

# The *Miyaza* and the Fisherman: Ritual Status in Coastal Villages of Wakayama Prefecture\*

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## I. *The Miyaza and Ritual Status.*

In competitive, pluralistic societies it is often more difficult to preserve ritual status than economic or political position. Nevertheless, even in modern societies ritual status, under certain conditions, continues to exist. In this paper I shall describe the ways in which two old and prestigious groups of fishermen in coastal villages of Wakayama Prefecture managed to maintain some of their prerogatives in the religious festivals of their communities in spite of radical social and economic change.

Both of these groups can be classified as *miyaza* (parish guilds), that is family cliques which during Japan's feudal period gained control of the religious, economic and political affairs of villages in Western Japan, especially in the Kinki region. Within both manor (*shôen*) and semi-autonomous village (*sôson* or *gôson*) they buttressed their secular power by a tight control over the affairs of the local Shinto shrine and, in some cases, the Buddhist temple. Many of these socio-religious monopolies legitimated their control over the access to the sacred and secular resources of their communities by claiming direct descent from a clan deity (*ujigami*) who founded the village. Their leaders served this god as oblationers who prepared offerings and as celebrants who performed

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purifications and presented the offerings and prayers of the community before the deity. Since the ritual status conferred by these roles was limited to a handful of the "better families," it was not unusual to find the same households acting as oblationers, celebrants and village headmen over several generations.

During the Tokugawa period, and even before, the material and spiritual privileges of these parish guilds came under attack by lower classes which were becoming increasingly independent and restive. With the spread of a money economy and an increase in social mobility traditional patron-client relationships began to break down. No longer could villages be held together by the "lineage ideology" of exclusive parish guilds. For this reason, throughout the Tokugawa period the prerogatives of the *miyaza* were steadily whittled away. At the same time more inclusive liturgical communities (*ujiko seido*) were created by the religious enfranchisement of one level of society after another (or what I shall call "expanding enclosures"). These new religious affiliations were often based on a "territorial ideology" whereby all those born or residing within the boundaries of a specific area became "children of the clan" (*ujiko*) and its god. Ritual obligations, including the office of lay-priest began to rotate throughout the households of the village. As election to village office became more common the *miyaza* began to lose its political control over the community. The historical development of the *miyaza* was far more complicated than this brief description suggests since, in nearly all communities, the guild members and the disenfranchised classes reached some kind of *modus vivendi* which, in turn, was reflected in various compromises in the handling of festivals and distribution of ceremonial obligations and rights. The nature and scope of this ritual enfranchisement naturally differed from place to place. Nevertheless, such was the general development and decline of privileged festival associations in Western Japan.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For the general history of the *miyaza* in Wakayama, see Andô Seiichi, *Kinsei miyaza no shūteki kenkyū*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1960 and the same author's *Edo jidai no nōmin*. Tokyo: Shibundō, 1959, pp. 116–156. In English, the *miyaza* has been dealt with by Thomas C. Smith in *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*. New York: Atheneum, 1966, pp. 58–59 and 188–200. For a general description of the institution see Winston Davis, "Parish Guilds and Political Culture in Village Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* (November, 1976), Vol. XXXV, No. 4, pp. 25–36.

II. *The Three Cultures of Wakayama.*

Before describing the role of privilege in the fishing villages of Wakayama, let us take a broader look at the economic and religious development of the prefecture as a whole. Andô Seiichi divides the prefecture into three cultural zones formed by the triangulation of Wakayama City in the northwest, Mt. Koya in the northeast and Kumano in the south.<sup>2</sup> Along the Ki River, which flows between Mt. Koya and Wakayama City, there arose a prosperous "river culture" characterized since prehistoric times by a high level of social differentiation.<sup>3</sup> It was here during Wakayama's middle ages that *shôen* first appeared, and within the *shôen*, *miyaza* families. The material culture of the area between Mt. Koya and the Kumano shrines, while rich in spiritual culture, was, with the exception of the holdings of the shrines and temples themselves, comparatively backward. Professor Andô calls this leg of the triangle a "mountain culture" or a "culture of mountain asceticism" (*shugendô no bunka*). Finally, along the coast, running from Wakayama City to Kumano one finds a "sea culture" composed of a chain of villages engaged primarily in fishing and sea transport. Hedged in by mountains, some of these communities such as the village of Ao described below have no arable land whatsoever. Others combine fishing with agriculture.

While the historical changes which transformed traditional Japanese life affected these three cultural areas in different ways and at different times, change was evident on all fronts. For our study, the most important of these changes was the gradual rise of the lower classes, especially during the Sengoku and Tokugawa periods. In the eastern "mountain culture" this shift in class power was seen in the kind of people who went on pilgrimage to Mt. Koya and the three Kumano shrines. During the ancient period, pilgrimage was indulged in primarily by emperors and the nobility who enjoyed *sumô* matches, *kagura* and poetry readings on their way to the holy places. During the medieval period, the warrior class figured prominently among the pilgrim bands. Only during the Tokugawa period did pilgrimage become possible on a large scale for the common people. For example, at the peak of the Kumano pilgrimage season in 1716 as many as 4,776 people put up in

2. Andô Seiichi "Waga kokyô no kako to shôrai," *Kumano Bunka*. Nachi Taisha: Kumano Bunka Kenkyûkai, No. 1 (August, 1975), pp. 14-29.

3. Andô Seiichi, *Wakayama-ken no rekishi*. Tokyo: Yamagawa Shuppansha, 1976, pp. 19-21.

the inns at Tanabe during one week alone. In 1738, during the same summer season, as many as 758 stayed there in one day.<sup>4</sup> In spite of these developments, agriculture in the Kumano area itself remained comparatively backward and must be listed together with Tōhoku, Kyūshū and the mountainous parts of Okayama as one of the less developed parts of Japan during the Tokugawa period. Significantly, almost no *miyaza*-type institutions developed in the Kumano region.

The agrarian *miyaza* is generally found where double cropping and *shōen* developed.<sup>5</sup> In Wakayama, these conditions were met primarily in the north, in the "river culture" of Kihoku. In this area, economic and political life was dominated not by one great family (as in Tōhoku), but by clusters of independent cultivators and their client families. Nor were shrines controlled by charismatic or shamanistic *shugenja* (as, again, was so often the case in Tōhoku) who, as religious virtuosi, could thwart the growth of lay-dominated *miyaza* institutions.<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, the patron families of northern Wakayama joined hands to control irrigation and drainage, to manage the common lands (sources of compost and fertilizers) and to plan for flood control. The social and economic power of these families was reflected in the religious status they enjoyed as members of the *miyaza*.

Even before the Tokugawa period, the economy of this "river cul-

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4. Pilgrimage to Kumano declined only as a result of the rising popularity of Mt. Koya and Ise. Stimulated by the largess of Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684–1751), Kumano made up for the decline of pilgrims by going into banking. Yoshimune made an original deposit with the shrine of 3,000 *tael*. By 1828 its capital had grown to 100,000 *tael* of which 80,000 was deposited by commoners. The shrine-bank also opened branch offices in Edo, Kyoto, Osaka, Sakai and Otsu. If someone defaulted on a loan the shogunal office of temples and shrines (*jisha bugyō*) stood ready to collect the debt. Thus, the bank was insured by the good name of the gods of Kumano and by the government itself. Contracts were often written on the back side of the shrine's amulets since it was believed that the crow, the messenger of the Kumano gods, would have revenge on anyone who failed to keep his word. Thus, the history of this shrine-bank reflects very clearly the rising power of commoners and the way in which capital was being accumulated in provincial Japan during the Tokugawa period. See Andō, *Wakayama-ken no rekishi*, pp. 105–107.

5. The medieval manors shown on the map in Andō's *Wakayama-ken no rekishi*, pp. 52–53 correspond closely with the areas in the prefecture where *miyaza* developed.

6. See Satō Kei, "Tōhoku chihō ni okeru miyaza no bōshōsei ni tsuite," *Nihon Minzokugaku*, No. 89 (1973), pp. 44–48. For a description of the social and economic development of the Kihoku region see Andō Seiichi, *Kinsei miyaza no shiteki kenkyū*, pp. 101–104 and the same author's "Kihoku no fūdo no rekishi," *Rekishi Techō*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 14–17.

ture" was highly developed. By the late middle ages, European missionaries commented that farming in northern Wakayama was as advanced as any in Europe. The area also enjoyed a strong local leadership since at the beginning of the Tokugawa period most of the medieval *dogô* chose to become cultivators rather than lords or retainers. While there were also conservative areas in Kihoku where dependent farmers (or clients) continued to exist until the beginning of the Meiji period, the greater part of the region, especially around the mouth of the Ki River, saw the growth of paid laborers (*hiyatoi rôdôsha* or *chingin rôdôsha*) and rural proletarians (*hôkônin*). As early as 1727 thread was being manufactured in the castle town of Wakayama, raw materials being collected and sold by a new merchant class. By the end of the eighteenth century the textile industry had advanced to the point where it became difficult to recruit men to work in the fields.

