

# 折口信夫的「稀人」： 遠方來訪的神明，天與地、物質與精神的媒介

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Shinobu Orikuchi's Marebito :  
Mediators between Heaven and Earth, Substance and Spirit

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日本文學家兼民族學學者折口信夫（1887-1953）提倡一種獨特的「古代學」，或稱「古代研究」，畢生投入「常世」<sup>1</sup>的研究（亦稱「母之國」，日文：妣が国），亦即一個不存在於真實的世界，跨越大海，完全獨立於人類世界以外的地方。現世的人僅活在當下，但常世的神享有永生，普遍具有神力。折口信夫認為，東亞半島上的原始神靈都是「魂」的節點，魂是動物、植物、礦物和所有物質相互聯結和想像的媒介。生命以魂的形式存在於所有物質，所有的存在形式因有魂而成形。

母之國是這一切誕生之地，也是所有現象回歸之地，因死亡而獲得重生。這是神靈之地，也是來世，無法用人類時間空間的連續線來衡量。現世與來世同時並存卻無交集，每年僅有一個時間相會，地點就在遙遠的群島間。南方群島規模最大的祭典活動多半於盛夏日照最強的時候舉辦，或隆冬時在北方半島海岸上，日照最微弱的時候舉行。此時，巨型神靈混在動植物與礦物體間，帶來來自母之國的神力，重新設定時間與空間，轉化為全新的時空。

折口信夫稱這些戴著面具，自母之國而來的神明為「稀人」，在凡人的日常生活間開啓特異或神聖的時間和空間。折口信夫認為，這是日本宗教最原始的形貌，也是日本所有表演藝術的原型。他的「古代研究」以稀人為主軸，並以共三卷的《古代研究》作為他對稀人的第一本重要著作。第一卷的主題是日本文學，其中第三部探討日本文學的誕生，與第一部民俗學研究同時出版，出版的時間並沒有按照文章撰寫的順序。另外有一篇先前發表的文章〈常世與來訪的稀人〉介紹幾位曾經出現在列島上的稀人，包含北方的生剝鬼（namahage）和折口信夫本人曾研究過，出現在南方群島的蒙面神（angama）。

折口信夫對稀人的定義如下：

「稀」最早可追溯的意思包含「不常來訪」或「不常出現」。「人」的意思是「人類」，古早時也可能意指「神明與神明的後代」。因此，稀人的意思是偶爾來訪的神明，也可能指神明與神明的後代。由於來訪的神明以人形出現，因此稀人也被歸類為「人」。

折口信夫也提到，

「簡單的說，我們所認知的稀人最原本的型態是神，也就是遠渡重洋造訪古代村落，為村民帶來喜樂之後踏上歸途的神明。」

來訪的稀人既是神明也是人類，從另一個通常獨立存在的超現實空間來到真實的世界。折口信夫認為這是稀人最原本的樣貌。

稀人兼具現實世界的人類與來自另一個世界的神明兩種身份，必然會有一些矛盾之處。稀人是人類，卻又不只是人類，至少還可以化身為非人類。這些平時看不到的變身，只有在祭典儀式時才會出現在村民眼前。因此，稀人的祭典活動必須在時間的交界處，譬如太陽日照最微弱或最強烈的時候，或是在空間的交界處，譬如陸地與海洋、山巒與平原交會之處。這樣的界限在分隔的同時亦將兩者結合唯一，因在此時人類也可能變身為神明。古代祭典舉辦的目的是為了讓村民參與與傳承，不是為了客觀的由外觀賞。稀人迎來祭典，也賦予祭典核心意義。

稀人具有二元性與歧義性，而塑造稀人崇高地位的自然環境也同樣具有二元性與歧義性。火山地帶的列島難免會遇到火山爆發與地震。大自然可以為人類帶來幸福，也可能造成不愉快的破壞。大自然釋

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<sup>1</sup>「常世」字面的意思是「永恆的世界」。古時候的人認為常世存在於海洋的另一端，後來被認為意指長生不老的理想世界。

