

Introduction

What is the information provided by this site?



□Welcome to our website.

□This site is to introduce unique Japanese culture, that is to say **the masked character in traditional folk performing arts**. They are sometimes in shrine festival (called Matsuri), sometimes come to people's house as a sacred visitor, sometimes appear in annual events and "Kagura" (this is a play which Japanese give to deities).



Matsuri (festival)

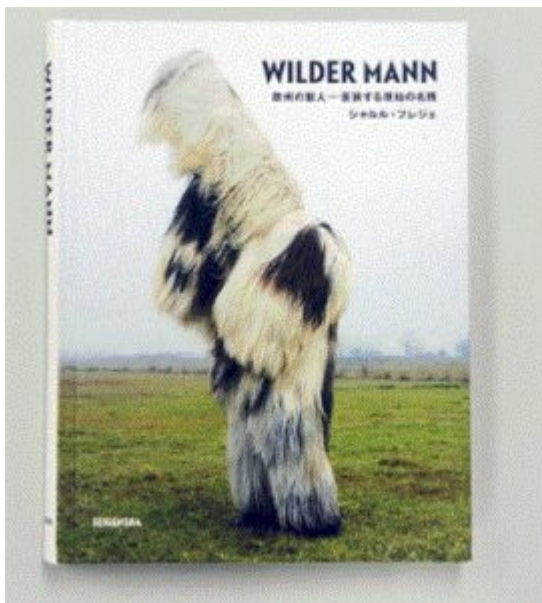


annual event

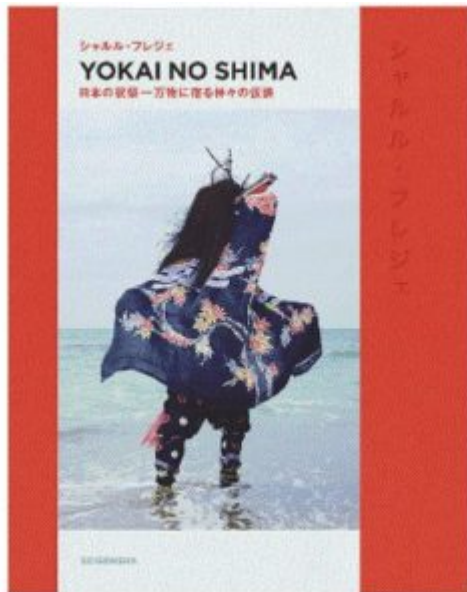
□Do you know how many ‘Matsuri’ there are in Japan? Some estimate there to be (One theory goes as follows) about three hundred thousands! Masked characters emerge in not all Matsuris but some of them. They express deities and demon by wearing masks. Japan has so many traditional strange masked characters.

Japan is one of the world’s leading countries for masked characters.

□For example, Charles Fre’ger, a photographer of France, published photographic inventory “WILDER MAN” (a collection of winter masquerade in Europe). Recently, he also published “YOKAI NO SHIMA” (a collection of Japanese deities, sacred animals, sacred visitors). Even though Japan is a small island, it has many characters compared to Europe. This country is full of fantastic events and strange characters. We will introduce them.



WILDER MAN



YOKAI NO SHIMA

□Do you know the Japanese traditional performing art “Noh”? Noh actors used about twenty kinds of masks in 14th C, now their numbers have increased about two hundred kinds. Contemporary, theater directors stopped using traditional maska, changing to realism, but in the “Noh” world, the number of masks are increasing. Why there so many masked characters in Japan?



Noh□□

Why does Japan have so many traditionally masked characters?

□I think, there are two reasons.

□One is polytheism. From ancient times, Japan has had a

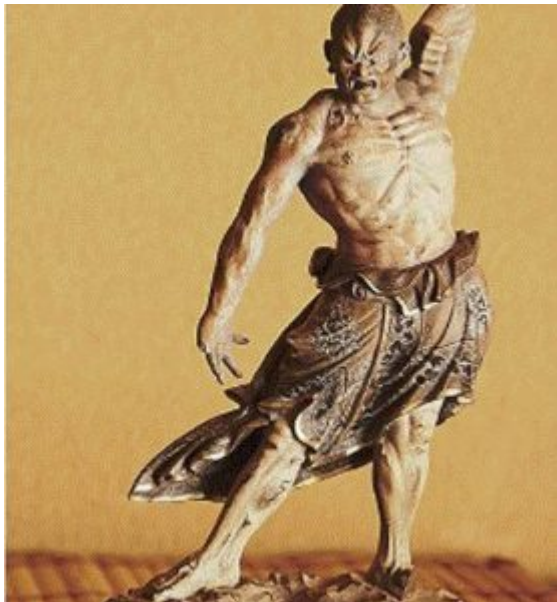
religious culture based on polytheism worshiping nature or spirits like shamanism or animism (called "Shinto"). Japanese express various spirits by wearing masks. Secondly, Japanese basically love unique characters. In old times they make "Dogu" (ancient statue by clay 10,000 years ago~2400 years ago), "Haniwa" (figure with clay for grave goods, 3 C~6 C) , buddha statue or "Yokai".



Dogu 土偶



Haniwa



buddha statue

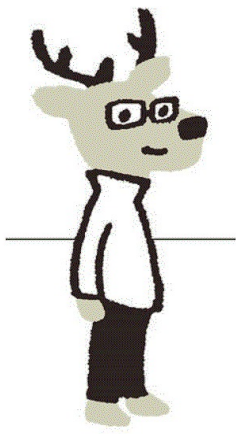


yokai

Now, Japanese have created figures of characters. Many companies and shops have original mascot characters.



pharmaceutical company



car manufacturer

□ Recently, popular “Yurukyara” have been used for local government campaigns. Spin-off merchandise is worth about \ 500 billion. Lovely characters are effective for advertising in this country.



Hikone city□□□□



Kumamoto prefecture 熊本県

□Traditional masked characters are in the genealogy and have a long history. You will find it interesting. I think some of them will give you pleasure and amusement. You might discover another new world of Japan.

□Shall we go into the YOKAI NO SHIMA” ?

□Please look forward to it !