

The Communitarian Aspect of Shinto Matsuri

By

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Introduction.¹

In the basically agricultural society of early Japan, water and fire were elemental necessities; co-operation in rice cultivation was a necessity for their very existence. Water and fire could also become mysterious powers of destruction, so the spirits of these forces needed propitiation if man was to work in harmony with nature. Each village formed a fairly closed society with religious and political leaders emerging from the group, not set apart, but chosen among equals, according to age or the custom of the village. Religion centred round *Kami*² and his gift of life through fertility of every kind, and his protection from the elemental forces of nature. Just as the life of the village depended upon the co-operation of the group, so too, the religious faith in *Kami* depended on the community for its expression. The whole village, not merely the individual, needed *Kami*'s gifts of prosperity and happiness, and his protection from every kind of evil. From these earliest forms of communal religious worship developed the *Shinto Matsuri*³ as we know it today.

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2. *Kami*: The deities in Shinto are infinitely numerous, and constantly increase in number. These gods all make up a union, and are united in peace and harmony. The beings which are called *kami* include everything from the spirits encharged with the creation and activizing of heaven and earth, the great ancestors of men, to all things in the universe, even plants, rocks, birds, beasts and fish.

3. *Matsuri*: Ceremonies offering prayers, thanksgiving, or reports

In this kind of farming society where there was little movement from village to village, and not much outside communication, the religious acts of ancient times were carefully handed down from generation to generation, thus exhibiting a deep respect for their ancestors and for the gift of life which had been passed on through them. The purpose of this paper is to study how far the basic communitarian aspect persists in the village *matsuri* of today. For this purpose I have confined my study to five typical village winter *matsuri*, each one unique in its symbolic resources. Urban *matsuri* are fast losing their ritualistic symbolism and are becoming simply festivities of a purely secular nature, because of rapidly changing economic and social conditions in the cities. For this reason this paper has been confined specifically to village *matsuri* where the old traditions are still a living reality.

What, then, is a *matsuri*? It may be considered both a religious and cultural phenomenon which has for its motive the renewal of the life-power of both *Kami* and man by the symbolic group-action of its members. The members are called *uji-ko* or children of the *uji-gami*⁴ which originally referred to the ancestral or tutelary *Kami* of a family or clan. With the changing social system of today the *uji-gami* now mean the *Kami* of persons living in a certain area, like the parish of the shrine, and those who are born or who live within the parish are called

to, praising the virtues of, and presenting offerings to a deity or deities. Many Shinto *matsuri* traditionally hand down extremely ancient forms and spirit, and they are extremely rich in variations according to deity, shrine, and purpose of worship. *Matsuri* is the most important thing in Shinto. In the true sense living prayerfully and obediently under the gods' protection is *matsuri*; life itself should be identical with *matsuri*. For example, the peasants begin cultivation in the early spring by praying for plentiful crops, and at the end of autumn they finish the agricultural cycle by offering thanksgiving for a plentiful harvest and present the harvest to the gods.

Note: Unless otherwise specified, all definitions of Shinto terms are taken from: *Basic Terms of Shinto* compiled by Shinto Committee for the IXth International Congress for the History of Religions. Kokugakuin University, Jinja Honcho and Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics. 1958, Tokyo.

4. *Uji-gami:* Anciently referred to the deity worshipped as the ancestral or tutelary deity of a certain clan or family; since the middle ages has been thought of more frequently as the tutelary deity of one village. One of the central characteristics of Shinto is the prominence of the idea of ancestor worship accompanied by growing consciousness of the *uji-gami* as common ancestor and by increasing solidarity with a spirit near to that of blood kinship.

uji-ko.⁵ A *matsuri* consists of two elements, that of solemn ritual which is performed with tranquillity and order, and that of festivity which exhibits collective excitement, spontaneity and confusion. Though the ritual follows the same pattern as the treatment of an honoured guest: that of preparation, invitation, offering of food and entertainment, communication and farewell, there is no anthropomorphism in Shinto. The spiritual reality of *Kami* is too strongly emphasized for that.