放的強大力量可作為善惡的判斷，帶來等量的建設或破壞。然而，破壞之後是創造，反之亦然，創造之後也可能帶來傷害。折口信夫在寫《古代研究》第三部〈日本文學的誕生〉時就意識到來自母之國的稀人的二元性與歧義性。他寫道，「曾有人以為外型凶猛的妖怪自母之國。」稀人祭典可以將大自然與人類造成的破壞轉化為創造性的建構。

1923年關東大地震時，折口信夫才剛從南方島嶼回來。這是他第二次動身前往南島進行研究調查，也才剛完成初步的構思。當時《古代研究》第三部也還沒寫完。地震後，日本人虐殺在當地生活的朝鮮人，折口信夫差點因此喪命。他經歷了大地震所造成的自然災害，也經歷了第二次世界大戰的人為迫害。折口信夫在過世前一年出版了曠世鉅作《從民族史觀的角度來看待另一個世界》，集他對稀人的討論之大成，與另一部著作《古代研究》同為留給後世子孫的鉅作。他在書中章節〈古代之前的日本〉最後幾句中提到，「迎接來訪神明的喜悅與期待，類似遇到凶猛野獸時的驚嚇。天堂即是地獄。洗滌罪惡即是煉獄。」

稀人既是人也是神，神聖但也是野獸，象徵人類世界以外一種無法馴服的自然力量，是天堂也是地獄。生剝鬼代表春天的來臨。蒙面神看似慈祥、風趣的老人家面具背後則是兇惡的鬼怪。然而，鬼怪也是一種精神存在，折口信夫稱之為「妖怪」或「外型凶猛的神靈」。這樣的精神存在是一種精神實體，非善亦非而這樣的觀念與折口信夫在《古代研究》書裡提到的論點相符。折口信夫最終對於稀人的結論不僅侷限於日本。他認為稀人是古物，早在「日本」成形之前，甚至早在日本有「古代」之前就已經出現。他所探索的是最原始的人類世界，因此他所謂的「古代」並非過去的時光，而是另一種更遙遠、更普世的形式。

折口信夫在《從民族史觀的角度來看待另一個世界》書中的章節〈古代之前的日本〉提到，「來訪的客人明顯是人，大家都知道，卻還是把他們視為來自另一個次元的生物。這是經過長時間培養出來的習慣，也是歷經長久累積的觀念，讓大家把訪客視為鬼怪。」將這些外來的力量納入社群，刺激群體由內部復甦，同時也避免外在破壞性的力量得到充分的發展。稀人介於內外的交界，既是內也是外，是「帶有一些邪惡成分的神靈」，也是「帶有一定程度前日本古代性質的神靈」。稀人是神，卻介於善與惡之間，可以將破壞轉化為建設，反之亦然。稀人、聖獸與戴上即可讓人化身為稀人的面具，都是這股力量的體現。

東亞列島在北邊和南邊都有開口。列島間由現代政治疆界區分，北邊有與西伯利亞相鄰的庫頁島、北極圈的堪察加半島及千島群島，一路延伸可至美國西北海岸。南邊從臺灣一路延伸菲律賓、東南亞、大洋洲和復活節島。若對日本以外地區對來訪神明的崇拜儀式進行正式的研究調查，或許會發現某種共通性，宗教和藝術期待融合為一種人類生活的原型模式。折口信夫對古代的研究包含兩個層面。由內有史前民俗傳說的這一部份。由外則有人類文化學的這一部份，追逐他者的現況。外轉為內，內又化為外。折口信夫的這些概念從何而來？

顯然是因為折口信夫本人和稀人有相似之處，也是他刻意為之。他瞭解，探索內在的自我需要外部觀點的協助。稀人是兼具人獸特質的神明，介於內外之間透過外在的力量刺激內在的復甦，有能力將封閉於內的力量向外釋放。他的角色和當代藝術家一樣。稀人可以是藝術作品的模特兒。終其一生，折口信夫保持對藝術的客觀研究與主觀呈現，過著遊走於兩端之間的生活。他以「釈道空」為筆名寫下多本優秀的文學著作，橫跨短歌、現代詩、小說和劇本等多種類別。在客觀研究稀人的同時，也和稀人一樣真實的呈現了自己。

