The Locus of the Ceremony

In 1985, I journeyed to Nara on December 16 to witness the ceremonies at the Kasuga Wakamiya 春日若宮 shrine. It suddenly grew chill at dusk and there were flurries of snow. As the night deepened, the cold rose in my legs. A little past ten o'clock, I passed through the first torii, then the second torii, and approached the main Kasuga shrine. In the courtyard in front of a worship hall, three shrine priestesses (*miko* 巫子) had removed their footwear and were sitting directly on the gravel. All three seemed to be concentrating on not making the slightest movement, and gradually the snow ceased falling amid their solemn silhouettes.

I passed to the right, and the Wakamiya shrine hall floated up out of the darkness. Worshippers and sightseers moved about, and shrine priests and priestesses came and went hurriedly.

As the time for the journey of the kami Wakamiya approached, the darkness grew, and the flickering lanterns and the traces of people vanished one by one. Darkness not only expands within space; it invades the crevices of the heart. As the power to suppress the power of sight, it abruptly invades us. It is as though the darkness was a foreshadowing communicating the movement of Wakamiya.

At 10:30, the first announcement is made, and the Ranjō 乱声 melody is performed by court musicians. Ranjō is a prelude to the

appearance of the kami. In the darkness, a flute sounds, accompanied by drums. Drawn by the sound of the flute, the kami awakens and slowly rises.

11:00. The second announcement is given, and Ranjō is performed again by court musicians. The sense of tension spread by the first Ranjō performance continues, and the time for the movement of the kami approaches moment by moment.

11:30. The third announcement is given, upon which the head priest (*gūji* 宮司) and the other priests and attendants form a line and depart from the shrine office. Taking a bypath, they proceed to the worship hall of Wakamiya. As if to greet the procession, the Ranjō melody is performed a third time by the musicians. During this interval, the lattices of the worship hall are raised and the lanterns are completely extinguished. In the worship hall and the surrounding area, darkness suddenly spreads like a living creature, full of a sense of the kami. At this time, the head priest ascends to the hall, opens the doors of the kami hall, and reads a secret prayer (*norito* 祝詞). After he has bowed once more and clapped his hands, at last the time for departure has come. Already the head priest and the others have donned masks and white gloves. In their hands are branches of *sakaki* 榊.

A little after 12:00, the kami rises. Morning is always the designated time for this. The ceremonies for the excursion have begun. Invisibly in the darkness surrounding Wakamiya, priests bearing *sakaki* have formed a barrier of people and begun moving. As though swimming through the darkness, people move shoulder to shoulder, bodies pushing together with heavy steps. Enveloped in the darkness, the branches of *sakaki*, and the odor of perspiration, the kami Wakamiya moves.

The flute has already changed from Ranjō to the Keiunraku 慶雲楽 melody. As though to rip through the flow of the melody, the priests surrounding Wakamiya chant “Oh-oh” from the depths of their bowels. It is the shout (*keihitsu* 警蹕) meant to clear the way and quiet those in the path of the procession. It may be said to be a warning to drive away demons. The hidden body of Wakamiya abides where the shouts arise.

As the shouts move, the place of the kami also moves. Only the sharply broken calls mark the place of the hidden kami. The kami has come to reside within the voices; the traces of the kami move only in the voices. The chant “Oh-oh” consists of human voices, but at the same time it is the voice of the god. The shout of “Oh” called out into the darkness, before it was spoken as a human word, harbored the shout of primal nature.

Let us survey the order of the procession. First are guards who go before and watch over the path from the Wakamiya shrine to the destination. Next, there are two great torches. These are not, however, used for illumination as in usual ceremonies. They are flames that serve for purification of the path of Wakamiya's journey. Hence, they are not referred to as torches (*taimatsu* 松明), but rather as sacred fires (*on-bi* 御火). This “sacred fire” is not a small hand-carried torch. It is four meters long and twenty centimeters in diameter, and each is carried—or rather dragged along the ground—by two stalwart men in white robes. Thus, four men transport the two torches approximately eighty meters before the kami and purify the ground. Next comes incense of burning aloeswood. The smoke of the fragrant wood penetrates the nostrils and purifies the air. Thus, first fire purifies the earth, and then incense purifies the air. Probably since ancient times the objects of such purification by fire and incense were death and the bodies of the dead. Further, the sojourn of the kami also became possible only through the purificatory powers of fire and incense.

Following the incense come bearers of *gohei* 御幣, the sacred staffs with pendant paper strips. Immediately behind them is the group of priests who surround Wakamiya calling “Oh!” They advance twisting the *mikoshi* (divine palanquin) violently. Led through the space purified by fire and incense, the pure white of the *gohei* glistening in the darkness, they form a cluster like a small hill and advance with the kami. Following this cluster is a bearer of the divine parasol, then priestesses, courtly musicians, and attendants of rank (*gubu-no-mono* 供奉の者).

The destination of the sojourn, where Wakamiya will pass only a single day, is a temporary structure erected between the first and second

torii. From sunrise, elaborate and brilliant artistic entertainments are performed before the temporary shrine (*otabisho* 御旅所). A gorgeous parade winds its way along the road from Nara, and in front of a large pine just inside of the first torii, the “Ceremony beneath the Pine” is conducted. It is thought that the Kasuga Myōjin 春日明神 deity assumes concrete form in the pine. The parade advances to the pine, and representatives of the traditional performing arts stemming from *dengaku* 田楽 and other entertainments reverently greet and pay their respects to the Kasuga god, who has descended and possessed the pine, and give short performances. It is a greeting paid to the kami of the main shrine.

The procession passes in front of the pine and proceeds to the temporary shrine. At 2:00 in the afternoon, before the Wakamiya kami who abides in the temporary shrine, the main part of the festival (*matsuri* 祭) begins. At this time, the *myōjin* god of the main Kasuga shrine has come as far as the pine tree at the first torii, and Wakamiya has traveled from the Wakamiya shrine to the temporary shrine. Facing these two invisible kami, the lavish performances are displayed one after another. These include *kagura* 神楽, *tōyū* 東遊, *dengaku*, *sarugaku* 猿楽, *bugaku* 舞楽, and *wamai* 和舞. Conducted out of deference and service to the kami, they are carried on continuously into the middle of the night. The bright colors of the performing arts transmitted from various Asian lands, the more vivid they are, the more deeply enclosed in the darkness are the kami, and while the performers move in energetic dance, the kami watch over them with subdued breath.

Then, at 11:00 at night, when all the performances have ended, Wakamiya departs the temporary shrine and returns to the main shrine. This is the returning ceremony (*kankō* 還幸). As during the ceremony at the start of the sojourn (*senkō* 遷幸), the kami returns the main shrine surrounded by priests.

This night, as the various performances—*kagura*, *dengaku*, *bugaku*—were conducted in succession before the temporary shrine, snow fell, at times in flurries, at times heavily. Gradually, however, it ceased, and in the sky stars appeared. Directly above the temporary shrine, the seven stars of the Great Dipper glistened like jewels. The time

for the departure of Wakamiya was approaching.