With the growing economic independence of the lower, disenfranchised classes, the socio-religious monopoly enjoyed by village establishments came under attack.<sup>7</sup> As in other parts of the Kinki region, most *miyaza* were forced to abandon their internal differences of rank and became, comparatively, egalitarian. As their monopoly over things sacred and secular began to diminish, village-wide shrine organizations, or liturgical communities, began to take their place. Most of the parish guilds which managed to survive into the 20th century were destroyed by the post-war land reforms. Today, the vast majority of *miyaza* in Kihoku have disappeared, leaving behind neither documents nor traditions. In some places the men from the old *miyaza* families still get together once or twice a year for a feast, but have little or nothing to do with the local shrine. In other places where the institution has not been as completely secularized, members of the *miyaza* continue to act as leaders in the religious life of their community, enjoying privileges now mellowed by compromise and retreat.

### III. *The Miyaza and the Fishing Village.*

In this essay I shall examine privileged ritual groups in two villages on the Wakayama coast. Do the above generalizations regarding economic and religious changes in the "river culture" in the north also apply to the "sea culture" of the west? How were ritual and status

7. For examples of the squabbles between *miyaza* households and disenfranchised families in this area, see Andô, *Kinsei miyaza no shiteki kenkyû*, pp. 11-25.

privileges maintained in villages of this sort?

While most *miyaza*-type villages grew out of the soil of agrarian *shôen*, the institution can also be found in fishing villages. Being subject to a higher element of risk than the agricultural village (e.g. shipwreck and "fisherman's luck"), the class structure of fishing villages is more volatile. Accordingly, status monopolies such as the *miyaza* are even harder to maintain. The vulnerability of economic and status relationships in these villages became still greater after fishing and agriculture became differentiated occupations around the Sengoku period.<sup>8</sup>

Because the two villages which I studied have no extant documents relating to the social organization of their community festivals, as a point of historical comparison I would like to look first at another fishing village in Wakayama where documents do survive.

A *miyaza* was established in the northwestern coastal village of Shiotsu-ura (formerly in Kishû-han, Ama-gun, Kamo-gumi; now Shimotsu-chô) by 14th century warriors who had been defeated in the struggles of the Northern and Southern Courts. Adopting the local *ujigami* as their ideological center, these *rônin* formed an exclusive *miyaza* limited to 48 families. As fishing developed as a specialized occupation in this village, these one-time warrior families emerged as head-fishermen (*amimoto*). In 1642 they strengthened their monopoly over the fishing industry by pooling resources and buying some nets over which they had complete control. As time went on, the relationship between the *amimoto* of the parish guild and their clients (*amiko*) began to break down. Between 1601 and 1616, 22 of the original 48 families disappeared from the membership lists of the *miyaza*. Between 1616 and 1647 another 38 vanished. In both cases, the guild families were replaced by new families who were able to take over the financial burdens of *amimoto* (which included not only the maintenance of the shrine and the cost of its festivals, but the corvée as well) which the older families were no longer able to bear. Other successful families established themselves not merely by buying their way into the *miyaza* but, for example, by building a Buddhist temple and donating stone lanterns to the Shinto shrine. After the Genroku period (1688-1704) many of the leading families began to move to other villages, which made it difficult or impossible

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8. The growth of castle towns and cotton production (which used fish for fertilizer) stimulated the growth of fishing as a separate occupation, especially in the Osaka area as early as the Muromachi period. In Wakayama, the split between the two ways of life probably took place around the beginning of the Tokugawa period.

for them to fulfill their obligations to the shrine and its guild. Thus, between 1601 and 1800, only 8 of the original 48 families remained on the roles of the *miyaza*. As a last-ditch attempt to revive the institution, a liberalized set of rules was adopted by the guild in 1800 which allowed outsiders to enter more easily. The socio-religious status of the guild, greatly devalued by this time, finally could be bought and sold like property. Nevertheless, from 1830 the rituals of the group ceased to be observed. In 1842, a memorandum was signed by 14 of its members calling for the restoration of the guild, but with no apparent success. In short, the history of the *miyaza* in the fishing village of Shiotsu-ura displays the same pattern of upheaval and decline which is found not only in the agrarian villages of northern Wakayama, but throughout Western Japan as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

#### IV. *Ao: the Kue Matsuri.*

Ao is a small fishing village located in a protected cove on the coast of Hidaka-gun not far from the town of Gobô. Its population of 800 is slightly less than what it was in the early 19th century.<sup>10</sup> On September 26th and 27th of every year it is the scene of a colorful festival called the *kue matsuri*, named after the *kue*, a large and tasty salt-water fish. The aim of this celebration is to pray for a good catch of fish and the safety of the fishing fleet. Because of its rather complex organization, I shall first introduce the *dramatis personae* of the festival and then describe the events themselves.<sup>11</sup>

##### 1. The parish guild (*kamiza*).

According to legend, about 250 years ago Shunryô Hôshi, the eighth priest of Kôtokuji, the Jôdo Shinshû temple in Ao, went to the Shirahige Shrine in Takashima-chô, Takashima-gun in Ômi (Shiga Prefecture) accompanied by the heads of nine local families in order to bring back to the village the sym-

9. Kasahara Masao, "Kinsei ni okeru miyaza no tokushitsu," in Andô Seiichi, ed., *Kinsei Wakayama no kôzô*. Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan, 1973, pp. 114-124.

10. Niida Yoshifuru, compiler, *Kii zokufudôki*. Wakayama-ken Shinshoku Torishimarisho. Kyoto: Gyôsei Gakkai Shuppan-bu, 1911, Vol. II, p. 487. These materials reflect conditions between 1806 when they were ordered to be compiled and 1839 when the five volume work was first published.

11. The only extant documents relating to the *kue matsuri* are two which deal with the offerings and ritual implements but not with the social organization of the festival. Composed in 1931 and 1946, these documents go back to a prototype written in 1874 which is no longer extant.

bol of this patron deity of fishermen. The present *kamiza* (i.e. *miyaza*) is made up of the descendants of these original nine families. When one of the families moves out of the village a close relative is asked to take over its responsibilities in the guild. Today, only five families remain active. The head of a sixth has died recently but is survived by a marriageable daughter. If she is able to attract a husband willing to take her family's name (i.e. a *yôshi*) the family may be able to continue its *miyaza* activities. Because, according to legend, the Buddhist priest led the founding families on their pilgrimage to Ômi the successors to the priesthood of Kôtokuji are sometimes regarded as members of the *kamiza* or even as its leader. Local opinion, however is divided on this point. If he is the leader it is in name only since the group is, internally, completely egalitarian. While they take their place in the "upper seats" (*kamiza*) at the *oza* feast, there is no fixed seating arrangement among them. At present, one of the members of the *kamiza* is retired and makes his living as a farmer. Another runs a general store. The others however are all fishermen. (The son of one of the members is the head of the fishermen's cooperative association). While it is said that the authority of the *kamiza* in the *kue matsuri* is paramount, in fact their participation in it is severely restricted to 1) preparing the offerings on the day of the festival and 2) presiding over the concluding *oza* feast. They are forbidden to take part in the procession to the shrine or in the ritual combat called the *kue-oshi*.

2. The parishioners or the "lower seats" (*shimoza*).

In *miyaza*-type villages there is usually a term to refer to families which do not belong to the parish guild but which are still part of the parish itself. In Ao the *shimoza* includes any male member of the community (exclusive of those who sit in the "upper seats" at the *oza* feast) who wishes to participate in the feast by taking his place in a "lower seat." Before the war as many as 100 people sometimes participated. Nowadays only three or four attend.

3. The shrine keeper (*miyamori*).

The shrine keeper is the lay priest, or celebrant, of the village. Throughout the year he presents offerings and prayers before the gods and performs various purifications. While there is no set form for appointing a shrine keeper, he is usually chosen by consultation between the shrine and temple representatives, the village president and council. He may keep his position for life or resign when he sees fit. He has a hand in the finances of the shrine, but must report all financial matters to the shrine and temple representatives. His remuneration is 25,000 yen per year.