舉行祭典的目的是為了讓當地人獲得身體上和心靈上的重生，將他們帶往一個新的階段。因此，祭典活動可能是不可對外公開的秘密儀式，只有受到信賴的人才能進入。稀人無形的抽象與神聖性在祭典中化為有形的實體。這個過程和攝影很像，由鏡頭捕捉稀人極其抽象的特質與光線，化為具體的呈現。稀人和攝影是相似的存在，均為藝術的原始形式。因此，當地的祭典參與者反對進行相關的記錄，認為稀人是古老的神明，也是世界萬物的起源，不應將其記錄。儘管在西表島、小濱島、新城島和石垣島（宮城）代代相傳的赤面黑面來訪神祭典，對柳田國男與折口信夫在民俗學方面的研究和理論建立有很深的影響，但赤面與黑面來訪神祭典並未和日本其他地方一起以「來訪神：仮面・仮装の神々」（帶面具與扮裝來訪的衆神）名義登錄為聯合國教科文組織的無形文化遺產<sup>2</sup>，原因可能是當地人並無登錄的意願。

參與儀式的村民化身赤面和黑面來訪神，卻嚴禁外人進入，更不允許觀光客參與神聖的變身儀式。然而，若對赤面和黑面來訪神沒有一些瞭解，很難理解折口信夫對稀人的論述，也無法解釋稀人的祭典儀式為何與攝影藝術如此相互呼應。幸好有曾在折口信夫研究探訪石垣島時協助指導的喜舍場永珣<sup>3</sup>和宮良高弘<sup>4</sup>的論述可供參考，我才能執筆撰寫祭典的介紹。下文取自我的著作《折口信夫》（講談社，2014），其中第四章祝祭有較為詳細的說明。我以折口信夫的《古代研究》為核心，詳述赤面與黑面神祭典的細節。

赤面與黑面來訪神的面具祭典在八重山群島上西表島的古見村代代傳承（三個戴面具的神明與白面神一起出現）。同樣位於八重山群島的小濱島、新城島和石垣島的宮良也有類似的祭典。古見村的祭典應為原型，後來才傳到其他島上。喜舍場永珣曾將他的調查研究成果整理〈赤面神祭典備忘錄〉一文，收入《八重山民俗誌》第一卷（由沖繩時報在1977年出版），說明祭典的重要儀式。喜舍場永珣描述赤面與黑面神奇特的造型，前者帶著長四十五公分的木質面具，面具在非祭典期間收藏起來。「面具上的牙齒和眼球由貝殼製成，耳裡可以燃香。」從正面的角度描述這樣一副具有強大的力量，類似生剝鬼節所使用的面具，但比生剝鬼更具野性。

#### 祭典的第一天

在農曆六月一個與水相關的午夜，有兩個神明的面具被大家秘密帶到村落東南方大約六百公尺處的洞窟。前一天晚上，村民才偷偷的採集了一種名為野葛藤的植物，編織成覆蓋祭典表演者手腳和身體的織物。表演者戴上神靈的面具，髮間飾以蒲葦草，過程中周圍都有人守衛，避免有人闖入洞穴。意欲偷窺的人可能會被攻擊。

表演者在在神聖的秘密洞穴內戴上礦物製成的面具和植物編織而成的服飾，逐漸蛻變化為神明。這個洞穴通往祖先神國，又稱尼羅，也是通往母之國的路。這些都是折口信夫所謂的異界或另一個世界。赤面與黑面神是每年一度從尼羅來人世拜訪的兩個神明。

2 聯合國教科文組織在2006年通過無形文化遺產保護公約，保護珍貴的表演藝術、民俗、儀式和節慶。日本在2018年以「戴面具與扮裝來訪的衆神」為名稱申請登錄十個相關的節慶活動。

3 喜舍場永珣（1885-1972）是民俗學家與地方歷史學家，沖繩縣八重山群島石垣島人，當地歷史、民間風俗與音樂研究先驅，著作包含《八重山歷史》、《八重山民謠誌》和《八重山古謠》，其中《八重山古謠》榮獲1971年柳田國男賞。