Ritual preparation for the *matsuri* essentially consists of purification of participants and everything connected with the *matsuri*, the ritual invitation may be in the form of a special cry (*keihitsu*) or by playing the flute or *o-koto* or by opening the altar doors. The offering of food and entertainment varies with each *matsuri*, reflecting the beliefs and social background of the participants. Again the stage of communication indicates the origin of the *matsuri* in the type of *Norito*⁶ or songs used. Beautiful words effect what they signify in Shinto belief (*Koto-dama*)⁷, so the word can become a dynamic communication of life between *Kami* and man. This can also be expressed in the ritual of drinking together the sacred wine (*o-miki*). The final stage symbolises the farewell of *Kami* by *keihitsu* or music or simply by shutting the doors of the altar.

Interpenetrating the life-communication of the ritual is the life-animation of the festivity. The deeper the participation in the ritual, the more dynamic and even ecstatic becomes the festivity. The first stage of the festivity is sacralization because, during the *matsuri*, those with special roles are possessed by the spirit of the *Kami*. After spiritual and physical purification and fasting these actors are dressed with costumes and masks, and

5. *Uji-ko*: Innate believers or parishioners of a shrine living within the traditional parish boundaries of a shrine. Originally referred to the entire membership of a clan possessing common ancestral gods or *uji-gami*, but in later ages the meaning changed, and *uji-gami* came to mean the gods of persons living in a certain area; and those who were born and lived in the area and who were under the tutelage of the *uji-gami* came to be called *uji-ko*.

6. *Norito*: Words addressed to a deity or deities, expressed in elegant, ancient Japanese. The style of expression is typified by the *Norito* recorded in the *Engi-shiki*, the law book compiled in the tenth century. They contain words of praise for the gods, lists of offerings, words identifying the persons originating and pronouncing the prayer, and the subject of the prayer, but they contain no didactic elements.

7. *Koto-dama*: This ancient belief had it that beautiful, good words bring about happiness and good, while coarse, evil words bring about unhappiness and evil.

thus become *shinza*⁸ (Kami-seat). The second stage of the festivity is the setting in motion of the activities, be they the procession with the *mikoshi*⁹ or other symbol-vehicles or merely the movement round the *yudono*¹⁰ in *Yudate Kagura*. By this simple gesture the *Kami* are invited to share the time-space relationship of these particular *uji-ko*. In the third stage the tempo of the music quickens, the motion becomes more lively and vigorous, excitement rises until the fourth stage is reached where status and roles become fluid, performers and spectators merge into one united community and the flow of animated life between *Kami* and man may even exhibit collective ecstasy. This is the heart of the *matsuri* as it is not only renewal of life but life-enrichment through communitarian participation of life of *Kami* and man. Thus the *matsuri* is a vibrant affirmation of life in all its forms and in all its beauty. A specific *matsuri* may be a simple ritual-festivity or it may be composed of several ritual-festivity complexes but basically each follows the same general pattern. After describing a few village *matsuri*, the basic pattern of this religious phenomenon will be more evident. In each case we need to know a little of the historical and social background of the area in order to understand the communitarian aspect of the *matsuri*.

*Kamimura Shimotsuki*¹¹ Festival

December 11th . . . up in the mountains of Nagano Prefecture where the first snow has fallen . . . a little village of perhaps three hundred people, one main street, a few farm houses and shops, a village office, not even a restaurant . . . time stands still here. The sun is setting as I arrive and already the sound of

8. *Shinza*: Place where the *Kami* is on a particular occasion or *matsuri*.

9. *Mikoshi*: Usually translated as "portable shrine." Actually it is a divine palanquin. An ancient vehicle used for a deity when travelling, visiting, or moving to a new shrine. When *mikoshi* are used, they are accompanied by priests and large numbers of people in procession dressed in ancient costumes and carrying various articles in their hands.

10. *Yudono*: Literally means "hot water place" implying a bathing area. Used in *Yudate*, a ceremony in which water is boiled and the hot water is sprinkled on the people to signify the casting off of impurities by bathing in the sacred hot water.

11. *Shimotsuki*: Literally "frost month" (November) A folk thanksgiving festival of rice, held during the period from 15th to 24th November, according to the moon calendar.

the big drum in the old Hachiman¹² shrine mingles with the roar of rushing water in the nearby mountain torrent. All else is quiet, even the children are hushed into expectant silence. . . . Night comes quickly in this little mountain valley, and with it the rain. . . .

