

WORLD MUSIC

JAPAN

WD-JP3 Hungary 1990

THE HEVENLY ROCK – CAVE (Ame-No-Iwato) *

WD – Traditional – Kagura – Instrumental & Vocal

Comp: (Traditional)

Perf: (?) (with flute, drum, & rattle-suzu)

Prod. Co: Hungaroton Records

Time: 5:16

A. **CD:** KAGURA – JAPANESE SHINTO RITUAL MUSIC

Hungaroton HCD 18193 (Tk 11)

B. Reissue on American Compilation **CD:** JAPANESE SHINTO
RITUAL MUSIC (1997)

Legacy CD 458 (Tk 10)

Notes: The Ama no Iwato (literally, Heavenly Rock Door) is located 8 km northeast of Takachiho in the Miyazaki Prefecture in the southern part of Kyushu Island. Also called Yasugawara Cave, it is just a few hundred meters from the Ama-no-Iwato-Jinja Shrine up the Iwato-gawa River. The photo shows the Yasugawara Cave where the stacked stones represent prayers that people have left. (For additional nice photos of this sacred site and the surrounding area see those of Tanaka Juuyoh.)



This Japanese Shito drum piece is subtitled, “Takachiho Yo-Kagura,” meaning a Shinto ritual dance from Takachiho. Shito is the native religion of Japan and the backbone of Japanese culture. (Anon.1,n.d.) But this is not religious music. Kagura is the ancient Shinto ritual dance of Shamanic origin. There is a mythological tale of how Kagura dance came into existence. The sun goddess Amaterasu became very upset at her brother so she hid in a cave. All of the other gods and goddesses were concerned and wanted her to

come outside. One of the goddesses began to dance and create a noisy commotion in order to entice Amaterasu to come out. The kami (gods) tricked Amaterasu by telling her there was a better sun goddess in the heavens. Amaterasu came out and light returned to the universe.” (Anon. 3 n.d.)

A variant of this legend tells that this is the cave where Amaterasu Omikami, goddess of the sun and supreme Shinto deity, is said to have hidden, thus plunging the world into darkness “after her wicked brother, Susano-o, bullied her with his dirty tricks. The other gods grew concerned and tried all they could to lure Amaterasu out of her cave. They tried getting the cocks from the Eternal Land to crow, to fool her into believing that the dawn had come without her. They tried to place a mirror in front of the cave’s door, so that when she open (sic) it, she would think she had a rival and emerge out of jealousy. But she wouldn’t open the door. So the goddess Ama-no-Uzumeno-Mikoto (literally the Terrible Heavenly Female) made

herself a costume out of sasaki leaves, eulalia grass and moss and performed a dance so comical and lewd that the Sun Goddess eventually got out of her cave to see what was happening.” (Anon. 2 n.d.) Sharp percussions introduce a lonely flute melody. Then shouts and what sounds like rocks clapped together rapidly. A steady rapid tapping beat with a slow bass drum beat is set down as the flute continues the same theme. About halfway in the rapid tapping beat picks up the tempo while the other percussions continue as before and the flute carries on. Then the tapping returns to the original tempo followed by another increase in tempo and tempo variations until all fades.

Ref: Anon. 1 n.d., Shinto: Nurturing Nature, [BBC World Service](#)

Anon. 2 n.d., Takachiho Travel Guide, Japan Guide, Kyushu Region, [Wa-pedia](#)

Anon. 3 n.d., Shinto, Kagura, [Wikipedia](#)

Japanese Shinto Ritual Music, [Allmusic](#) and [Amazon](#)(◀AUDIO SAMPLES)

Tanaka Juuyoh 2011, Amano Yasugawara, Photos, [Flickrriver](#)

caveinspiredmusic.com