4 宮良高弘（1935-2018），日本民俗學家沖繩縣八重山群島石垣島人，札幌大學教授，其著作《波照間島民俗誌》曾獲1973年澁澤賞。

神聖的洞穴裡到底都在做些什麼？喜舍場永珣記錄了小濱島的例子。在洞穴最深處最神聖的地方，透過名為「重生」(仕出す)的儀式為面具上妝。關於「重生」一詞的含意，宮良高弘將他對西表島古見村(所有祭典儀式的發源地)的赤面與黑面神，以及他對重要中繼點小濱島的研究，收錄在〈八重山諸島的秘密結社〉(《我的沖繩叢書》第五卷〈沖繩學的課題〉，木耳社，1972)一文中。宮良高弘說明祭典的參與者如何從聖泉汲取泉水製作面具上的妝，這個過程稱之為「重生」。據說泉水源頭為尼羅，源頭為母之國。「重生」一詞意味著「孵化」或「蛻皮」，有重新誕生的意涵。

「重生」代表「孵化」或「蛻皮」，不像「出生」僅代表人類的誕生。折口信夫善用「重生」的概念寫下〈若水の話〉一文，收錄在他的著作《古代研究》中，更廣泛的探討其死亡與復生之意涵。他寫道，「這種開始與從母親的子宮出生不一樣。」又說「也可以說是從死亡中復生。」什麼樣的實體可以重新開始？當然是來自另一個世界的稀人，透過聖水的儀式洗禮化身為人類。人才能夠像神一樣的生活。折口信夫寫道，「簡言之，孵蛋或蛻皮都是化身為人的一種庇護方式，賦予生命新的形式。」就像蛇從卵中孵化之後經歷多次蛻皮，同樣的，面具將扮演者化為稀人，兼具神明與野獸的雙重身份，借助春天的外在力量一而再、再而三的復生。

人類戴上造型凶猛的面具就能化身為聖獸進而成為神明。洞穴象徵再生的子宮。赤面與黑面來訪神邊吼邊從島上原始的子宮衝出。新城島舉辦祭典活動時，整個島化為一個巨大的節慶舞台。喜舍場永珣曾描述赤面與黑面神如何在他面前現身。他寫道，「赤面和黑面神從洞窟中跳出來，前有兩名剛滿十五歲的少年持旗者領路。少年身穿陣羽織、裡衣和綁腿，左右腳交替跳躍，舉著旗桿跳舞、唱歌和打鼓。」後面跟著八名擔任祭典護衛的鼓先頭，接著是赤面和黑面神，隨後是老年男子、中年男子、年輕男子，最後是女子。神與人混在一起唱歌、跳舞。

面具神的起源有兩種相互矛盾的說法。有一種說法是他們來自群島南方的仙境，是外來的神靈。另一種說法是稀人是曾經在神山消失的男孩的祖靈，成仙後經常回來拜訪曾經居住的村莊。在沖繩西表島上的古見岳村，這些看似相互矛盾的傳說融合唯一。當地人與外來者、稀人與祖靈、是蛇的化身(如折口信夫所想)或米的化身(如曾說)都是柳田國男的民俗學研究和折口信夫的「古代研究」的基礎。兩位學者觀察或交互重疊或區隔分開的種種現象，神明與人類和動物與宇宙萬物間沒有明確的界限，可以合而為一也可以分隔為二。

「稀人」是來訪的神明，其面具遠比扮演神靈的人類更為重要。因為灑上聖水的面具具有復甦生命的能力。面具即是神靈，除去身與心、靈魂與肉體的分界。神靈存在於人工製作的面具裡，而相機的機械構造也具有同樣的力量。戴著面具的稀人祭典與攝影捕捉到的畫面有相似的聯結。賦予神聖的無形力量具體的形貌，正是稀人與攝影的真諦。

## Shinobu Orikuchi's Marebito : Mediators between Heaven and Earth, Substance and Spirit

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Shinobu Orikuchi (1887-1953) was a scholar of Japanese literature and folklore who advocated a unique type of *Kodai-gaku*, or “studies of ancient times”. Throughout his life, Orikuchi was engaged with one particular notion, namely Tokoyo<sup>1</sup>, or the Everlasting World, also known as Hahagakuni, the “Land of Mothers”. This place was said to exist beyond reality, across seas, completely separate from the human realm. In the present world, people live for the moment, but in Hahagakuni, gods have eternal lives, possessed of universal spiritual force. It was Orikuchi's understanding that the primitive gods of the East-Asian archipelago were nodes for tama, or “spirit”. Tama was the medium, he argued, by which animal, vegetable, mineral and every type of matter could be imagined as interconnected, in one overarching entirety. Through tama, life dwells in all matter, and all forms of existence come into being by means of it.