The following year, in 1986, I went to the Nigatsudō 二月堂 hall of Tōdaiji 東大寺 temple on March 7 to observe the ceremonies known as “The Water-Drawing” (Omizutori お水取). Less than three months had passed since the Kasuga Wakamiya festival. If the Wakamiya ceremonies constitute a midwinter festival, Omizutori is clearly a festival of the early spring. The winter festival and spring festival have been held in close proximity at the Kasuga Taisha shrine and Tōdaiji temple from ancient times. One is held as a Shinto festival, the other as a Buddhist festival, conducted in quick succession.

Omizutori is held from February 20 to March 14, and over this period of nearly a month various rituals are conducted. Traditionally, these are called Shuni-e. Among them, it is the Omizutori ritual that has attracted great general interest. This ceremony is held on March 12, when the new water (*wakamizu* 若水, also *kōzui* 香水, “fragrant water” for offerings) is drawn. On this day, an immense torch is brought up to the worship hall, and in the darkness embers are rained down.

It was, however, on March 7 that I entered the Nigatsudō hall to observe the rituals conducted by practicing monks within the hall, away from the public eye. On this day also, ten torches are brought up to the hall, while within the hall, into the depths of the night, violent prostrations and ceremonies involving running were carried on. In addition, the highlight of the day, the “sojourn of the small Kannon 観音,” was conducted in a secretive atmosphere.

From about sunset on this day, the torches are brought up a steep path one by one to the Nigatsudō hall. Each measures about ten meters in length and flares up in flames. Each torch is carried by a number of sturdy men. At the front platform of the hall the torches are spun and the embers tumble down into the night darkness. This is repeated ten times.

After witnessing the torches, I was invited to a chamber of the worship hall of Nigatsudō. It was a place in which women are forbidden. In the altar were monks who had undergone religious purification by

entering into a life of seclusion and performing rites of repentance. They had already begun chanting sutras. In addition to the usual ceremonial chanting of sutra texts, there was also a reading of a register of the names of kami (*jinmyōchō* 神名帳). The purpose of this latter rite is to pray for witness to the more than 13,700 kami throughout the country.

On this day, the ceremony known as the “Sojourn of the Small Kannon” (*Ko-gannon shutsugyo* 小観音出御) was being conducted. In the inner altar of the Nigatsudō, two statues—large and small—of the eleven-faced Kannon are enshrined; they are known as the “large Kannon” and the “small Kannon.” The large Kannon is said to be a human-size statue of gilt bronze and occupies the center of the altar platform (*shumidan* 須弥壇). The small Kannon is said to be a seven-inch statue of gilt bronze. It is enclosed in an altar case (*zushi* 厨子) and occupies a position in front of the large Kannon on the west side of the altar. These Kannon are the central objects of worship during the Shuni-e 修二会 ceremonies.

In the “Sojourn of the Small Kannon,” the statue is ceremonially moved in the evening from its place of enshrinement on the altar to the north side of the worship hall. When on the altar, it faces west, but in the worship hall, it faces south.

It is said that no one can actually see the small Kannon, for the altar case is never opened. In fact, the large Kannon also cannot be seen, for it is covered by banners hanging from its canopy, and viewing by outsiders has traditionally been prohibited. Thus, it is altogether uncertain what sort of images the large and small Kannon are. It is not merely that no one is allowed to see them. In documents and records associated with the Shuni-e, there is no mention anywhere of actually seeing the images and no descriptions of them. They have been thoroughly transformed into “hidden buddhas” (*hibutsu* 秘仏).

Originally, buddhas and bodhisattvas were regarded as visible. Their images were clear and visible to any who looked. The Kannon that plays the central role in the Shuni-e, however, is bound in the darkness of completely different traditions. Like the invisible kami Wakamiya of the Kasuga shrine, the Nigatsudō Kannon are completely hidden from

sight.

As night deepened, I moved to the stone-floored area surrounding the altar to observe the activities in the inner altar. In the dim light of the lamps, the monks chanted sutras, intoned spells, rubbed their *nenju* rosaries, clanged small, bronze cymbals, and blew conch shells, the booming voices and sounds reverberating through the hall. After a time, from the front of the worship hall, loud sounds of heavy objects beating against the wooden floor planks began. The practice of “casting five points of the body to the ground” in prostration (*gotai tōchi* 五体投地) had begun. For this practice, special boards were placed in the central part of the worship hall, and practitioners threw their whole bodies down on them. One leaps up and falls directly down on the boards, thus causing a loud sound that echoes in the hearts of worshippers who have secluded themselves in the hall.

It is said that the Shuni-e ceremonies are essentially a practice of repentance known as Keka 悔過 or Sanpō 懺法. When this method of practice is performed before the eleven-faced Kannon, it is called Jūichimen keka 十一面悔過, and when performed before Yakushi Nyorai 藥師如来, it is called Yakushi keka. If this is the case, then the climax of the Shuni-e lies in the practice of prostrations. After the prostrations have ended, the hall is once more dominated by the chanting of sutras and spells. As the night deepens, the figures of people melt into darkness.¹

2. Myth and Ritual

The central image of worship in the Nigatsudō hall of Tōdaiji temple where the Shuni-e ceremonies are conducted is a Kannon statue which no one has seen. While the center of well-known rituals, it is a “hidden buddha” (*hibutsu*). It is not to be reverently beheld as object of worship, but rather contemplated as enveloped in infinite darkness and infinite light.

Nevertheless, the traditions concerning this “hidden buddha” do record the miraculous tale of a person who has actually seen it. For

example, according to fascicle one of *Nigatsudō engi emaki* 二月堂縁起絵巻,² a horizontal handscroll that records the origins and practices of the Nigatsudō hall, in the tenth month of Tenpyō shōhō 天平勝宝 3 [751], the Buddhist monk Sanetada 実忠 of Tōdaiji encountered the “living eleven-faced Kannon” at Naniwazu 難波津 in Settsu 摂津 province. Sanetada was the first *bettō* 別当 of Tōdaiji and a close disciple of Rōben 良弁, and it is said that he was the originator of the Shuni-e practices. The origins of the Kannon are unclear, but the passage from the *Nigatsudō engi emaki* describing Sanetada’s encounter states:

Master Sanetada went to Naniwazu bay in Settsu province, and facing Mt. Potalaka, made offerings of incense and flowers, sending them out to sea, and with great earnestness worshiped and prayed for guidance. The vessel of pure water went out far to the south and then returned. After one hundred days of doing this, the living body of the eleven-faced Kannon came before his eyes from Mt. Potalaka riding on the vessel of pure water. The master enshrined it at Kenjakuin temple, which is now called Nigatsudō. Because it has been kept from the eyes of ignorant beings, there is no one who can carelessly worship this body. This living body even now has not changed in the slightest and possesses virtuous efficacy and boundless benefit. In the time of Toba-in, it was the physical body of Kannon in the Nigatsudō hall of Tōdaiji temple that was known as the miraculous Kannon of the land of Japan.³

Sanetada took the Kannon, which had crossed the ocean to Naniwazu from distant Mt. Potalaka 補陀落 in the south seas, which is the Pure Land of Kannon, and enshrined it in Kenjakuin 絹索院 (Nigatsudō). The *Engi* scroll calls the eleven-faced Kannon a “living body” and the “physical body of Kannon,” but records that no ordinary ignorant being saw the figure directly. Thus, even though it is the living, physical body, no one other than Sanetada has actually seen it. The *Engi* treats the Kannon encountered by Sanetada at Naniwazu as a “hidden

buddha.”