4. The shrine and temple representatives (*shaji sôdai*).

In most communities laymen in charge of the financial support of the Shinto shrine (the *sekinin yakuin* or *ujiko sôdai*) have nothing to do with the affairs of the Buddhist temple.<sup>12</sup> In Ao, where there is only one temple and one shrine, the *sôdai* oversee the finances of both institutions. There are three

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12. According to Japanese law, the *sekinin yakuin* are in charge of shrine or temple finances, the sale of wood from forests owned by religious institutions, and the appointment of new priests. The priest, who often appoints the *sekinin yakuin*, may be counted as one of the group himself.



of these representatives, each chosen for a three year term. Two are chosen from among the villagers in general and one from the village assembly, or *kukaigiin*.

5. The Buddhist priest (*jūshoku*).

Since 1484 when the local priest, a certain Dōmyō, converted from Shingon Buddhism, Ao's temple has been affiliated with Jōdo Shinshū. During Oda Nobunaga's harassment of the faith, a priest by the name of Kyōnyō is said to have fled from Waka-ura to Ao where he was hidden in a cave on the coast for sixteen days by the villagers. Sometime later, the daughter of Yukawa Naoharu, a powerful lord in Hidaka-gun (a contemporary and sometime ally of Toyotomi Hideyoshi) became the wife of the priest of the temple. This seems to corroborate what we can assume from the legend of the founding of the local *miyaza*, namely that the priest of Kōtokuji was a person of considerable stature in the area.<sup>13</sup> The priest's role is, of course, hereditary. He participates in the *miyaza*'s poison tasting ritual (*odokumi*) and in the *oza* feast. He is explicitly prohibited from taking part in the procession to the shrine and the *kue-oshi*.

6. The professional Shinto priest (*shinkan*).

The priest, who comes from the nearby village of Hii-ku, is invited to preside over four different festivals in Ao. The services he performs in Ao are all under the direction of the local shrine keeper, that is, a layman. During the *oza* feast he takes his place among the "upper seats". He receives an annual honorarium of 30,000 yen.

7. The rotating festival leadership (*tōban*).

There are nine *tōban*, contiguous households which rotate on a yearly basis. Whereas the *kamiza* is in charge of preparing the offerings for the deity, the *tōban* are responsible for procuring these foodstuffs. While ten percent of the festival budget is contributed by the village itself (each household donating 300 yen), ninety percent of the expenses must be borne by the *tōban* who donate about 20,000 to 30,000 yen each. To qualify as a *tōban* there must be no sickness or recent deaths in the family. If a family declines its responsibilities because of sickness, death or poverty, it must take its turn the following year. A childless couple often "borrows" a child to help them with their obligations during the festival. The exact composition of the *tōban* group is determined in August. When the *tōban* first meet on the 20th of that month, they choose the steward, the supervisor, the serving boys and girls, and the persimmon- and bean-bearers for the *kue matsuri* and begin to make arrangements to collect the food for the festival offerings. At the *oza* feast the *tōban* take their places in the "lower seats."

The following individuals can be called the *tōban*'s circle since they are either chosen from among the *tōban* households or appointed by their group:

8A. The steward (*kamioki*).

The steward is a *tōban* whose home will serve as a storeroom for the

13. Niida, *Kii zokufudōki*, Vol. II, p. 487. On Yukawa Naoharu, see Andō, *Wakayama-ken no rekishi*, p. 77.

offerings which are collected for the festival. The steward must therefore have a living room large enough to hold the wall-sized shelves which will be used for storing the forty-eight types of offerings. It must also be large enough to accommodate the parish guild when it assembles to prepare and arrange this food on offering trays. It is in the steward's home that the *odokumi* rite takes place on the eve of the festival. On the morning of the festival itself he participates in the procession to the shrine (which begins from his house) as one of the *tôban*. He later takes his place with the other *tôban* in the "lower seats" at the *oza* feast.

#### 8B. The supervisor (*masutori*).

The supervisor is a wife of one of the *tôban*. She must have passed the years of childbearing so as not to contaminate the offerings with a woman's monthly "red pollution." While women in general play only minor roles in the festival, the supervisor is perhaps the single most important member of the *tôban*'s circle, and is the *éminence grise* (or the *urakatasan*, as the villagers put it) of the festival. She is responsible for organizing the *tôban*'s activities. During the *oza* feast she serves the men their food which is prepared by the *tôban* wives who are not allowed in the room.

#### 8C. Serving girls (*hanajorô*).

There are nine serving girls who carry sacred wine (*miki*) to the shrine on the day of the festival. They must be pre-pubescent (aged five to ten) in order to protect the offerings from the "red pollution."

#### 8D. Serving boys (*hanaotoko*).

There are five serving boys (aged ten to twelve) who act as the servants and messengers (*tsukaiban*) of the *tôban*. They also serve *miki* during the *oza* feast, having been specially trained for this ritual by the shrine keeper. Like the serving girls, the boys are also responsible for carrying offerings to the shrine on the day of the festival.

#### 8E. Bean-bearers and persimmon-bearers (*mame-kaki ninaibito*).

These are four men (over thirty-five years of age) who are chosen by the *tôban* to carry these offerings to the shrine. Like the *kue* and the *taru mikoshi*, these offerings will be used as the "footballs" of the *kue-oshi* contest.

#### 8F. The cat guard (*nekoban*).

The cat guard, one of the easier and safer festival responsibilities, is a *tôban* who is chosen to sit in the shrine while the *oza* is going on to see that prowling cats do not devour the sacred offerings.

#### 9. The east and west youth associations (*tôzaigumi*, or *wakashû*) and their leaders (*wakashûgashira*).

Ao has long been divided into two youth associations, each with its own lodge. Each group tries to outdo the other in its performance of a lion dance. The rivalry between the two groups is so keen that fights often break out when someone violates the division of ritual labor. In the ritual combat of the

*kue-oshi* these young men try to prevent the *tôban* from offering the *kue* and the *taru mikoshi*, the beans and the persimmons. Formerly, these associations acted as general service groups for the community. Recently, however, they have declined in importance and function only during the festival. Membership in the youth associations begins after a young man completes his compulsory education. Individuals graduate from the group at the age of thirty-five. Like all of the participants in the festival, members of the youth groups must be residents of Ao. If a family moves from one side of the village to the other, the young man in the family may change to the opposite youth association. Traditionally each youth association had two leaders whose power during the festivals was absolute. They were chosen by age usually for a term of one year (though they could be reelected). Each association also had a secretary-treasurer. After the war, in order to supervise the larger number of youths in the village, each association established two new assistant leaders. In the past few years, however, the number of young men has decreased. In the west association alone, in 1973 there were 37 members, in 1974, 33, and in 1975 only 30. About 80 percent of each graduating high school class leaves the village to find work elsewhere. During the *kue-oshi* contest, the leaders of the youth associations join the *tôban* in their struggle to present the offerings before the deity.

Preparations for the *kue matsuri* begin about a month-and-a-half before the festival itself. During August a *kue* must be found and prepared for the festival by pickling it in brine for twenty days. This turns it into a tough, pigskin-like object. Recently the fish has become scarce and often has to be purchased rather than caught. In 1976, for example, it was found in a fishmarket in Nagasaki. On the day of the festival, some of the older men gather at the steward's house to stuff the *kue* with straw and attach it with straw ropes to a long beam. At the same time, a wine barrel palanquin (*taru-mikoshi*) and special boxes for the offerings of beans and persimmons are readied by others.

About the middle of September, the shrine keeper purifies the steward, his family's god-shelf, the room that will house the offerings and the supervisor. After this, only the steward and the supervisor are allowed to enter the room where the offerings are stored. The room is regarded as sacred even though, unlike many other villages, the symbols of the deity (*goshintai*) are not stored in the steward's house. On September 18th the youth groups assemble separately and begin rehearsals for the lion dances. While this is going on, the shrine keeper calls the serving boys to his house and begins to train them for the role they will play during the *oza* ceremony. As the festival approaches, preparations become more intense. The youth associations must weave new straw festoons and choose the men who will be in charge of the music and lion dances. Fresh dirt must be spread in front of the shrine which, on a rainy day, turns the area in front of the shrine into a sea of mud.

On the eve of the festival (*yoimiya*), the young men begin to put up festival banners throughout the village and prepare the floats.