Hahagakuni is where this is born. At the same time, it is the place to which phenomena will return, via the phenomenon of death. As both a spiritual zone and an afterworld, Hahagakuni is incommensurable with human space-time continuums. The two zones exist in parallel, but without intersection. Yet one time only each year, the two do encounter each other, and that event takes place in this far-off archipelago. Typically, greatest festivals in the region are held either in mid-summer in the southern islands, when the sun is strongest, or in mid-winter along the northern peninsular coasts, when the sun is weakest. At both times, monstrous divinities appear mixing animal, vegetable and mineral shapes, bring spiritual power from Hahagakuni, and resetting time and space into something completely new.

Orikuchi gave a name to these arriving divinities that come from Hahagakuni wearing masks. He called them *marebito*. They open up a temporal and spatial extraordinariness, or sacredness, but this occurs within routine secular life. To Orikuchi, such was the most primitive form of Japanese religion, and the prototype for its performing arts. Orikuchi's “studies of ancient times” focussed on these *marebito*, and his first major anthology on them was the three-volume *Kodai kenkyu* (*Studies of ancient times*). Volume 1 was on Japanese literature, and it included a section titled *Kokubungaku no hassei* (Birth of Japanese literature) Part3 –which was published together with a section called *Minzokugaku-hen* (Folklore studies) Part 1, thus the anthology overrode the order in which the article had first been written. There was also a long article previously published as *Tokoyo oyobi“marebito”* (Everlasting world and visiting divinities). These works discussed various *marebito* arrivals in the archipelago, both northern *marebito* such as *namahage*, and southern ones, such as *angama*, which he had personally researched.

Orikuchi defined *marebito* as follows:

The oldest traceable meaning of *mare* is thought to be “least frequently-visited”, or “infrequently occurring”. The word *bito* (from *hito*) would later mean “people”, but in ancient times it could also mean “the gods and their successors.” Thus, *marebito* meant occasionally-visiting gods, but could also mean entities that were both god and successor, at the same time. *Marebito* included the label of *hito* because these gods arrived in human form.

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<sup>1</sup> Tokoyo, literally “everlasting world”, was believed by ancient people to exist beyond the oceans. Later thought associated it with a utopian land of immortality.

Orikuchi went on,

“In short, what I think of us as marebito, were, in their prototypical form, gods. The primary sense was spirits who came from beyond the seas to visit ancient villages, and bring joy to people’s lives, before returning home.”

The existence of these dual figures, simultaneously god and person, visiting the real world from a normally separate, surreal space, was the primordial form of marebito, in Orikuchi’s definition.

Being at one and the same time a person of this world and gods from the world beyond, marebito have inevitable contradictions. They are human and also more than human. Or at least they can turn themselves into something beyond the human. Festivals were rituals by which such normally-impossible transformations become possible, before villagers’ very eyes. This must be why marebito festivals occur at temporal boundaries, such as when the sun is at its strongest or weakest, and at spatial boundaries, such as between land and sea, or mountain and plain. Boundaries separate, but also unite. During such a period, humans can become divinities. Ancient festivals were not for objective, external observation, but for participation, as villagers initiated them and passed them on. Marebito were figures who brought the festival, and gave it its core meaning.

Just as marebito have ambivalent, dual characters, so too the natural environment that gave rise to their cults was interstitial. It is the destiny of a volcanic archipelago to experience eruption and earthquake. Nature can bring blessing, but also baleful loss. Its rough power functions as judgement on good or evil, with commensurate construction or destruction. However, destruction can lead to creation, and vice-versa. Orikuchi was already aware of the duality and ambivalence of marebito in their abode in Hahagakuni, when he wrote *Kokubungaku no hassei* Part 3. As he put it there, “people once thought Hahagakuni was the country from which monsters with ferocious appearances came”. Marebito festivals were ways to reconfigure natural and human-generated destruction, and to understand it as creative reconstruction.