The *Nigatsudō engi emaki* is considered to have been composed in the latter part of the Muromachi period, but the original form of this legend already appears also in Gyōnen's *Sangoku buppō dentsū engi* 凝念の三国仏法伝通縁起 (scroll 2),⁴ which was written toward the end of the Kamakura period. Gyōnen's *Engi* states that Sanetada prayed for guidance to Kannon on Mt. Potalaka, and enshrined the Kannon on the central altar of Nigatsudō. This miracle story of the “eleven-faced Kannon” coming from Mt. Potalaka does not, however, occur in any earlier related documents. It seems that the story of the “Fudaraku Kannon 補陀落観音” of Nigatsudō suddenly emerged in the medieval period. In other words, the story of Sanetada's miraculous experience in the Tenpyō 天平 era was actually mythologically shaped in the Kamakura period within the framework of the *Engi*.

Let us note here an interesting issue that arises. There are two statues of Kannon—large and small—enshrined on the central altar platform in Nigatsudō, and both of them are hidden buddhas. The question is, which image was originally the central object of the Nigatsudō Shuni-e ceremonies? Were there two images of Kannon enshrined from the very start? Or did some sort of change in ritual occur with the passage of time? In Gyōnen's *Sangoku buppō dentsū engi* and in *Nigatsudō engi emaki*, it is the small Kannon that appears as the central object of worship in Nigatsudō; there is no mention whatsoever of the large Kannon. These two works compiled in the medieval period record their narrative focusing on the small Kannon that had crossed the seas from Mt. Potalaka. Concerning this question, Kawamura Tomoyuki 川村知行 (1984) states that the original central object of worship in Nigatsudō was the large Kannon, and that later, in the twelfth century, the small Kannon came to be placed there also. He conjectures that the structure of the ceremonies seen today in the Shuni-e date back to that time.⁵

Originally, the Shuni-e of Tōdaiji's Nigatsudō took place from the first day of the second month according to the lunar calendar (by the modern calendar, about March 1) to the fourteenth day. Of these

fourteen days, the first seven were devoted to rituals dedicated to the large Kannon in the center of the altar, and the latter seven days to ceremonies in which the small Kannon in its altar case was the center of worship. It is not clear when this division of rituals into two seven-day periods was first instituted, but at very least it suggests that the small Kannon was temporarily moved to the position of the central object of worship. Moreover, Kawamura states that the small Kannon was probably originally not enshrined within the Nigatsudō. According to *Shichi daiji junrei shiki* 七大寺巡礼私記 composed in the first half of the twelfth century, every year on the first day of the second month, the small Kannon was removed from the treasure storehouse of Tōdaiji Kenjakuin and placed in front of the large Kannon. According to this record, the small Kannon, thus, was originally not an object of worship in the Nigatsudō, but was kept in the treasure storehouse, and was placed in Nigatsudō during the period of the Shuni-e.

Concerning this practice, a further question arises of precisely when the small Kannon was brought to Nigatsudō. Two theories have been advanced—the first day of the second month (the first day of the first seven-day period) and the eighth day of the second month (the first day of the second seven-day period)—but it appears that the eighth day is correct. It is recorded in *Ruijushō* 類聚抄, which is quoted in *Kakuzenshō* 覺禪抄, that on the eighth day, the image (identified as the Potalaka Kannon), which was kept in the Inzō 印藏 storehouse, was removed to Nigatsudō, where it was received as the central image of worship. The Inzō was one of four treasure storehouses located just north of the Tōdaiji refectory (*jikidō* 食堂). The *Shichi daiji junrei shiki* mentioned above states that the small Kannon was kept in the “treasure storehouse” (*hōzō* 宝蔵) of Kenjakuin, but this entry is confused in content, and it is probably the Inzō that is correct, according to Kawamura.

We see, therefore, that the small Kannon originally had the character of a temporary object of worship that was moved to Nigatsudō for a specific period of time. Gradually, the procedure of transfer was eliminated, and it came to be permanently installed in the hall. It is not clear, however, whether through permanent placement in Nigatsudō, the

image that was a temporary object of worship became the proper and formal object of worship. At the least, however, in relation to the Shuni-e rituals, we may surmise that there arose a subtle alteration in balance between the large and small Kannon.

The next question, then, is precisely when the small Kannon came to be placed in Nigatsudō. According to Kawamura's research, it appears to be possible to set the date between 1123 and 1148. *Nigatsudō shuchū rengyōshū nikki* 二月堂修中練行衆日記 clearly records in 1148 that the small Kannon has already been placed behind the large Kannon. Further, in *Kakuzenshō*, there is a statement noting that in 1123 the small Kannon was kept in the Inzō repository of Tōdaiji temple. Thus, permanent placement in Nigatsudō must have occurred between these two dates.

In this light, we see that the legend of the Potalaka Kannon—the small Kannon—recorded in *Sangoku buppō dentsū engi* and *Nigatsudō engi emaki* was formed based on the ritual space tying together the Nigatsudō and the Inzō, which were located within the Tōdaiji precincts. We can conjecture that the two spaces—as limits that highlight the movement of the small Kannon—possessed something of a mythological, symbolic meaning. In order to explore this issue, we must consider the structure of the Shuni-e ceremony itself, noting in particular that during the period of the Shuni-e, the small Kannon not only moves to the altar of the Nigatsudō; it also moves from the inner altar to the worship area. This is one of the prominent features of the ceremony. The movements of the small Kannon symbolically reflect the cosmological conceptions underlying the Shuni-e as a whole.

According to the practice observed at present, before the start of the Shuni-e, the small Kannon is moved from in front of the large Kannon to the rear, so that they are back-to-back, and a screen (similar to those bearing paintings of the welcoming Amida) is placed between them. With the statues in this position, the central object of worship for the first seven days is the large Kannon. The small Kannon is hidden behind the large Kannon, indicating a ritual absence. At sunset on the seventh day, however, about 5:40 p.m., the small Kannon is moved out to the

worship area and enshrined with altar adornments, and worship is performed. Afterwards, at about 12:50 a.m. early on the eighth day, the small Kannon—in its altar case—is carried once around the altar area in something like a ceremonial palanquin used for Shinto deities and then placed in front of the large Kannon in a “re-entrance.” From this day, for the second week of the observance, it becomes the central object of worship in the Shuni-e.

The movement of the small Kannon within the Nigatsudō consists of three stages: placement behind the large Kannon, emergence from the altar to the worship area, and entrance from the worship area into the altar and to the front of the large Kannon. It is traditionally said that of these stages, the second—emergence from the altar area—represents the arrival of the small Kannon from Fudaraku to Naniwazu, and the last—the placement in front of the large Kannon—represents the reception of the small Kannon when it was brought from Naniwazu into the Nigatsudō. This traditional explanation originated, of course, from the legend as recorded in the *Sangoku buppō dentsū engi* and the *Nigatsudō engi emaki*.

