

Oracle in Aural and Physical Expression: A Study of Traditional Performances of Shamans in Aogashima

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Aogashima is an island, roughly 9km in circumference, located at the southern end of the Izu Islands. The people of Aogashima maintained traditional rituals, shamanism and exorcism by female shamans, until recently. This is a folklore report, or to be more specific, a study on performance, especially the shamans' aural and physical expressions during spiritual possession. It is based on materials obtained from fieldwork done in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with additional comparative studies on various other sources. The aural expressions of shamans consist of forms of 〈Geh-geh〉 and 〈Hai-hai〉, which are regarded as the voice of “*Oshirase* [announcement, notification] from the gods”. Another form, 〈Oshi-oshi〉, is the voice of “*Noke-barai*”. The physical expressions include over ten forms of hand performance, including “*Anmon* of hands”. The performances with the feet include “*Issoku-tobi*” and “*Ashi-byousi*”. The last section is an analysis of these actions in terms of physiological movement, mimicry and materiality, including reference to other traditional performing arts.