

「釈迦如来」SHAKANYORAI

Traditional performing art representing historical and cultural background of Saga area

Saga Dainenbutsu kyogen

Saga Dainenbutsu Kyogen Hozonkai / Designated as nationally important intangible folk cultural assets

- ・Spring performance (April)
- ・Autumn performance (October)

The Kyogen performed at the Godai-san Seiryō-ji temple (also popularly known as Saga Shaka-Do) is known as one of the three major Nenbutsu Kyogens of Kyoto, together with Mibu and Senbon-enmado.

It originates from a ceremonial event called Dainenbutsu-e(gathering) in 1279(Kōan 2nd) initiated by Engaku. Noh-style, full-faced masks have been used in Saga Kyogen as early as the Muromachi era (14-16th century), on a writing in the back of a mask indicates the year "Kyoroku 2nd" or AD 1529. Heritage of the Saga kyogen once faced a crisis of extinction in 1963, when dwindling number of actors resulted in a cancellation and discontinuation of performances. But in 1975, a group of people who were concerned to the extinction established a voluntary conservation group, called Saga Dainenbutsu Kyogen Hozonkai, thus the regular performance of Saga Kyogen has revived. In 1986, Saga Kyogen has been designated as a nationally important intangible folk cultural asset.

Saga Kyogen is a pantmime, like Mibu Kyogen, and it consists of Hayashi-kata(musicians) and Koken (supervisors) in addition to Kyogen-kata(actors). Hayashi-kata means instrumental performers who play kane (bell), taiko(drum), and yokobue(flute). There are two basic rhythmic patterns, one is "Kan/Den/(pause)/Den/Kan/Den/Den" and the other is "Kan/Den/Den/Den/Kan/Den/Den/(pause)", in which "Kan" represents the sound of kane and "Den" represents the sound of taiko. During the fighting

scenes of Demon and Spider, Kane(bell) is rung strongly and quickly, which is called "Hayagane". Yokobue (Japanese flute) used in Saga Kyogen is unique because it has nine holes, whereas Japanese flute usually has six or seven holes. Koken is a supervisor who occasionally helps actors to change costumes and small gears. When the actor get sudden accident during performance, Koken may take up his role without mask.

Programs of Saga Kyogen have two broad types, as "Katamon"(hard ones) and "Yawarakamon"(soft ones). "Katamon" is a serious play originating from Noh play and "Yawarakamon" is a comical play.

<Katamon>

「TSUCHIGUMO」「RASHOMON」「OEYAMA」
「KUMASAKA」「HASHIBENKEI」「HYAKUMAN」
「FUNABENKEI」「DAIBUTSUKUYO」「DOJOJI」
「MOMIJIGARI」「YOUCHISOGA」「HYAKUMAN」

<Yawarakamon>

「HANANUSSUTO」「ATAGOMAIRI」
「SHAKANYORAI」「TORORO」「SHIBARIBOUZU」
「DAIKOKUGARI」「OHARAME」「KANIDON」
「GAKIZUMO」

"SHAKANYORAI" is a program played exclusively in Saga Dainenbutu Kyogen. Compared to other Dainenbutsu Kyogens, Saga Dainenbutsu Kyogen well preserves original features of good old days, later modifications. Every year, the Hozonkai undertake three days of spring regular performance on Saturday and Sunday in April, and one day on Sunday around October 26th, in memory of Engaku Shōnin's death. Saga Dainenbutsu Kyogen Hozonkai undertake a performance along with the "Otaimatsu" (fire festival) in Seiryō-ji temple on March 15th, "Momiji Matsuri" (Autumn festival) in Arashiyama in November.

KYOGEN