We must note here that during the period from the eve of the seventh day to the dawn of the eighth, rituals are performed twice in which the small Kannon is moved by palanquin, and though these moves take place within the hall, a torchbearer with a *taimatsu* torch leads the procession as though to light the way. Further, while in the preliminary stage to this movement during the first seven days, the small Kannon is placed behind the large Kannon to indicate absence, with the “re-entrance” on the eighth day, it circles the outer area of the altar one time. Kawamura Tomoyuki conjectures that the special features of this rite indicate traces of the ceremonial reception of the small Kannon from outside the Nigatsudō. The fact that the small Kannon was originally preserved in the Inzō storehouse supports such a conjecture. In short, the myth of the arrival from Fudaraku to Naniwazu and the fact of the movement from the Inzō to the Nigatsudō are reflected in the Shuni-e rituals that center on the small Kannon.

Sanetada, the first *bettō* of Tōdaiji and a ranking disciple of Rōben.⁶ This theory, however, is based on later traditions, and it now appears that that the ceremony begun by Sanetada was actually the “Eleven-face Repentance” rites (Jūichimen keka) conducted in the second month. There are various theories regarding the relationship between the “Eleven-face Repentance” and Shuni-e,⁷ but in any case the former rite appears to have arisen from ceremonies of repentance in which an eleven-faced Kannon was the central object of worship. Further, appearances in historical documents of the term “Shuni-e” cannot be traced far back. The first appearance of a ritual practice conducted in the second month in early documents occurs in *Engi shiki* 延喜式 (fascicle 26), which was completed in 927. This work speaks of “the annual second month ritual practices” (Nigatsu shuhō 二月修法) of Shin'yakushiji 新薬師寺 temple. It is not until 1106, in *Tōdaiji yōroku* 東大寺要録, that this is recorded as the Nigatsudō Shuni-e of Tōdaiji temple.

That the first mention of the Nigatsudō Shuni-e in historical documents goes back only to the early twelfth century indicates that the character of the ceremony was relatively new. Yamagishi Tsuneto 山岸常人 has put forth a theory based on a close analysis of repentance rites from the Nara period to the first half of the Heian period.⁸ He conjectures that the repentance rites that had flourished during the Nara period gradually atrophied in the early part of the Heian period and began to show tendencies of a change in character, gradually taking on a composite form incorporating the new modes of belief and prayer of the times. The result was the Shushō-e 修正会 and the Shuni-e ceremonies that appeared as regular temple events in the Sekkan 撰関 and Insei 院政 eras (10th-late 13th cen.). While the Nara period repentance rites and the Shushō-e and Shuni-e are both Buddhist ceremonies of penitence, there are clear differences between them in content and character.

The Shuni-e of Nigatsudō in the Sekkan and Insei eras shows signs of shedding the character of repentance from earlier periods, but as a rite of the new age, was almost completely ignored within the system of state ceremonies of the time.⁹ There is no mention of it whatsoever in the diaries of the court nobility, indicating that it failed to attract their

interest. During this period, the Shuni-e that was conducted on the scale of a national ceremony was that of Hōsshōji 法勝寺 temple, which was built by Emperor Shirakawa 白河 as an expression of his aspiration. In contrast to the emperor's Shuni-e conducted as a public, rite, the Nigatsudō Shuni-e of Tōdaiji was markedly private and limited. It may already have shown the tendency of adopting the beliefs and rites of prayer of the times.

It appears, therefore, that the myths and rituals surrounding the small Kannon are the products of the Insei era. Hence, just as the Tōdaiji Shuni-e was in the process of shedding the aspects of being simply a repentance ritual from the earlier period, so the rites of the small Kannon were not limited to repentance with an eleven-faced Kannon as image of worship. In other words, in the small Kannon rituals of Nigatsudō, we see clearly a complex character resulting from contact with new currents of the times. What was the nature of this complex, compound character? Here let us turn to the highly suggestive work of Satō Michiko 佐藤道子.¹⁰

We have seen that the core of the small Kannon rituals lies in the spacial movement of the image. It is ceremonially brought forth (*shutsugyo* 出御) from the inner altar to the worship hall, and then returned to the altar (*gonyū* 後入). Underlying this spacial movement, on the one hand, is the myth that the small Kannon has come to Naniwazu across the seas from Mt. Potalaka. This journey is imitated in the rituals. On the other hand, when we analyze the discrete portions of the ritual movements, we find traces of a transference of the small Kannon between the Inzō storehouse and Nigatsudō hall, which symbolize two extreme points in the Tōdaiji cosmos. This is the theory of Kawamura. Concerning this issue of the significance of the distinctive movements of the small Kannon, Satō has remarked that they "remind one of the basic pattern of the festivals dedicated to Shinto deities." She observes that the altar case with the small Kannon is moved from the altar to the worship area, and that there various offerings are made. After that, it is returned to the altar. These ceremonies of the second seven days correspond to the typical pattern in which the ceremonial palanquin of a deity is carried to

certain resting places, and after various offerings are made, it is returned to the shrine. Moreover, the altar case of the small Kannon is called “treasure hall” (*hōden*), “deity palanquin” (*mikoshi* 神輿), and “spirit palanquin” (*reijo* 靈輿); it has the form of a ceremonial Shinto palanquin with a “treasure box” style roof to which an ornament is affixed. As we have seen, the small Kannon that appears in the Shuni-e legend is not permanently placed as an object of worship, but rather is the central object of worship for the special observances of the Keka-e (Shuni-e); it possesses the character of a visiting deity.

Various offices or roles are established for the smooth performance of the ceremonies of the Nigatsudō Shuni-e. These include the head monk of the hall, the youths of the hall, and so on. Matters concerning these roles and that of the practicing monks who seclude themselves in the altar were recorded in “diaries,” of which numerous examples survive. These include the *Rengyōshu nikki*, *Shosekai nikki* 処世界日記, *Dōshi nikki* 堂司日記, and *Dōdōji nikki* 堂童子日記. The earliest extant of these diaries is the *Shosekai nikki* from 1459. Its postscript includes the following record of the procedure of the concluding rituals of the fifteenth day.¹¹

Item. Fifteenth day abbreviated verse.

Fire-fire, purification, repentance, perfume water, Ox king, kami, sunset, place of kami, first hour of night, five vows, ablution, return to shrine, exit.