Before he had finished writing Part 3 and shortly after he had made his second research trip to the southern islands, and thus just as he was formulating his initial ideas, Orikuchi experienced the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. He was also almost caught up in the Kanto Massacre, when Japanese turned on their Korean-Japanese neighbours. Having undergone the natural disaster of an East-Asian earthquake, and having also lived through the manmade disaster of the Pacific War, one year before his death Orikuchi published his groundbreaking *Minzokushikanniokerutakaikannenn* (An ethnohistory of notions of the other world) . It is as substantial as *Kokubungakunohassei* and can be seen as the culmination of his marebito discussion, and his legacy for future generations. These are the last sentences of his chapter on *Zen-kodainiokeru Nihon* (Japan before ancient times) : “the sense of joyous expectation at receiving visiting divinities was similar to the surprise at encountering ferocious beasts. Paradise implies hell. Sin-cleaning is Purgatory.”

Marebito are both human and divine, sacred, yet also wild beasts. They represent an untameable nature outside the human sphere – paradise and the obverse hell. The namahage indicate the arrival of springtime, but behind masks of the merciful and funny old man Angama, is a ferocious goblin. However, this goblin nature also has a spiritual existence, what Orikuchi called yokai, or “monstrous spirits”. That force pre-exists all else, being neither good nor evil. This idea is fully compatible with the arguments Orikuchi made in his “studies of ancient times”. Orikuchi’s final conclusions about marebito went beyond the confines of Japan, because he addressed an antiquity before the “ancient” and before “Japan” came to be. He investigated a primordial human world.

Orikuchi's "ancient times" was not past time, but an even more remote universal mode.

Orikuchi began the same chapter as follows: "The visitors were of course human actors. Although people knew this, they still saw them as creatures from a different dimension. It was customs developed over long periods of time, and accumulated notions that made people see the visitors specifically as monstrous spirits." Bringing these external forces inside the community revitalized it. It also prevented external (destructive) forces from fully developing. Located between inside and out, marebito are at once outside and inside. They are "spirits or divinities with a certain content of evil," and moreover, "spirits with a certain degree of pre-Japanese nature." As divinities, marebito are ambivalent towards good and evil. They can turn destruction into construction, and vice-versa. Marebito, sacred beasts, and the masks worn to transform people into marebito, are concretisations of this power.

The East Asian archipelago opens to north and south. Though controlled by modern political boundaries, the north reaches via Sakhalin, to Siberia, Kamchatka and Arctic Region, and via the Kuril Islands (called in Japanese the "thousand islands") to the North-West coast of America. The south is open via Taiwan to the Philippines, South-East Asia, Oceania and Easter Island (Rapa Nui) . A proper excavation of the worship of visiting divinities goes beyond Japan to find a universality where religion and artistic expectation mix together into a prototypical mode of human life. Orikuchi's studies of ancient times were two-fold. One part consisted of folklore, that is, pursuing the pre-history of the self – the inside. The other consisted of ethnology, pursuing the present state of Others – the outside. The outside was turned into the inside, and the inside into outside. How is it that Orikuchi came to such a view?

Surely it was because Shinobu Orikuchi was like marebito himself, and intentionally so. He was conscious of how external viewpoints are needed to explore the interiority of the self. Marebito are divinities embodying human and beast together. They live midway between outside and inside, and revitalize the inner through external power. They are equipped with the capacity to convert internal closures into external release. This is the same as the role of contemporary artists. Marebito can be models for artistic work. Throughout his life Orikuchi himself lived a dual and ambivalent existence because he practiced both objective research and subjective expressions in art. Under the penname Shaku Choku he left outstanding literary works in many genres, from tanka poetry and contemporary verse, to novels and plays. While studying marebito objectively, he also expressed himself like an actual marebito.