At about 6 P.M. the Buddhist priest and the shrine keeper meet at the steward's house to taste the offerings and make sure they have not been poisoned (the *odokumi* rite). This ceremony is carried out by these two leaders of the temple and shrine while the steward and supervisor sit beside them in silence. The atmosphere during the *odokumi* which I observed was extremely relaxed. No one even bothered to turn off the television set in the next room. When the ceremony was finished, a full meal was served to all four leaders. That evening there was dancing in front of the shrine followed by two lion dances, competitive performances put on by the two youth associations.

On the day of the festival, September 27th, the steward contacts the various people in charge of the offerings at 5 A.M. By 7 o'clock the parish guild has assembled at his house to peel and prepare the vegetables and arrange the offerings on large wooden trays. The shrine keeper sits to one side preparing the paper streamers (*gohei*) which will be used during the celebration. In the back of the house the wives of the *tôban* come and go bringing various items from the kitchen to the busy guildsmen. At about 8 o'clock the *kue* and *taru-mikoshi* are prepared. Finally, after all of the offerings have been properly arranged, the procession leaves the steward's house for the shrine. Winding through the narrow paths between the crowded homes of the fishermen, the procession makes its way to the shrine preceded by the unearthly whine of archaic reed instruments. The members of the parish guild, discretely returning to their homes, do not participate in the event. Nor, because of her sex, is the supervisor allowed to take part. Her place is taken by a young, unmarried man who paints his face white and dresses in a woman's bright red *kimono*.

For a short distance the procession follows the road that runs along the coast in front of the village. Then it turns into precincts of the shrine, passes through the *torii* and begins to mount the tall stairs leading to the small shrine at the top of the hill. At the end of the procession come the *kue*- and *taru-mikoshi* and the offerings of beans and persimmons. As soon as these arrive at the *torii*, the young men carrying them bolt and begin to run away with them in the direction of the wharf. The *tôban* (and the leaders of the youth association whom they have enlisted), determined to offer these things as quickly and decently as possible, pull in the opposite direction. A fierce mêlée then erupts with each side pounding, kicking, heaving and dragging away

the members of the opposite team. This contest goes on for about three hours as the *mikoshi* are repeatedly captured and lost by both sides. Nearly all of the young men—many of whom come to the event half drunk—will have bruises to show for weeks to come.

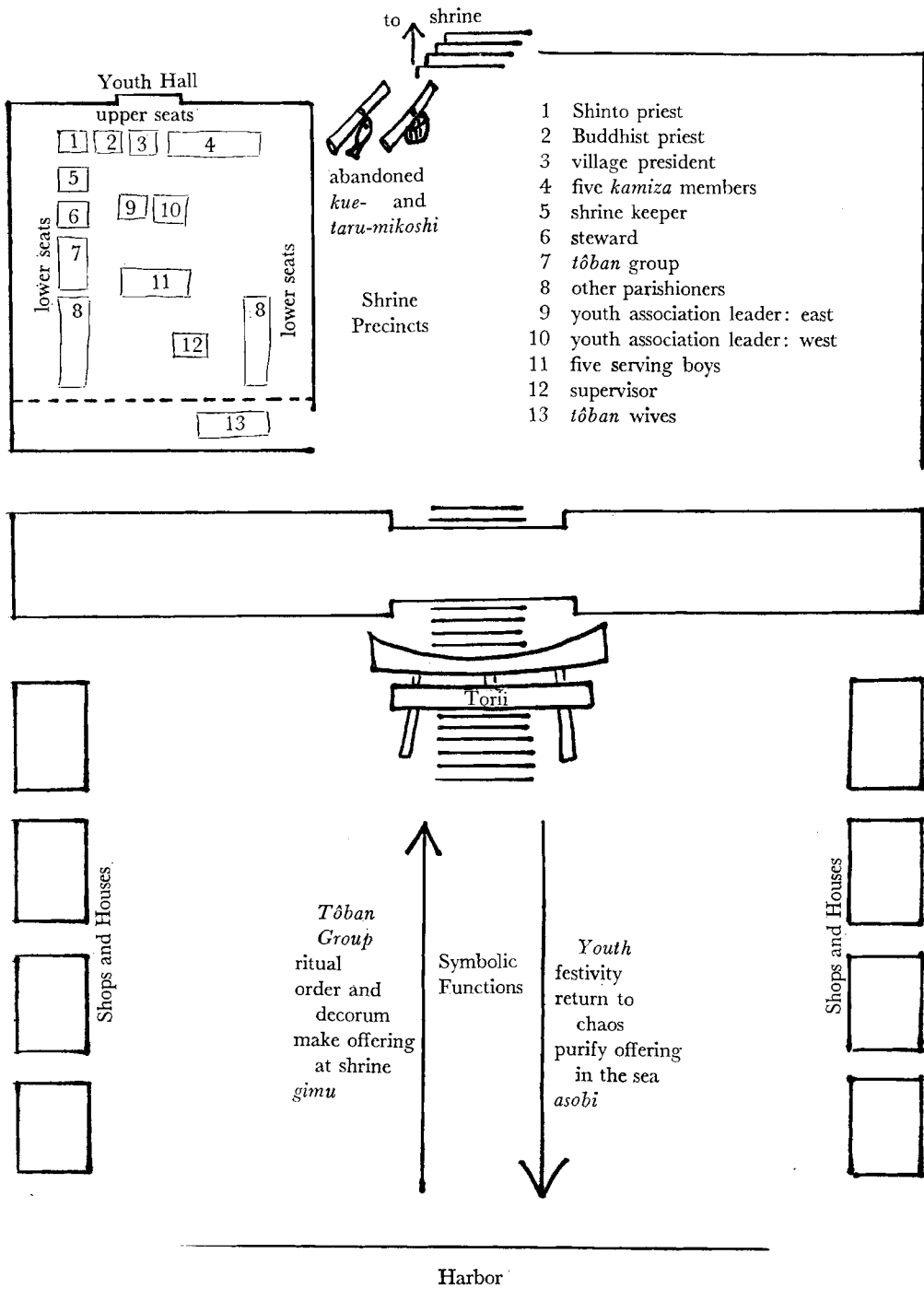
Why this outrageous behavior? According to legend, one year the men carrying the *kue-mikoshi* had too much to drink and dropped their offering in the dirt. A heated argument ensued whether or not to continue on to the shrine. Some felt that they should first purify the offering “with salt” (i.e. by dipping it into the harbor). Others maintained that a little dirt did not matter and that the *kue* should be offered to the god at once. This argument became, in effect, an etiological myth explaining why today the *tôban* try to offer the *kue* and why the youth oppose them. It shows why the youth throw the offerings into the sea and why the *tôban* must fish them out again. Actually, the myth and the symbolic activity based on it are good examples of the creative tension between ritual (making the offerings) and festivity (combat and sport) which in the classical Shinto festival becomes a means for the reinvigoration of both *kami* and community.<sup>14</sup> Ritual contests of this sort almost invariably divide the community into two *unequal* groups.<sup>15</sup> Thus the *tôban*'s circle has a ritual obligation (*gimu*) to make their offerings and thereby maintain the good order and decorum of the village. The youth, on the other hand, play the roles of clowns and tricksters. They sing, cavort, and act drunk and saucy. While they are responsible for dirtying the offerings in the first place, it is only through their “sport” (*asobi*) that the offerings are purified in the sea. Looked at analytically, the *kue-oshi* is therefore the expression of a tension between *gimu* and *asobi*, ritual and festivity. It is a classic example of the dialectical relationship between propriety and orgy, order and chaos, the sacred and the mundane that one finds in Shinto celebrations.

By about one o'clock the *tôban* have captured the offerings of beans and persimmons and the *taru mikoshi* and bring them into the shrine precincts. When they finally succeed in bringing the *kue mikoshi* itself up the stairs the ritual combat comes to an end. By this time the fish is in shreds and is too dirty to be offered. It is simply abandoned in a corner of the precincts together with the *taru mikoshi*. Once again

14. Sonoda Minoru, “The Traditional Festival in Urban Society,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (June–September, 1975), Vol. 2, Nos. 2 and 3, pp. 103–136. The original article appeared in *Nihon bunka kenkyûsho kiyô*, No. 35, March, 1975, pp. 1–34.

15. Matsudaira Narimitsu, *Matsuri*. Tokyo: Nikkô Shoin, 1943, p. 22.

Ao: *Kue Matsuri*



order has conquered disorder, decorum has overcome insult and rebellion. The elders have triumphed over the youth.