Satō takes special note of the term, “return to shrine,” conjecturing that it indicates that the small Kannon was originally kept somewhere other than the hall, and that it refers to an important ritual manifesting the early manner of the small Kannon rites. Moreover, the expression “return to shrine” (*kankyū* 還宮) closely resembles the term “return” (*kankō*) used for excursions of the kami, thus suggesting strong similarity with Shinto rites. Thus, if the concluding rituals of the fifteenth day are considered in relation to the rites surrounding the small Kannon, it appears to correspond with the ritual of “entrance” conducted late at

night on the seventh day. In other words, through the ritual of “reentry,” the small Kannon is placed in a central position on the altar stand of Nigatsudō, and it remains there for the second seven-day period of the Shuni-e, during which it receives offerings of incense, flowers, lamps, and music (chanting). Thereafter, through the rite of “return to the shrine,” it journeys back to its original place. Satō suggests that this procedure reflects that of Shinto ceremonies for kami. In the present procedure for the Shuni-e observance, the small Kannon is moved to the worship hall through the rite of “departure,” and after receiving offerings, returns to the central altar in a rite of “reentry.” There is no movement of returning to an original place outside the hall. In the original procedure, however, the small Kannon was received into the hall from outside and returned to a place outside the hall. The space of movement has been condensed or simplified in the present practice. In the original ceremony, there was passage between an original place and the Nigatsudō hall, which functioned as a temporary place of rest (*otabisho*). Satō therefore concludes that the religious rituals centering on the small Kannon, rather than being Buddhist rites, possess the character of a kami ceremony.

I find that Satō’s observation illuminates the fundamental character of the Nigatsudō Shuni-e rituals. If we view her discussion in the framework of Yamagishi’s research mentioned above, then it seems to indicate the central point of change in the development of the eleven-face repentance rituals of the Nara period into the Shuni-e of the Insei era. In other words, the change concerns the injection of elements of kami ceremonies into the structure of Buddhist rituals. The new beliefs and religious rituals of the times fused in this way with the older rites. The traditional rites characteristic of repentance, such as the violent prostrations, were preserved. Nevertheless, the rites of repentance that placed importance on active penitence and redemption of one’s evil acts came to be supplemented by a more static ritual, based on receiving and worshipping the kami, in which kami and human beings acted together. It was the first half of the twelfth century during which this change emerged. This is the period in which the *Engi* narrates the myth of the

arrival of the small Kannon.

If, as stated above, elements of kami worship have been incorporated into the ceremonies centering on the small Kannon, then, in essence, there emerged in them an attitude in which the small Kannon was worshipped as though it were a kami. Just as a deity is moved from the central shrine to resting places during a festival, the small Kannon also is moved from the altar to the worship area. Further, just as the deity is moved from the resting place to back to the shrine, so the small Kannon is also moved from the worship area to the altar. Moreover, in order to shift this analogy into the realm of visual, ritual space, the small Kannon must first be hidden from sight, just as a Shinto deity is invisible. The deity's departure and return take place in the darkness of night, with just the light of a torch at the head of the procession; likewise, the emergence and return of the small Kannon must also take place in pitch darkness, so that the physical body is eternally hidden in invisibility.

The small Kannon as an object of worship casts off and abandons the physical form and adornments of traditional Buddhist iconology and is transformed into an existence that transcends our sight. Here, the altar case in which the small Kannon is enclosed is not simply a storage case to protect the image. It becomes a metaphor that symbolizes the trace of the kami that resides in the background of the world. The small Kannon is sealed within the altar case as a "hidden buddha" (*hibutsu*) whose body and countenance are enveloped in darkness and rendered indiscernible. A hidden buddha is, in essence, the extreme form of the approach of the iconic buddhas into the realm of existence of the invisible, noniconographic gods.

Originally the gods of Japan were invisible. They were believed to settle in special "places" such as mountains, woods, or trees, and were anonymous existences whose individuality or physical characteristics were not emphasized. Because of these amorphous bodies, they possessed the possibility of infinite division. They are capable of the division of spirit like a kind of cell division, and move freely through space, repeatedly transposing themselves to particular places. In other words,

kami are invisible existences that exercise the power of possession or transference. Moreover, in that they are completely free of physical bodies, they are noniconographic objects of worship.

By contrast, the images of buddhas and bodhisattvas that were introduced with the transmission of Buddhist tradition as objects of worship were above all visible to the eye. They were clothed in gorgeous adornments and possessed clear countenances and supple bodies. This physicality was an expression of their powers of salvation. It may be said that if the kami exercised the functioning of possession, the buddhas exercised the functioning of incarnation.¹² (See Chapter 1)

Following the transmission of Buddhism to Japan, there was a period of contact and coexistence of the invisible kami with the visible buddhas, but gradually a relationship of mutual influence was born. One result was the production of images of kami as Shinto came under Buddhist influence. Another important result is the exact opposite movement, the transformation of buddhas and bodhisattvas into "hidden buddhas." Buddhas and bodhisattvas as objects of worship entered the realm of invisibility of the kami. As hidden buddhas, the buddhas are cut off from the sight of worshippers; they move in space like kami, and transfer themselves by signs as though by the power of possession of the kami. Further, a typical example of this transformation into a hidden buddha is seen in the case of the small Kannon of the Nigatsudō Shuni-e. The rituals of the small Kannon are like a visual depiction of the transposition of the buddha into the realm of the power of possession.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the Tōdaiji Nigatsudō Shuni-e originally centered on rites of repentance conducted with the eleven-faced Kannon as the main image of worship. Rituals of repentance involve casting one's entire body before buddhas and bodhisattvas and striving to realize the aspiration to repentance and redemption. Kannon as the object of worship possesses a richly expressive countenance and body. It is through the smile of Kannon filled with compassion and the fragrance arising from the buddha's physical body that the practitioner's blood and tears shed in the act of repentance reach an ecstatic catharsis. In this way,

the practice of repentance, when performed before an incarnated icon, has the greatest psychological effectiveness. If this is the case, it is not surprising that when the character of the Shuni-e gradually shifted from the standard of repentance to that of kami worship (*kami matsuri*), at the same time the small Kannon as object of worship should undergo a change in body, becoming a hidden buddha. In other words, when the incarnated icon changed into the noniconic kami and buddhas, it was received like a kami. The small Kannon had been an individual icon in the traditional iconography, but in the Nigatsudō Shuni-e, which adopted the trends of the medieval period, it strongly manifested the noniconic character by which it abandoned its physicality.

In this way, the small Kannon of the Nigatsudō was abruptly transformed into a hidden buddha in the period of cloistered government (*Insei*) in the twelfth century. Since then, the prohibition against opening the doors of the altar case was born and the legend that forbids direct sight was established. According to documents of later times, the two central statues of the Nigatsudō are, as mentioned above, a large gilt bronze Kannon and a small seven-inch gilt bronze Kannon. This tradition is corroborated by *Kakuzenshō*, a catalogue of medieval esoteric iconography, which includes illustrations of the two Kannon of the Nigatsudō. They appear in the notes (*uragaki* 裏書) to the section on “the eleven-faced Kannon figure” in the *Seinan* 西南院 text of *Kakuzenshō*.

According to the historical investigation of Kawamura the contents of these notes indicate that they date from before 1180.¹³ From the notation, “the trace of Fudaraku,” appended to one of the two Kannon illustrated, we know that it represents the small Kannon, but there is little in appearance that distinguishes the two Kannon. These notes also include illustrations of other eleven-faced Kannon, such as those enshrined at Tōdaiji and Gangōji 元興寺. All of these Kannon are similar in appearance. There are slight variations in the faces emerging from the head, but in general there are no distinctive features. This suggests that the small Kannon of the Nigatsudō was, like those of the other temples, originally worshipped as a visible icon. A transformation occurred, however, and it entered a process of change into a hidden buddha. Its

appearance remained visible only in a medieval catalogue, and gradually records of any direct perception completely ceased. The small Kannon became famous in later centuries not because of the individual character of its appearance, but because of the special nature of its transformation into a hidden buddha.