Festivals are performed in order to renew local people both physically and mentally, taking them on to another stage. They may be secret initiations which must not be disclosed to other groups. Only by forging relations of trust can someone enter the festival arena. Marebito are produced by taking the abstraction and sacredness of the invisible realm and making it inhabit our visible, physical bodies. The process is similar to photography. The camera takes that most abstract quality, light, and fixes it into some physical, concrete substrate. Marebito and photography are analogous types of being. Both are examples of the same primordial mode of art. It must be for this reason that festival participants strongly resist records being made, for marebito are ancestral divinities whose original existence generates all worldly matter. Interestingly, the akamata and kuromata festivals are not inscribed on the UNESCO-registered list of Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>2</sup> grouping of "Visiting of Divinities: gods in masks and costumes." The akamata and kuromata festivals are passed down on

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2 Intangible Cultural Heritage is a UNESCO enterprise based on the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It was initiated in 2006 with the purpose of protecting unparalleled performing arts, folklore, rituals and festivals. 10 Japanese visiting-divinity rituals were registered as "*Raiho-shin, ritual visits of deities in masks and costumes*" in 2018.



the islands of Iriomote, Kohama, Aragusuku and Ishigaki (Miyara), and were highly influential in the theorisings of Orikuchi and also Kunio Yanagita, in their own fields of folklore studies. In spite of the academic significance, one assumes that the local people refused to allow the akamata and kuromata festivals to be registered.

Villagers who have been initiated into the transformational processes that turn human performers into akamata and kuromata, keep the ritual strictly closed. Of course tourists are not allowed to learn about the sacred metamorphosis. However, without knowing something of the akamata and kuromata transformation rituals it is hard to follow Orikuchi's discussions of marebito. Without that information, I cannot explain why marebito ritual and photography resonate so well with each other. Luckily, there is available to us reports divulged by Eijun Kishaba<sup>3</sup>, who guided Orikuchi in his research on Ishigaki, and by Takahiro Miyara<sup>4</sup>. Thanks to these, I was able to write on outline of the festival, and the following is taken from a more detailed description I published in *Shinobu Orikuchi* (Kodansya, 2014), especially Chapter 4. Based on my expertise, I note the core point of Kodai-gaku by Orikuchi, reconstructing the detail of the akamata and kuromata festivals as follows.

The masked rituals of akamata and kuromata are passed down on the Yaeyama Islands, such as at Komi hamlet on Iriomote (where three masked divinities, called shiromata appear) ; also at Kohama, Aragusuku, and at Miyara hamlet on Ishigaki. It is assumed that Komi's is the original version with the others deriving from it, perhaps via intermediaries. Kishaba's survey gave rise to an article titled *Akamata shinji ni kansuru oboe-gaki* (Memorandum on akamata divinity rituals), published in *Yaeyamaminzokushi* (Yaeyama ethnography), Vol. 1, (Okinawa Times, 1977) . This essay allows us to grasp the core ritual that generates the mysterious occurrence. Kishaba described the peculiar appearance of akamata and kuromata, noting that the former uses a 45cm wooden mask which at all other times is stored secretly, stating, "the mask has teeth and eyeballs formed of shellwork, while the ear had a device for burning incense." The impression is of a mask that viewed frontally resembles that used at the namahage, but wilder.

On the first day of the ritual,

after midnight on a "water-related" day during the 6th lunar month, people secretly take two divinity masks to a place called Nabin Cave, some 600m south-east of the hamlet. On the previous night, people had covertly collected plants called harigane kazura, and woven them into fabrics to cover the performers' bodies, hands and feet. The performers don the divine masks and ornament their hair with pampas grass. During this process, watchmen called nabin-dosaji insure that guards called chijinshindo keep intruders away from the cave, with anyone caught peeping likely to be attacked.

Inside the sacred, secret cave, the performers put on the mineral masks and vegetable clothing, gradually transforming into divinities. The cave where this takes place is associated with the Land of Ancestors, or Niiru, which leads to Hahagakuni. These are the places that Orikuchi called the Underworld and Another World. Akamata and Kuromata are two divinities who come to earth from Niiru, just once a year.

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3 Eijun Kishaba (1885-1972), folklorist and local historian, was born on Ishigaki Island, Yaeyama Islands, Okinawa Prefecture, where he pioneered research into local history, folklore and folk music. Works include *Yaeyamarekishi* (History of Yaeyama Islands), *Yaeyamamin'yoshi* (History of Yaeyama folksongs) and *Yaeyamakoyo* (traditional folksongs of the Yaeyama islands), this last awarded the YanagitaKunio Prize on 1971.

4 Takahiro Miyara (1935-2018), Japanese folklorist born on Ishigaki Island, Okinawa Prefecture, and long-term professor at Sapporo University. Award Shibusawa Prize for *Hateruma-jimaminzokushi* (Ethnography on Hateruma Island) in 1973.

