

## Kijimun's Monologue —No.4—

Topic: Masked deities in Okinawan festivals

Keywords: *Raihō-shin*, *Marebito*, *Hōnen-sai*, *Matsuri*

\*Please refer to the text below for the meaning of Japanese words.

### *Raihō-shin* who comes to *Hōnen-sai* (a harvest festival)

*Haisāi*, *Kijimun yaibīn!!* Summer is on the way! The summer of Okinawa is the season of festivals! What is indispensable for Okinawan festivals is *Raihō-shin* (gods in masks and costumes who come from the spiritual world to bring a bumper harvest to the human world.) Various gods who come from *Niraikanai* (a paradise beyond seas in which Okinawan people believe) purify evils and grant good fortune in each region. I'm going to introduce the Okinawan Gods in a mask at once. You should go and see at least one of the festivals in this year!

### Various gods and goddesses

*Miruku* who has white and well-rounded face is the god of fertility, and he walks around with many children. It is *Ohoho* who follows him with saying “*Ohoho! ohoho!*” and waving a bundle of bills under children's nose to abduct them. *Mayunganashi* who appears in the night uses a stick and wears a straw raincoat and hat. In a festival of *Akamata-Kuromata* which is famous as a hidden festival, it is strictly forbidden to take any photos still now. It is *Dādūdā* who has a black face and long nose. *Angama* visit human homes as ancestor gods, and they give a unique answer in falsetto voices to questions about the after-life posed from the audience. *Pāntu* are masked gods covered its entire body by mud and creeper, and they drive away the ill luck of villagers and all things in the village by daubing their sacred mud.

Orikuchi Shinobu who was a Japanese literature scholar and folklorist created a word “*Marebito*” which designated *Raihō-shin*. He said “It is said that the very first meaning of *Marebito* was a god. A god who visits human world at the certain time. It is the God who comes from the sky, beyond the sea, to only limited village to bring the villagers wealth, longevity and some other happiness. It is what people believed in.” (Orikuchi Shinobu, “*Kodai seikatsu no kenkyū*,” P41.)

### The backstage of *Raihō-shin* —a case of *Pāntu* (in Hirara shimajiri, Miyakojima city)

It is hardly possible to know the backstage of “God,” in other words, the backstage of the performer who plays the role of “God.” However, there is a very rare essay which was written by the performer of *Pāntu*, “*Jikkyō Pāntu* 2005 (A live broadcasting of *Pāntu* 2005)” by Kamiwarabi. He wrote about his experience of disguising himself as one of three gods of the *Pāntu* Festival in Miyako Islands. At the Festival, three *Pāntu* run around in a village, and they drive away the ill luck of villagers and all things in the village by daubing their sacred mud. He wittily and gaily described the sites of making

*Pāntu* and the day of Festival; it is an essay must-read.

Besides, there are many *Raihō-shin* not masked, why don't you look for them on the website of the University of the Ryukyus Library through Digital Archive, BIDOM or iXiO using the keywords above. We assure that you can find a lot of literature about them.