4. Two Types of Matsuri

There are fundamental points of similarity between the Nigatsudō Shuni-e 二月堂修二会 and the Kasuga Wakamiya On-matsuri 春日若宮おん祭. The movements of the small Kannon, which plays the central role in the second seven-day period of the Shuni-e, parallel those of Wakamiya, who has the principle role in the On-matsuri. The Wakamiya On-matsuri is conducted from December 15 to 18, but the highlight occurs with the ceremonial excursion (*senkō* 遷幸) late at night on the 16th and the ritual of return (*kankō* 還幸) on the night of the 17th. These strongly resemble the pattern of the rituals of departure (*shutsugyo* 出御) and reentry (*gonyū* 後入) of the small Kannon on the middle day of the Nigatsudō Shuni-e. The midnight movement of the invisible kami (Wakamiya) and the late night movement of the sealed and hidden buddha (small Kannon) may be seen superimposed or interlocking. As noted before, the Kasuga Wakamiya On-matsuri in December is a winter observance, and the Nigatsudō Shuni-e in February is a spring observance. Thus, certain basic differences may be seen in the two rites. Nevertheless, in both cases the supernatural central figure, invisible in the depths of the night, moves repeatedly through a space led by a *taimatsu* torch, and the entire process of the rite is taut with emotions of awe.

The Kasuga Taisha shrine is commonly said to have been founded in 768. When the focus is shifted to the point of origin of faith in the shrine, the date must be pushed back more than ten years. The existence of the “kami grounds” of the Taisha shrine in Tenpyō shōhō 8 (756) is attested to by *Tōdaiji sankai shishizu* 東大寺山堺四至図, preserved in the Shōsōin 正倉院.¹⁴ If this is so, the origins of the faith of the Kasuga

Taisha and the origins of the “Eleven-face repentance” that is thought to be the early form of the Nigatsudō Shuni-e date from the same period. According to *Tōdaiji gon-bettō Sanetada nijūkyūkajō no koto* 東大寺権別当実忠二十九ヶ条事 by Sanetada, the founder of the Shuni-e, the Eleven-face repentance, held for twenty-seven days each year from the first day of the second month, was begun in Tenpyō shōhō 4 (752).¹⁵

I have commented on the gap in dates of the founding and origins of the Kasuga Taisha shrine. Nishida Nagao 西田長男 has also commented on this problem, noting that in terms of the history of shrine architecture, two approaches must be considered. Traditionally, shrines have been distinguished as *miya* 宮 and *yashiro* 社. *Miya* refers to cases in which kami halls were constructed from the start. They may be considered permanent structures. By contrast, *yashiro* are spaces set off and surrounded by *shimenawa* straw ropes or other markers. They are temporarily established sacred spaces, and kami halls are not constructed. They possess the character of prohibited, consecrated grounds. In other words, they are “*yashiro*” or sacred spaces in place of shrine structures. In general, it is thought that kami permanently abide in *miya* (or the derivative *tono* 殿), but this is not the case with *yashiro*. On the occasions of periodic festivals, kami come and appear there. Fundamental architectural differences arose from this distinction between permanent *miya* and temporary *yashiro*.

Thus, there is a difference of some years in the start of the Kasuga Taisha, depending on whether it is taken as the origins of faith or the founding of the hall structures. In either case, however, its beginnings can be traced back to about the mid-eighth century, at approximately the same time as the establishment of the Tōdaiji Nigatsudō Shuni-e observances. This means that it also coincides with the period of the founding of Tōdaiji temple itself as an expression of the aspiration of Emperor Shōmu 聖武. Further, when we consider that the Kasuga Taisha shrine, together with Kōfukuji 興福寺 temple, was constructed through the religious reverence and the enormous political and economic power of the Fujiwara clan, the closeness of dates of founding of these religious institutions seems hardly accidental.

Nishida has noted that the Kasuga-sai or festival of the Kasuga Taisha was originally a celebration of the founding of the shrine.¹⁶ To adopt an approach of Eliade, the Kasuga-sai observance may be seen as a periodic revival or reenactment of the time of the original founding of the Kasuga Taisha shrine. Further, the *Tōdaiji sankai shishizu* maps include characters indicating a “lid-shaped mountain” (*Mikasayama* 御蓋山) and a “sacred ground” at the west of the compound. Further, it is indicated that the western foothill formed a place for ceremonies. Thus, the ceremonies of the Kasuga-sai were originally performed on these “sacred grounds” at the western face of the hills.

The Kasuga kami, however, gradually moved from the temporary sacred space of the *yashiro* to the permanent shrine hall, the *miya*. This is because the four deities that served as protector gods (*mamori-gami*) for the Fujiwara clan came to be assembled here and regularly worshiped. In the first hall, Takemikazuchi no Mikoto was transferred by prayer from the Fujiwara clan lands in Kashima 鹿島. In the second hall, Futsunushi no Mikoto was transferred from the same region of Katori 香取. By contrast, in the third hall is the ancestral kami of the Fujiwara clan, Amenokoyane no Mikoto, transferred from the area of Hiraoka 枚岡, and in the fourth hall is a consort-like female kami, Himekami. These four *miya* halls are in a row from east to west, and all are constructed facing the south, corresponding to the alignment of the Heijō palace. At the time, the idea that the emperor faces the south was imported from China and applied to palace architecture, and extended to the construction of temples and shrines such as Tōdaiji, Kōfukuji, and Kasuga Taisha. The transformation of the *yashiro* sacred spaces of the Kasuga kami to *miya* shrine halls was completed according to this thought, and the present compound of the four main shrine halls of Kasuga was determined. This probably took place about 768, which is said to be the date of the founding of the Kasuga Taisha shrine.¹⁷

To repeat, the Kasuga-sai festival are observances centering on the four main halls of Kasuga as *miya* shrines, but during the Sekkan 摂関 era (10th-11th cen.), this festival grew in elaborateness as the observance for the clan gods of the Fujiwara. The dramatic character of the original

observance as the reenactment or return to the time of origin of the shrine was abandoned, and it was turned into a colorful and lavish festival to symbolize the prosperity and power of the Fujiwara clan. The Kasuga observances during the Sekkan era were held on the first day of the monkey of the second and eleventh months. The central event of the ceremonies was the reception of the *hōhei* offering, delivered by courier sent from the imperial office of the Konoe 近衛, and the reading by the chief priest.¹⁸

From the diary of Fujiwara Michinaga 道長 (966-1027), *Midōkanpakuki* 御堂関白記, it appears that the ceremonies reached their peak of elegance and scale when Michinaga's sons Yorimichi 頼通 and Norimichi 教通 served as couriers. We see from this the strong interest during this period in having the children of powerful nobility serve as emissary for the Kamo 賀茂 and Kasuga shrine festivals. Filling this role was a necessary step on the ladder to political success, and by playing an important part in the ceremonies for the clan kami, one was performing an official role of responsibility that demonstrated awareness as a member of the clan. By being dispatched as emissary for the Kasuga festival and attending the banquet of the shrine priests within the sacred precincts of the shrine, one gained the qualifications to participate in forming the political policies important to the nation. Thus, the Kasuga-sai ceremonies gradually transcended the bounds of a festival observance for clan deities and gained the authority and prestige equivalent to court rites. Strictly speaking, it came to possess a character distinct from kami worship.