As soon as everybody can go home and take a bath, the *oza* feast is held in the Youth Hall just below the shrine. This is a feast given by the shrine keeper for the whole parish, or rather, for whoever wants to come and sit in the "lower seats" of the hall. Under the direction of the shrine keeper, the five serving boys serve *sake* and *miki* in a curious, ceremonial fashion. While the guests eat, the boys go back and forth delivering reciprocal toasts here and there (*gohenpai*). After the sacred rice wine is brought down from the shrine by the shrine keeper and served in large black containers (*kurowan*), messengers are sent to fetch the leaders of the two youth associations to join the village elders for the rest of the feast.

The next day is devoted to cleaning up (*atokatazuke*). The members of the two youth groups, on behalf of their leaders, visit the homes of those who made contributions to the festival or who cooperated in some particular way, presenting them with amulets and gratuities. In the evening a party is held in each of the youth lodges and leaders are chosen for the coming year.

#### V. *Koza: the Mifune Matsuri.*

The present town of Koza in Higashi Muro-gun is a result of a merger with two other communities in 1956. The population of the present community is 7,800, considerably larger than it was in the early 19th century when it stood at 1,242.<sup>16</sup> While the name of the town is now written with the characters "old" and "seat," it is thought that the original orthography was "god-seat" which, incidentally, is a common name for *miyaza* groups throughout the country.<sup>17</sup> Although the whaling industry existed as early as the Tokugawa period in Koza, it was only in the Meiji period that a whaling company was established. This brought considerable revenues to the town which, itself, held 1,000 shares of its stock. It may also have helped to alter traditional relations between the head-fishermen (*amimoto*) and their workers (*amiko*). After the disappearance of this firm in the late Meiji period no other fishing companies took its place. Consequently, Koza fishermen must use their own rather small vessels for fishing. These are serviceable only

16. Niida, *Kü zokufudôki*, Vol. III, p. 4.

17. *ibid.*

in the immediate coastal waters. Because of the restricted nature of fishing in Koza, and thanks to its location, a more varied economy has developed than in Ao. In Ao where two fishing companies operate several good sized vessels, about 95 percent of the working population is fishermen. In Koza, however, fishermen have become a minority. Like Ao, Koza is too small to absorb its own offspring so that about 85 percent of the youth must go to Shingû, Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe or Kyoto to find work.

Before looking at the events of the *mifune matsuri* (sacred barge festival) and their meaning, let us once again see who the principal players are.

1. The head-fishermen's group (*amimoto*).

The *amimoto* were once a closed group of eight to ten families with internal differences of rank. How many and what these ranks were are not clearly known. In the past the leader of this group was known as the *amimoto tôban*. Chosen on a yearly basis, this *tôban* was responsible for providing a barge (*tôbune* or *gozabune*) that would take the three divine children up the river to Kôchi Island on the day of the festival. Around 1913 there were about ten or fifteen *amimoto* owning boats of various sizes. Today there are five *amimoto* and one leader called the *ajiro no sendo*. The latter is regarded as the fisherman with the greatest skill. Nowadays, there is said to be no fixed number of *amimoto*. An *amimoto* is simply one who 1) owns his own vessel and 2) employs men who are not his own kinsmen.

2. Three divine children (*oshôro*).

The word *oshôro*, usually pronounced *ojôro*, actually means "noble lady" in Classical Japanese. In Koza it is used for three children, a girl and two boys aged six to eight, chosen annually by the *ajiro no sendo* from among the homes of fishermen. Their "leader" is said to be the girl. For the three days of the festival these children live with the village priest and are revered as deities. During this time their feet are not allowed to touch the ground. Their religious role is similar to the child-deities (*ochigosan* or *yorimashi*) found in many other Japanese communities.

3. Youth groups and leaders.

Originally there was only one youth association in Koza, but with the growing complexity of the community, this split into the following two groups about thirty years ago:

a. *Yûshinkai*.

This group is made up exclusively of the sons of local fishermen. Aged from about 16 through 38, there are presently about 40 members. During the festival these young men are in charge of the ceremonial barges (*mifune*). In addition to its own leadership, the *yûshinkai* is supervised by an alumni association called the *Kôchikai* (or "OBs," Japanese-English for "Old Boys"). Members of this group teach the young men the proper use of the barges and how to sing the traditional boat songs. In addition



to their own rather spacious lodge, the members of the *Yūshinkai* also make use of three houses for assembling before they board the three sacred vessels. Formerly these ships were manned by youths living in one of the three territorial divisions of the community corresponding to the Chinese characters for "upper," "middle," and "lower" written on the stern of each vessel. Today this residential qualification is breaking down.

b. *Seinenkai*.

This is an association for the sons of non-fishermen (e.g. merchants or salaried men) living in Koza. Presently, members of this group also total about 40 and are aged from 18 to 35. They are responsible for putting on the lion dances and music of the festival. After graduating from the *Seinenkai*, members may join the *Hozonkai* (corresponding to the *Yūshinkai*'s "OBs") which is in charge of instructing the younger generation in the lion dances and festival music.

4. The village president (*kuchō*).

As in Ao, the *kuchō* is the most important civil leader taking part in the festival. The county president (*chōchō*) attends the festivities at Kōchi Island but is not otherwise involved. The *kuchō* attends all of the Shinto rituals and rides with the three divine children, the priest and the shrine representatives in the *tōbune* to Kōchi Island on the main day of the festival. In the past the village headman was always an *amimoto*. The present *kuchō* was an *amimoto* for eight years before assuming his civic responsibilities in 1963. He still is the leader of the fisherman's co-operative association. The *kuchō* before him was a member of the Ichidayū family, whose ancestors were the officers of the *han* in charge of whaling (*kuji-ragata*).

5. Shrine Representatives (*ujiko sōdai*).

These are three men (one of whom is the village president himself) who are responsible for the financial affairs of the shrine and its festivals. They do not have a major ritual role.

6. The helmsmen (*kajitori*).

These three young men, about 33 years old, are also called the festival-officials (*saiten'in*). Standing in the prow of each of the barges, they guide the vessel to and from the island of Kōchi. Each man dresses in the white robes of a priest and makes various offerings and purifications along the way.

7. The Priest (*kannushi*).

Unlike Ao, the priest of the Koza Shrine is a resident of his community. Although he has a secular occupation as well, he can be considered a professional priest.

The festival begins on the 13th of July. On that day lanterns and banners are put up throughout the village. The house of the priest and the three houses where the crews of the barges assemble are decorated with sacred festoons. At 7 P.M. the three children chosen to be *oshōro* for the year are given baths and carried to the shrine piggyback—lest

their feet touch the ground. There the children, together with the village president, the two shrine representatives, and the *amimoto*, are purified by the Shinto priest. (During this and other rituals, the fishermen take their places in the rear of the group.) After this initial purification, the *seinenkai* youths put their lion mask into a *yatai* (a small float resembling a portable shrine) and go through the village streets with drum and flute to announce the beginning of the festival. By city standards, this is a quiet beginning. But for the children of Koza who scamper along beside the procession, it is an unforgettable experience.

At 2 P.M. on the following day, the three divine children (now in festival garb), the three helmsmen (dressed in pure white), the two leaders of the youth groups (in short black coats worn over blue and white robes), the village president (in a black robe) and three *amimoto* (in trousers and white shirts) assemble in the shrine for another brief ceremony. After purifying the group and serving them *miki*, the priest entrusts each helmsman with a plaque (*goshingaku*) wrapped in white cloth. These are the symbols of the god Kôchi Daimyôjin, also known as Kottama-sama in the local dialect. The "body of the deity" is Kôchi Island itself, a place about a mile and a half upstream, said to be too sacred for men to set foot upon. After being purified, the three helmsmen march quickly to the river and install the plaques upon the roof of each vessel. Guiding the barges first to the mouth of the river the helmsmen purify each in the salt water of the sea, dousing both the sea and the barges with offerings of sacred rice wine (a purificatory rite called *shioami*). After this, they turn their barges around and begin a leisurely voyage upstream to the sacred island. Because the barges are covered with banners and brightly decorated canvas tarpaulins the men at the oars cannot be seen. From the banks of the river only the muffled sound of their boat songs and the occasional wail of a *yamabushi*'s conch shell can be heard from within the vessels. With the white robed helmsman at the prow, the sight of the three red barges making their way up the river is one of remarkable but simple beauty. As the vessels approach the bridge which crosses the river, traffic is stopped to prevent the cars and trucks above from profaning the procession of sacred barges passing below. When they arrive at the island, the helmsmen make offerings of rice wine, ceramic bowls and a small vessel containing salt water and black pebbles. The barges then are docked on the river bank opposite the island. There they will remain until the events of the following day. Later, around 6 P.M. on the same day (the 15th), a boat race is held among three teams of middle