What really occurs inside the sacred cave? Kishaba documented the case at Kohama. The innermost part is the most sacred place, and here make-up is applied to the masks in a rite referred to by the obscure term of *shidasu*. What does the word connote? Takahiro Miyara, who researched *akamata* and *kuromata* on Iriomote (that is, at the originating place of the rituals) and also at Kohama (an important relay point) left a valuable account titled *Yeyamashotoniokeruiwayuruhimitsukesshanitsuite* (On secret societies in the Yaeyama islands; Okinawagaku no Kadai, Soshō Waga Okinawa, Vol. 5, Mokuji-sha, 1972). Miyara explained how participants take water from a sacred spring within the cave and produce make-up with it, applying this to the masks. The process is described as *shidasu*. The water is said to come from Niiru, welling up from Hahagakuni. Apparently there is a verb *shidin* meaning “to be born”, “hatch out” or “to shed skin”.

*Shidasu* also means to “hatch” or “shed”, and is different from the verb *marin*, meaning a human birth. Orikuchi cleverly reacted to the concept of *shidasu* (also pronounced *suderu*) and discussed this in an article titled *Wakamizu (Ochimizu) no hanashi (Talks on fresh (dripping) water)*, first published in his *Kodaikenkyū*, investigating more widely notions of death and revival covered by the term. He stated, “*suderu* is to be born other than from a mother’s womb,” or, “one can say it is to be born from death (revival).” What kind of entity can undergo *suderu*? Surely it is *marebito*, who emerge from the underworld, and incarnate into human bodies by rituals involving sacred water. By this, humans can live as gods. “In short,” Orikuchi wrote, “eggs or discardable skins function as havens from which incarnation takes place, moving life into new forms.” A snake is born of an egg, but sheds its skins repeatedly. So too, a mask that turns a performer into a *marebito* – a divinity and a wild beast – borrows the external power of a spring and so can revive again and again.

By wearing ferocious masks, humans can change into immortal, sacred animals, and thence into divinities. The cave functions as the womb for this rebirth. *Akamata* and *Kuromata* emerge from the island’s primordial womb with roaring voices, and in the case of the festival performed at Aragusuku, the whole island then erupts into one gigantic festival theatre. Kishaba told how he saw the *akamata* and *kuromata* manifest themselves right in front of him. He wrote, “The *akamata* and *kuromata* danced their way out of the Nabin Cave, led by two flag holders who had been selected from newly-initiated adults, called *shin-chikiya*, or youths who had become 15 that year. The youths wore tabards (battle surcoats, or *jinbaori*) with undershirts, long underwear and gaiters, and jumped on alternate legs, raising the flagpole and dancing to the singing and drumming.” Following them went an escort of eight *chijinshindo*, who serve to police the festival. The *akamata* and *kuromata* came next, then old, middle-aged and young men, then women. Divinities and people comingled as one, singing, dancing and leaping.

Two contradictory legends exist concerning the origins of masked divinities. One says that they are alien spirits who come from a southern paradise beyond the archipelago. The other says they are the ancestral spirit of a boy who vanished in the direction of a sacred mountain, became a god, and now repeatedly returns to his village. In the case of Komi hamlet on Iriomote, these contradictory traditions seem to be united as one. The ambivalence between inside and out, *marebito* and ancestral spirits, incarnation of snakes (as Orikuchi thought) or rice (as Yanagita argued) are the foundations of both Kunio Yanagita’s folklore studies and Shinobu Orikuchi’s “studies of ancient times”. Both men investigated phenomena layered as one, then torn apart again as two. By this regime of ambivalence, divinities, people, animals and all the matter of the universe, can both unite, and split asunder.

At visiting-divinity – *marebito* – rituals, it is the masks that are most important, far more than the human actors. It is masks that revive, after being showered with sacred water. The masks are the spirit. All divisions

between mind and body, spirit and flesh are nullified. Spiritual power dwells inside the man-made masks. The same power dwells in the machinery of a camera. There is an inevitable connection between mask-wearing marebito festivals and capturing things by photography. Concretising an invisible, sacred power into a visible form is the essence of both marebito and photography.