As we have seen, during the Tenpyō shōhō era, the Kasuga Taisha shrine was transformed from a *yashiro* to a *miya*, and gradually, during the period when the Sekkan order was established, the *miya* rose to become a center of state rites of a level of prestige with imperial court rites. This may be said to be a natural development, in view of the fact that the Kasuga kami were the clan deities of the Fujiwara. This process of change in the Kasuga Taisha was also, however, one in which, simultaneously, the character of the rituals surrounding the Kasuga kami were gradually pushed into the background. The original apperception

of performing ritual worship to call the kami to the sacred precincts as *yashiro* receded into mere memory of a distant past. Through the continued rise of Kasuga Taisha as a site of public, state rites, the original character of the rites as kami worship within the precincts was lost. It may be said that the manifestation of the eminence of the kami themselves faded before the magical powers of the lavish and elaborate rituals. The spiritual authority of the kami faced a crisis.

In this situation, however, an epochal change occurred. Or rather, the critical circumstances made a change necessary. This was the construction of the Wakamiya shrine and the establishment of the Wakamiya On-matsuri observances. To state my conclusion first, we see here a deliberate attempt to reinstate the original form of kami worship (kami matsuri). This was an attempt at restoration, in which, in contrast to the ceremonies centered on the Kasuga *miya* shrines, the spiritual authority of the kami was manifested through the revival of a *yashiro*-type spectacle.

The Kasuga Wakamiya shrine is, at present, counted as the fifth shrine hall and stands adjacent the four main halls, but originally it was located jointly with the fourth hall. Later, a small temporary hall was built between the second and third halls, but gradually it gained independent status and a hall was constructed in the present location. According to Ōhigashi Nobukazu 大東延和, this occurred in Chōshō 長承 4 (1135, also Hōen 保延 1).¹⁹ This date is found in *Wakamiya go-konpon en* 若宮御根本縁 (Ninpyō 3 [1153]), which narrates the founding of Wakamiya, and Fujiwara Munetada's 藤原宗忠 *Chūyūki* 中右記. Already from the following year, 1136, the On-matsuri centering on Wakamiya began to be performed. This is clear from the entry in *Chūyūki* for Hoen 2 (1136), ninth month, seventeenth day.²⁰

According to Ōhigashi, the construction of a Wakamiya hall was planned and the rituals established during this period because, although the power of the Sekkan system was at its peak, there was in actuality a rapid increase in social unrest arising in part from natural disasters. The Chōshō era (1132-35) was one of floods and famine throughout the country, and epidemics spread (according to *Chūyūki* and other records).

In the third and fourth months of 1135, special dispensations of rice were made twice involving several thousand *koku* 石, and in the seventh month of the same year, admonitions were ordered in connection to disasters, sickness, famine, and bandits (*Honchō monzui* 本朝文粹 and other records). In these circumstances, it would not be surprising for the central authorities of state, the Fujiwara Sekkan, to seek alleviation by depending on the spirit power of the newly emergent water kami, Kasuga Wakamiya.

The critical condition of the society gave rise to expectations of the newly established kami Wakamiya and spurred faith in the kami's power. The ceremonies at the four main shrines of Kasuga had already been formed as elegant rituals centered on the imperial offering. Thus, interest in the youthful kami quickly soared. Nevertheless, in considering this historical background, it is also important to note that the period of the founding of the Wakamiya shrine and the establishment of the Wakamiya ceremonies almost perfectly coincides with the establishment of rituals centering on the small Kannon in the Tōdaiji Nigatsudō Shuni-e. To repeat, mention of the Tōdaiji Nigatsudō Shuni-e first appears in historical documents in the *Tōdaiji yōroku* completed in 1106. Further, it has been determined that the permanent enshrinement of the small Kannon in Nigatsudō hall occurred between 1123 and 1148. Thus, the construction of the Kasuga Wakamiya shrine (1135) and the inauguration of the Wakamiya ceremonies (1136) correspond precisely with the period during which the small Kannon came to be permanently placed in Nigatsudō as the central object of worship of the Shuni-e rites. This was the period when the cloister government of Toba-in 鳥羽院 began, and the Taira clan began gaining power. History was about to enter a period of social upheaval.

Perhaps the period of crisis called for the appearance of a new kami. Or perhaps the memory of the original kami, washed by the rough waves of the times, came to manifest again a clear form. In either case, the small Kannon that became the central object of worship in Nigatsudō, as a hidden buddha, came to be worshiped precisely like a kami, and as if to follow on its heels, Kasuga Wakamiya came to be received as a newly

emergent kami bearing sacred preeminence. In the nearby spaces of Tōdaiji temple and Kasuga Taisha shrine, buddha (the small Kannon) and kami (Wakamiya), on the stage of a kami matsuri, came almost indistinguishably to repeat the drama of emergence and concealment.

We must note here that the Nigatsudō Shuni-e and the Wakamiya On-matsuri were both established during the twelfth century with a common intent and conception. The majesty of *hotoke* that has been transformed into a hidden buddha and the august dignity of kami were sought within almost the identical cosmos of apperception. Regarding this cosmology, we should note that in the Tōdaiji precincts, seven halls all face south, and by contrast, the Nigatsudō hall in which the Shuni-e is performed alone faces west. I have already mentioned that Tōdaiji follows the pattern of the Heijō palace in facing south, based on the Chinese notion that the emperor faces south. The Nigatsudō hall breaks with this architectural plan.

Behind Nigatsudō there spread the primal woods of Kasuga, and in front are the slopes of Wakakusa 若草 hill. The hall itself is built on the mountainside and occupies a space from which one can survey at one sweeping glance the Great Buddha Hall and the rest of the seven halls of Tōdaiji. This scene is located in the northeast corner of the Yamato plain. The same general description may be made in the case of Kasuga Wakamiya. The four main halls of Kasuga all face south, and the fifth hall of Wakamiya alone was built facing west. This was clearly planned with the conception of having a mountain like Wakakusa in the background. Behind, on the three peaks of Kannabi 神奈備 mountain, just as in the case of Nigatsudō, are the primal forests of Kasuga. If these forests are identified as a kind of chaos, with Wakakusa mountain to the northwest and Sangai-yama to the southwest, two points seem to surround the chaos like fixed stars. At the western foothills of these two fixed stars stand Nigatsudō and Wakamiya like luminous bodies emerging from the darkness of the chaos. Two lines extending west from the central point of the Kasuga forests—the line from Wakakusa mountain to Nigatsudō and the line from Sangai-yama to Wakamiya—intersect at right angles the axis running north and south through the

seven halls of Tōdaiji and the four main halls of Kasuga. Here, a conception of an east-west axis has probably been implanted in conformity with the courses of the sun and moon.²¹