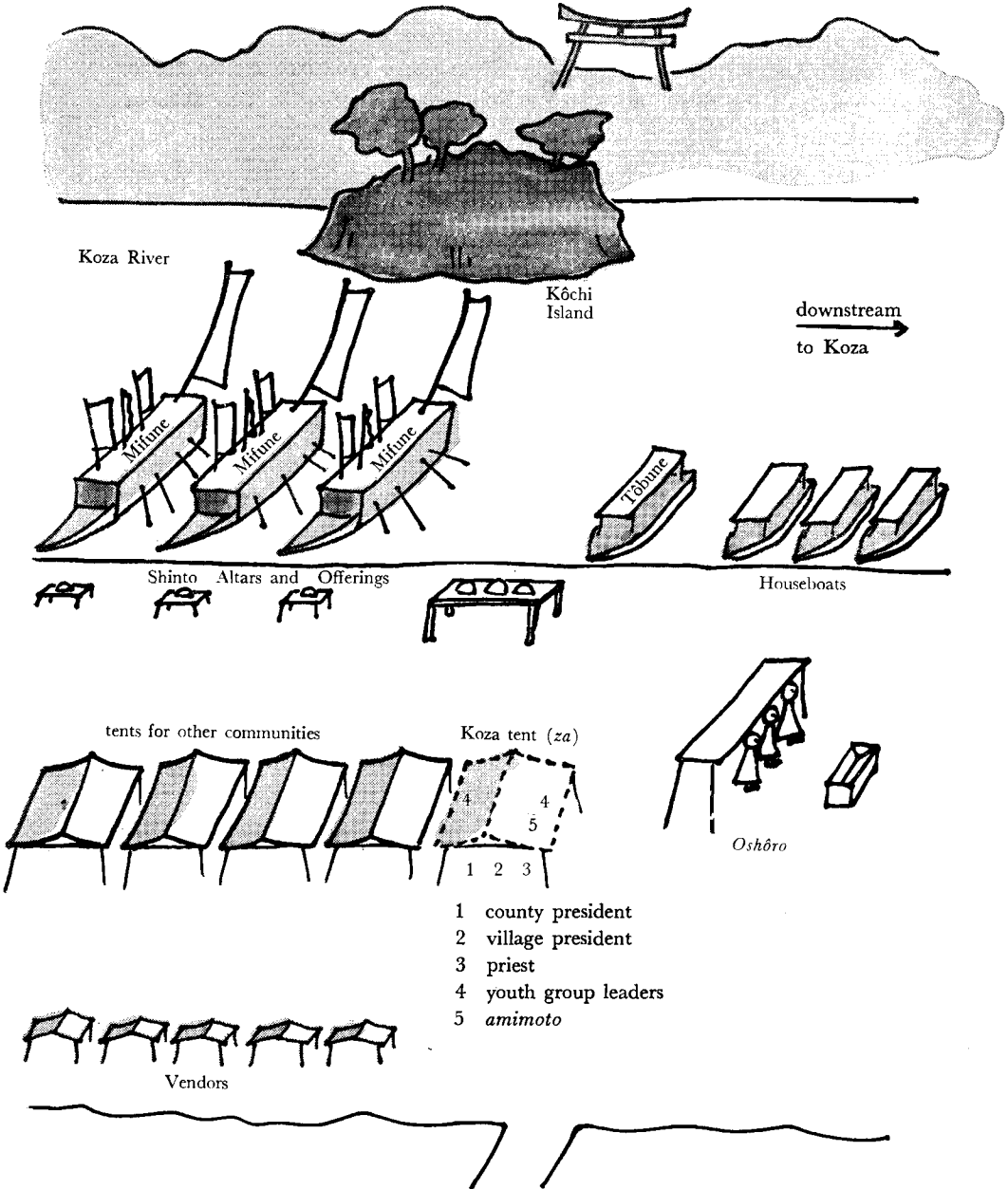
school boys at the mouth of the Koza River. Originally these three teams corresponded to the three territorial sections of the village. Today this regional identity is breaking down and children from outside of Koza are allowed to participate. In the evening, the children dress up in festive *kimono* and go to visit the street shops (*yomise*) set up on the south side of the river and watch a lion dance winding its way through the streets.

The next day is the festival itself (*honmatsuri*). Offerings are presented on temporary Shinto altars erected on the pebbly shore of the river facing the island deity. In the morning, the three divine children are brought up the river in the *tôbune* and enshrined in a small booth on the north side of the river. There they must sit quietly facing the sea for several hours, their feet protected from the earth by a straw mat.<sup>18</sup> One by one, the fishermen and their families worship the children and throw coins into the offering box set in front of them. After offerings and purifications have been made at the Shinto altars, the three barges begin to circumnavigate the island slowly and majestically, like priests circumambulating an altar. Along the river five tents (*za*) are set up for Koza and the other communities participating in the festival. In the tent belonging to Koza the seats of honor are taken by the county president (*chôchô*), the village president and the Shinto priest. Sitting on the sidelines are the *amimoto* and the leaders of the youth associations. After an exquisite lion dance featuring a duel between the lion and a *tengu* (played by a small child), beer and lunches are distributed. While the groups in the tents are feasting, the three barges move downstream and dock alongside of the houseboats which have come up the river to watch the festivities. Then people in the houseboats give the young boatmen small gifts, or *shûgi* or *hana* as they are called. These are presents of money, food wrapped in bamboo grass, or simply an

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18. Because the children are made to look straight ahead towards the sea and pay no attention to the sacred island and festivities going on around it, the present festival may be the result of a fusion of two much older celebrations: one a sea festival, represented nowadays by the fishermen and their divine children, the other a fresh water festival formerly celebrated by the peasants in the area who used the water of the Koza River for irrigation. See Sakurai Mitsuru, "Kumano no fune matsuri," *Kokugakuin Zasshi*, Vol. 64, No. 235 (Feb.-Mar., 1963), p. 43-76. However this may be, it is clear that the god Kôchi was early homologized with the deity Susanô no mikoto who was brought to Koza from the Gion Shrine in Kyoto during the Heian period as a god of water, wood, boats, war and epidemics. In 1920 there was a merger of this deity with the Hachiman and Sumiyoshi gods of the vicinity which, collectively, make up the pantheon of the present-day Koza Shrine.

Koza: *Mifune Matsuri*



- 1 county president
- 2 village president
- 3 priest
- 4 youth group leaders
- 5 animoto

invitation to come to one's home to receive a small gift. They are tokens of gratitude given to the young men for their efforts in putting on the festival. After receiving these gratuities, the young men debark and some of the "Old Boys" climb aboard the ships to enjoy a little *sake* and gossip, and to sing a few boat songs for old time's sake. After a final boat race between the middle school boys, the three barges sail down the river to the village. There, in the shrine, after the gods have been thanked for their safe return, the festival comes to an end.

#### VI. *Ritual Status: How it Survives.*

While we lack any firm documentary evidence for reconstructing the historical development of the *kamiza* of Ao and the *amimoto* clique in Koza, it is reasonably certain that these groups confronted economic and social pressures similar to those which caused parish guilds in the "river culture" of Kihoku and in other fishing villages such as Shiotsumura to disappear altogether. How did the groups in Ao and Koza manage to survive?

##### VI. A. *Ao.*

Compared with other *miyaza*-type villages, the distribution of ritual offices and responsibilities in Ao is somewhat anomalous. The kind of division of ritual labor we find between Ao's *kamiza*, *miyamori*, and *tôban* corresponds to none of the fourteen types of religious leadership described by Wakamori Tarô.<sup>19</sup> Of all of his types, the fourteenth itself is perhaps closest to the situation in Ao. This Wakamori describes as a village in which a professional priest comes to the village to take charge of the shrine and its festivals. In some places, he points out, the priest performs the work of the lay celebrant, oblationer and sub-oblationer. In other places these lower ritual ranks may continue to be filled on the basis of an (often debilitated) rotation system. The oblationer, in particular, is likely to be reduced to the level of a "waiter," his home no longer being regarded as the dwelling place of the *kami*. In Ao, however, the priest from Hii-ku comes only on four occasions during the year, and even then is subordinate to the local shrine keeper. Only offerings, and not the symbols of the deity (*goshintai*), are kept

19. Wakamori Tarô, *Kyûsei kyôdô no kenkyû*. Tokyo: Kiyomizukôbundô Shobô, 1967, pp. 106-127.

in the home of the steward. This does, indeed, seem to reduce him to the level of a "waiter."

