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On *Yorigito* of *Shugendo* Religion

Hitoshi Miyake

The present article attempts to reveal the mechanism of *Yorigito* (憑祈祷) of *Shugendo* religion. While assuming that the actions in this ritual exercise are symbolic, we analyze them at the level of the meaning.

Yorigito is one of the stylized divinations of *Shugendo* religion. *Shugenja*, or the performer, surrounds the medium, repeats monotonous recitations, and beats drums. In due course of time the mediums enter trance, and then, the performer and the medium exchange hypnotic conversations which turn out to be oracles. The monotonous recitations are meant to invite the tutelary deities of the community involved. The drums are beaten for the purpose of protecting the people from the evil spirits.

Yorigito is operated on such a mechanism that the performer invites the tutelary deities of the community involved and disperses the evil spirits, and that he provides the oracle as to the rich or poor harvest of the coming year in the presense of both the deities and the people. Upon observing the oracle delivered from the hypnotic the people of the community are led to be convinced of the divination.

Thereupon, *Shugenja*, the performer of the divination, succeeds in having the people believe that he controls the tutelary deities, and thus maintains a highly esteemed position.