The second point to be noted here is the similarity between the movements late in the night of the “hidden buddha” (small Kannon) in the Shuni-e and those of Wakamiya. The rituals of the emergence and reentry of the small Kannon during the final day of the first seven-day period in February, as stated earlier, connect the two spaces of the central altar with the worship hall, while the ceremonies of the sojourn and return of Wakamiya during late in the night of the 16th and 17th of December move between the main Wakamiya shrine and the temporary shrine resting place between the first and second torii gates. There is a strong possibility that the emergence and reentry of the small Kannon within the Nigatsudō hall are a simulated movement that originally joined the hall with a place outside. Thus, it may be said that there is a fundamental similarity between the small Kannon’s rituals of emergence and reentry and Wakamiya’s sojourn and return. Of particular importance in relation to this issue is the observation of Fukuyama Toshio 福山敏男 from the perspective of architectural history. He states that the temporarily constructed shrine of black wood that serves as the “resting place” (*otabisho*) during the Wakamiya observances represents the “*yashiro*” style of ancient times.²²

Today, the shrine of black wood is built facing south, like the four main shrine halls, but originally it bore the coloration of places of worship. According to Fukuyama, the four main halls as they stand at present are almost identical in form and size, in a design known as the “Kasuga style” (*Kasuga-zukuri* 春日造) and are lined up adjacent to each other from east to west. Their structure, however, differs from the buildings for the Daijōsai ceremony or the Sumiyoshi Taisha and Izumo Taisha shrines in that a much smaller scale has been adopted, much like that seen in structures for worship (*yōhaisho* 遥拝所). This may be because small temporary shrines that were built each year for the festival became fixed in the present form. If this is so, then the shrine of black wood rebuilt annually for the resting place during the Wakamiya

observances may reflect the style of the ancient period.

If Fukuyama's conjectures are indeed correct, then it is possible that the establishment of the Wakamiya ceremonies was an attempt to return to the original, ancient form of the Kasuga ceremonies that focused on the main four halls. Hidden in the movement by Wakamiya to the temporary shrine was the intent to revive the original faith in kami. In this case, the sojourn of the kami was not, of course, merely a change of place. The kami's sojourn and return was a tense, formal movement which, through the appearance of the invisible kami itself, forcefully engraved in the sensations of people an awe-inspiring majesty. This impression of majesty stirred people's original faith in the kami. The kami that conceals itself abides in repose with tranquil bearing, but when moving into people's presence, it cannot but rouse emotions of awe and reverence. This is, I think, the fundamental meaning of the kami's movement. If this is so, surely the movement of the hidden buddha in the Nigatsudō Shuni-e may be understood to possess a similar character. The emergence and reentry of the small Kannon also is conducted so that the kami-like aura of the hidden buddha radiates into its surroundings.

The third point to be noted is that regarding the Wakamiya observances, there are in fact two distinct kinds of observance that are fused, and there is no essential connection between the two. On the one hand, there is the procession of the kami through the depths of night, moving to the temporary shrine. On the other hand, there is the O-watari shiki お渡り式 ceremonies, which unfold like a lavish picture scroll through the day of December 17. Concerning the O-watari shiki, Nakane Yoshiaki 中根義明 notes that its origins go back more than eight centuries, to the time when the founder of the Kasuga shrine, the Kanpaku Fujiwara Tadamichi 関白藤原忠通, erected a temporary shelter on the Kasuga moor and, praying for the kami's presence there, established a ceremony (On-matsuri).²³ In succeeding periods entertainments (kami *asobi* 神遊び), performances, and rituals were added, increasing the element of performing arts, so that the festival that is observed at present was evolved. In other words, it became the O-watari shiki in which one may survey the public entertainments from the

court period through the Edo period, and colorful displays of performing arts from throughout the country are conducted in the “Ceremony Beneath the Pine” and before the kami at the temporary shrine of the resting place.

Clearly this O-watari shiki differs fundamentally in character from the “sojourn” of Wakamiya. The O-watari shiki is a human display before the kami, with a lavish parade and performances of arts conducted in daytime. By contrast, the journey of Wakamiya is a secretive rite of the night in which the kami manifests to humans its spiritual dignity. There is no correspondence between the divine sojourn and the human O-watari shiki performances. In this regard, we are reminded of the Nigatsudō Shuni-e, in which the rituals surrounding the small Kannon were born from conceptions completely different from the violent practices of repentance stemming from the Eleven-face repentance observance. This is because major changes occurred in the development from the Nara period Eleven-face repentance ceremonies and the Shuni-e of the Sekkan and Insei eras. The rituals of repentance and penitence came to incorporate the secret rites of the kami matsuri ceremonies. This change is in harmony with the historical process by which the secret rite of the sojourn of Wakamiya was newly added to the Kasuga ceremonies, which were grand ceremonies of shrine worship by the ruling Fujiwara clan.

In these changes, the role of fire is especially significant. The fire of the *taimatsu* torches that lead the processions of the kami and *hotoke* play a symbolic role. In contrast to the grand ceremonies conducted in broad daylight, the secret rites performed in the depths of night are accomplished through praying in the darkness for the presence of the invisible kami or the hidden buddha. That which illuminates the path of the movement of the kami or *hotoke* is only the purified fire.

At present, the “matsuri” of the Tōdaiji Shuni-e is widely considered a “fire festival,” but strictly speaking this can be said only of the rites of the emergence and reentry of the small Kannon. This is because the movements of the small Kannon within the Nigatsudō hall are led by the fire of the *taimatsu* torch. In the same way, today the rites

of purification by the fire of the *taimatsu*, together with incense, is an important element of the sojourn and return of the Kasuga Wakamiya. In order to lead the invisible kami and hidden buddha, the fire that illuminates the darkness is necessary. It appears that there were two kinds of matsuri observances. The rites of the small Kannon of Nigatsudō and the Kasuga Wakamiya rites, through the performance of invisible rituals in the depths of night, both manifest the identical conception of the matsuri observance. Within the invisible, secret rites, it is the fire of the *taimatsu* torch that illuminates in flashes the existence of the kami and *hotoke*.

The Shuni-e ceremonies of Nigatsudō, through the transformation of the small Kannon into a hidden buddha in the medieval period, markedly strengthened the character of a kami matsuri observance. Further, this character of the kami matsuri bears strong resemblance with that of the Kasuga Wakamiya On-matsuri founded about the same time. Moreover, the Shuni-e and the Wakamiya-sai, in their topographical positions within their precincts, and in the formal movements of the central object of worship and kami body, show close structural relationships. These indicate relationships in cosmology and ideology that cannot be ignored. Further, the conceptual element in thought that made this possible was the process of transformation of the small Kannon into a hidden buddha, that is, the manifestation within the Buddhist icon of the functioning of spirit possession. This is precisely the reverse process of that seen in the manifestation within Shinto icons of the functioning of incarnation (in, for example, the emergence of statues of kami).

The Wakamiya On-matsuri as a winter observance, through comparison with the Nigatsudō Shuni-e as a spring observance, vividly displays its dual nature. And in the same way, in the mirror of the Wakamiya rites, the rituals of the small Kannon reveal their fundamental significance.