The parallels and differences between Ao's festival organization and Wakamori's categories—which admittedly are ideal-types—are significant. But of greater importance is the way in which the prerogatives of the *miyaza* in Ao have been restricted. While it is said that in the past the group was in absolute control of the festival, scolding even the *tôban* if they did not perform their tasks correctly, today its authority and functions are marginal. Its members do not play the priestly role of the celebrant, a privilege common in many parish guilds. Instead, this role is played by a non-member, the shrine keeper (*miyamori*). In most villages, the *miyamori* is a lower office, a janitor of sorts comparable with the gravekeeper (*hakamori*) in Buddhist temples. The guild itself, restricted to preparing the offerings, is therefore made into an association of oblationers. The *tôban* of the village who are responsible for collecting the offerings which the guild will prepare, assume the still lower tasks of sub-oblationers.

This unusual distribution of ritual rights, obligations and restrictions prompts us to look more closely at the positions held by the *miyamori* and the *tôban*. The *miyamori* enjoys a social prestige which surpasses even that of the members of the hereditary parish guild. The present *miyamori* graduated from middle school before the war (a rare accomplishment in that time) and was regarded as an "intellectual" in his day. He has held the office for 21 years. It is this man who first puts a knife into the *kue* when it is prepared for the festival. This may suggest that he originally had a role in the preparation of the offerings which, of course, is a function of the *kamiza*. He also pays for the *oza* feast, an expense borne by the *miyaza* itself in other villages. These facts suggest that originally the *miyamori* may have been a member of the parish guild. If so, and if we count the Buddhist priest among the members of the *miyaza* as some villagers do, the poison tasting ritual (*odokumi*) may originally have been a feast celebrated by the two leaders of the *miyaza* as the prelude to the *kue matsuri*.

When we turn to the *tôban* system we notice that, oddly enough, there are nine *tôban*, just as there were, originally, nine members of the *kamiza*. The *tôban* also appoint nine serving girls. This repetition of groups of nine suggests that there once may have been some kind of organizational symmetry or even solidarity between the *miyaza* and the *tôban* as embodiments of the order and stability of the community. This is also suggested by the close cooperation between the two groups

throughout the festival.

We can therefore hypothetically reconstruct the history of the *miyaza* in Ao as follows. The group was formed by nine household-heads who brought the deity of the Shirahige Shrine from Ômi to Ao. Presumably in those days only families that were financially secure could have made such a journey. We can therefore speculate that like the members of the parish guild in Shiotsu-ura, the original nine guildsmen in Ao were *amimoto*. By giving a name to a shrine which formerly was simply an outpost of the Kumano shrines, they gained both prestige for themselves and their community.<sup>20</sup> Originally they were in complete control of the *kue matsuri*. Its two leaders, the Buddhist priest and the *miyamori*, presided over the *odokumi* on the eve of the festival. On the following day, the members of the *miyaza* participated in the procession to the shrine and perhaps in the *kue-oshi* itself. After all, why should there be such a strong interdiction on their participation today if in the past they did not take part in the event? The original *kue-oshi* therefore probably utilized the existing class and generational structure of the village (the *amimoto* versus the *amiko* plus youth) in order to bring out as dramatically as possible the symbolic conflict between order and chaos. Through the ritual ploy of the *kue-oshi* (a "return to chaos") the entire community was divided—both socially and religiously—antagonized, tested, re-invigorated and re-established. The *oza* which follows the ritual combat may originally have been as much of a feast of reconciliation as a thanksgiving rite. "Lower seats" (*shimoza*) and "upper seats" (*kamiza*), young and old, all now clean and refreshed, were reunited by drinking sacred rice wine in the precincts of the shrine.

With the decline of their economic and political position, we can assume that, again as in Shiotsu-ura, the ritual privileges of the *miyaza* were undercut. Finally the group was reduced to its present situation: a parish guild with no celebrant, prohibited from making offerings to the deity, its festival role limited to preparing offerings and presiding over the concluding feast of the festival.

While many traditional religious customs persist with considerable force, the local community cult has suffered some attrition in modern times. Two fishing companies, established in 1932 and 1934, greatly

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20. Niida, *Kii zokufudôki*, Vol. II, p. 487. Throughout Kishû there were 99 such shrines, called Ôji Shrines, dedicated to Amaterasu Ômikami. These were places where pilgrims could worship the Kumano Gongen "from afar" and find spiritual refreshment on their way to Kumano. See Andô, *Wakayama-ken no rekishi*, p. 38.

changed the lives of the local fishermen. Giving up their families' nets and fishing poles, they found that they could make a much better living by working for these companies. After the navy confiscated their boats during the Pacific War there was no work for the men left in Ao. After the war, however, from 1945 to 1955, the fishing industry prospered once again. Unfortunately their success resulted in a serious depletion of fish so that wages began to fall. Today many fishermen supplement company wages by going to sea now and then in their own boats. In spite of this setback, thanks to the greater resources of the fishing companies, fishermen now enjoy an unprecedented financial and personal security. If, in earlier times, fisherman's luck inspired piety, the security of their occupation in recent times seems to have encouraged some measure of indifference to the *kami*. Many villagers suspect that what once was religious festivity has now degenerated into mere recreation. Only a few people bother to attend the *oza* as *shimoza* members since, as they put it, there is so little to drink. The common attitude towards religion seems to be, as the Japanese proverb puts it, *kanawanu toki no kami da nomi* (believing only when everything else fails). Nowadays, when the catch is poor, the fishermen of Ao often say to each other, "let's go to pray to Kôjin sama at Tateri, or to the Susa Shrine in Chida!" They tend to overlook their own *ujigami* which, after all, is a patron god of fishermen. Perhaps, as one villager put it, he is too close to be of any help (*chikai mono wa arigataku nai*).

#### VI. B. *Koza*.

In spite of its generally conservative nature, *Koza*'s liturgical community has undergone significant changes in recent years. Compared with Ao, *Koza* has become a far larger and complicated community. As we have seen, five neighboring communities participate in the *mifune matsuri*, making it a much more impressive event than the *kue matsuri* in Ao. While other villages may put on lion dances, *Koza* itself has charge of the religious rituals, the sacred barges and boat races. It also pays for 50% of the expenses of the festival. The community is also more complex religiously. Instead of one Buddhist temple, it has four. New religions such as Sôka Gakkai, Tenrikyô and Seichô no Ie actively compete for followers. The growing complexity of the town is also reflected in the split of the youth association into two groups based on the occupation of the father. In addition, about ten years ago another youth group called the *Koza-chô Seinendan*, including about 150



young people of both sexes came into existence in order to promote athletic activities and adult education. In contrast to the *Seinenkai* and *Yûshinkai*, this group has no ritual functions.

Even in pre-war Koza, a more secular trend could be seen as traditional lustrations in the sea (*omisogi*) began to disappear. Until five years ago the *amimoto* and their men used to purify themselves in the icy waters of the Koza River (formerly called the River of God or the Purification River) at New Year's. As the priest of the village puts it, this represents "a new way of thinking about religion." The children's portable shrine which is paraded through the streets on the 14th is also a post-war development. This kind of take-over by children of the religious activities of adults is also, according to Yanagita Kunio, a sign of secularization. Differently interpreted, however, this process could be regarded as a religious "enfranchisement" of children in recent years. The festival has also lost some of its former color. Since the building of a road along the side of the river, most people find it more convenient to drive or take a taxi to the festival rather than row upstream in the traditional houseboats. During the 1920s there used to be about seventy or eighty of these boats participating in the festival. Today only about ten make the voyage. This no doubt has detracted both from the charm and the sense of personal participation in the festival.

Significant changes have taken place in Koza's festival organization. Originally only those possessing a special wooden amulet called the *ujiko no kigata* were allowed to participate in the festival. Exactly who these people were is unclear. At any rate, today the restriction no longer holds. The composition of the *amimoto* group itself has also changed. We have already seen that the number of *amimoto* seems to have been originally limited to about eight or ten families before the Meiji period and that by 1913 they numbered between ten and fifteen. It is said that "in the old days" these head fishermen always held the highest seats of honor (*kamiza*) at all festivals. While some *amimoto* families can be traced back many generations, the requirements for membership in the group are now based on achievement rather than heredity. This is especially true of the *ajiro no sendo* who is selected for his expert knowledge of the tides and fish. In other words, both in the fishing industry and in the festival organization of the village, achievement seems to be replacing traditional "ascribed" dignity. The fact that the privilege of choosing the divine children is held by a person of achievement rather than by a clique of head fishermen may have made the continuation of this right more palatable to contemporary villagers. Nevertheless, the

fact that *amimoto* continue to be chosen as political leaders, their children serving the religious roles of *kajitori* (i.e. lay celebrants) and *oshôro* (i.e. divine children) shows clearly that the traditional nexus between the *amimoto*, politics and religious celebration has yet to be broken.

Because Koza is both an older and a more complex community than Ao, the meaning of its major festival is also more difficult to decipher. In contrast to Ao, the fishermen of Koza insist that the purpose of their festival is not to increase the harvest of fish. According to local legend, the fishermen of Koza took part in the battle of Dan-no-Ura (1185) as mercenary sailors. The purpose of the original *mifune matsuri* was, therefore, to pray for the safe return of the mercenaries, to console the spirits of those who did not return, and to announce the final victory before the island god, Kôchi sama. Even during the Pacific War, young men from Koza took small pebbles from the island as amulets before leaving for the navy. If they returned, they presented the same pebble to the deity as a thanksgiving offering. During those days, the helmsmen of the sacred barges were chosen from among those lads about to be sent to the front. The barges themselves are covered by a brightly painted triple layered canvas said to have been designed originally to ward off the arrows of the enemy. In short, according to legend and custom, the original meaning of the festival was to celebrate the Koza fisherman *as a warrior*. We have seen the same tradition of the fisherman-as-warrior reflected in the documents of the *miyaza* of Shiotsu-ura. This is not surprising since the culture of the warrior class also deeply colored the parish guilds of the agrarian village. Archery contests, putting on the *eboshi* and other *bushi* customs are common in many of the Japanese *miyaza*. The very names given to the guilds and their leaders also reflect the warrior tradition. In both the fishing and agricultural village the medieval warrior tradition provided a mythical charter for the enactment of ritual and social status.<sup>21</sup>

Imposed upon the theme of the fisherman-as-warrior is another festival motif: the fisherman-as-whaler. During the Tokugawa Period the whaling industry began to color the festival. The *mifune* themselves are regarded, somewhat poetically perhaps, not only as men-of-war but as small whaling vessels. Some regard the boat races around Kôchi Island as symbolic re-enactments of the hunting of a whale. Others think of this contest as a way of training the youth of the village for

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21. See Davis, "Parish Guilds and Political Culture in Village Japan," p. 33.

sea battles. Whether he is thought of as warrior or as whaler, the purpose of the festival is not to pray for a good catch, but to celebrate the courage and manliness of the fisherman. Whether the sacred barges and racing boats are regarded as imaginary war vessels or as whaling ships, the *mifune matsuri* as a whole seems to be primarily a festival of status and not of productivity.

#### VI. C. *Savoir Faire and Secularization.*

When we compare the festival organizations of these communities the differences at first seem to outnumber the similarities. Koza's festival surpasses that of Ao in both complexity and sheer size. In Ao there are no divine children, no resident Shinto priest, and no longer any *amimoto*. In Koza there are no *sôdai* representing both temple and shrine, no Buddhist priest who participates in the Shinto rites, and no longer any *tôban*. In Ao all members of the parish guild are hereditary households. In Koza, while some *amimoto* families can be traced back several generations, requirements for membership in the group are now based on achievement.

When we look more carefully at the structure of these festivals significant similarities begin to emerge. Some of these similarities are elements common to the local community cults (so-called "*Shintô*") of Japan. In both villages we find nearly the same kinds of purifications and offerings. In both the dominant ritual roles are played by men while women play supporting roles, usually in the kitchen. The only crucial female roles are the *masutori* in Ao and the leading *oshôro* in Koza. In both villages we have seen elders working together with youth associations to put on festivals. In both, ritual was combined with festivity to rejuvenate the *kami*, nature, and at least the *shadow* of social order and status. While professional priests play important ceremonial parts in the festivals of both communities, lay celebrants—the shrine keeper in Ao and the helmsmen in Koza—continue to perform vital roles in the celebrations. Finally, both festivals end with an exchange of gratuities.

Both groups seem to have maintained their vestigial ritual status by compromising their privileges and cooperating with other groups and leaders in the community. Today, the only ritual privileges which these groups hold onto are, in Ao, the right to prepare offerings and preside over a feast, and, in Koza, the right to attend various purifications and choose three divine children once every year. In Ao the parish guild

has given up (if it ever had) the functions of lay celebrant so common in other *miyaza*-type villages. In Koza, the right to participate in the festival has now been extended to the entire community. In the postwar period the children too have been enfranchised and pull their own palanquin through the streets. The head fishermen's group has been opened up to anyone who can maintain a suitable boat and crew. This makes ritual privileges more "reasonable" in today's achievement-oriented society. Only women have yet to be enfranchised.

Ao's *kamiza* and Koza's *amimoto* seem to have maintained their status in the festival life of their villages by a skillful application of very traditional political *savoir faire* such as 1) compromise and consensus, 2) the division of labor, 3) benevolent hierarchy, and 4) socio-religious enfranchisement. Through compromise and consensus, the quasi-privileged groups in Ao and Koza avoided the nemesis that would, and did, fall upon the heads of less flexible parish cliques such as the *miyaza* in Shiotsu-ura. Through a division of ritual labor, they seem to have parcelled out many of their own hereditary rights, thereby winning for themselves a longer life in the end. Through benevolent hierarchy, they were able to sustain their leadership roles as elders while relying on the energy and resources of those younger and lower in prestige and rank. Through the religious enfranchisement of greater numbers they were able to avoid a direct confrontation between the privileged and unprivileged strata within their communities. Lower classes were brought into the liturgical community not by voluntarism or universal enfranchisement, but by the slow process of expanding enclosures. The resulting "egalitarian" village is, as Erwin H. Johnson puts it, "egalitarian for those who are members."<sup>22</sup> In such communities, enfranchisement ends at the borders of the village.

These principles are the basis for successful group organization throughout Japanese society, both sacred and secular. They can be found in both *miyaza*-type villages as well as in the broader liturgical communities (*ujiko seido*) in which all residents are enfranchised. The presence of these principles (or *savoir faire*<sup>23</sup>) therefore does not prove

22. "Status Changes in Hamlet Structure Accompanying Modernization," in R. P. Dore, ed., *Aspects of Social Change in Modern Japan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, p. 169.

23. Strictly speaking, principles in the abstract sense of the word are what one does not find in the development of the *miyaza*. In his study of the quarrels of the *miyaza* in Kishû villages, Thomas Smith found that "the contestants showed remarkably little interest in formulating guiding principles for a different kind of community. Insofar as they appealed to abstract principle at all, it was as

that the festival organizations of Ao and Koza have evolved historically from *miyaza* to *ujiko*. Their use does not even prove that privilege has been compromised in these communities. It is possible, though not likely, that from the beginning, socio-religious status in these villages was of such a low-profile, and festival privileges so innocuous that no fundamental changes were necessary for the preservation of the rights of these groups in modern times. A comparison with the history of other *miyaza*-type groups, both in the "river culture" of Wakayama and the rest of Western Japan, suggests that this was *not* the case. Judging from the fate of the festival clique in Shiotsu-ura and from the clues we can pick up from the oral traditions of Ao and Koza, we can conclude that the festival organization of these two villages has indeed undergone significant changes entailing the limitation of hereditary or ascriptive ritual privileges.

Finally, perhaps more important for the maintenance of residual privilege than the adroit application of political wisdom is the growing secularization of religion in both communities. In both, rituals and purifications have been simplified or given up. One would hesitate to apply the conventional wisdom of the sociologist and call these festivals "meaning-imposing events" which provide a symbolic basis for the "social solidarity" of these communities. On the contrary, it is quite obvious that in both Ao and Koza ritual status no longer reflects everyday, social position. In such communities, *it simply does not matter* who prepares offerings or selects divine children.

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an afterthought incidental to the specific issue at hand." *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, p. 197.