Hunters were the first inhabitants of the area, for deer, wild boar and bears abounded. According to legend, the hunters one day saw a group of strangers in the mountain, six men and a woman who begged for shelter. One of the strangers, a tall, dignified old man with a long beard, named Okuye, explained that they had all been exiled from the court at Nara to Azuma-no-Kuni (Kanto) but had lost their way. The hunters sympathized with them and invited them to settle in the area. The strangers did so and taught their guests how to farm. As my informant added significantly: "The hunters brought salt from some unknown area and life in the village began"—indicating the importance of such a commodity in those days. Gradually a little village developed around the confluence of two mountain streams. Five *Kami* were specially worshipped—water, fire, wood, earth and metal.

Though all documents have been burnt through several fire accidents, another legend speaks of the Juntoku Tenno Era about 950 years ago. A certain Sakumaru claimed descent from one of the original hunters of the area and became leader of the village. One day a strange beggar came to visit him, asking for shelter, saying "I am on my way to Fuji-Sen-Gen-Daijin¹³ to pay my respects of Kono-Hana-Sakuya-Hime" (wife of Ninigino-Mikoto¹⁴). At first Sakumaru refused to give him shelter, but later he relented. Next morning the beggar continued on his pilgrimage to Mt. Fuji. Six months later he returned, bringing a small stone from Mt. Fuji for Sakumaru in gratitude for

12. *Hachiman*: Generally refers to the three deities Emperor Ojin, Empress Jingu, and Hime-gami, which were first enshrined in the Usa Hachiman-gu of Oita Prefecture and thence came to be enshrined in many Hachiman shrines around the country. Besides being worshipped as the deity of war, the deity Hachiman is the object of deep devotion by many classes.

13. *Fuji Sen Gen Daijin*: The Kami of Mt. Fuji.

14. *Hiko-Ho-No-Ninigi-No-Kami* married *Kono-Hana-Sakuya-Hime*. Her father cursed *Ninigi*, the heavenly ancestor of the Imperial Clan, with a mortal life for having rejected his eldest daughter *Iwa-Naga-Hime* "because of her exceeding ugliness". *Kojiki* 1:41.

his hospitality. It is still treasured as a *go-shintai*¹⁵ in the village today. However the villagers discovered that the pilgrim was not a beggar, but a very scholarly court official, named Kumano Sennin. He remained in the village for a time and then returned to Kyoto, accompanied by a few of the villagers who worked as *toneri*¹⁶ for a time. Kumano taught them about Emperor Ojin whose birth was heralded by eight flags coming from heaven.¹⁷ By this time his cult as Hachiman had spread far and wide. Kumano also brought them to a *Yudate-no-mai*¹⁸ *matsuri*, explained its significance and gave them five masks to bring back and use for their village *Yudate* in the future. They are still used today and kept with great care in a small storehouse (*okura*) on a cliff overlooking the river, shrine and village.

The region was very mountainous, but the farmers cut down or burnt some of the trees, planted grain and lived up in the mountains until the harvest, after which they came down to the village and had a thanksgiving festival. This was the beginning of the *Shimotsuki matsuri*. At first it was called the *Katsugi matsuri*¹⁹ because the men and women were allowed to mate freely on this one day of the year.

Preparations for tonight's *matsuri* have been in progress for several days, with all the village involved: making *shimenawa*²⁰ and decorations, collecting firewood, rice and rice wine (*osake*), constructing the *yama* (mountain), cleaning the two cauldrons, practising the music and dancing. Young and old do what they can under the direction of the *matsuri* committee.

15. *Go-Shintai*: An object of worship in which the spirit of a deity is believed to reside, or a symbol or medium of the spirit of a deity. *Shintai* is of Chinese origin; in Japanese terms it is called *mi-tama-shiro*. *Go-shintai* is a polite way of saying the same thing.

16. *Toneri*: A male court attendant of low rank who served the person of the emperor or princes of the blood. (*Kojiki* glossary)

17. *Ojin*: See *Nihon Shoki* Pt. 1 Bk X and *Kojiki* Bk 2: 91. Neither of these books speaks of flags, but *Kojiki* gives other evidence of his special birth: "When he was newly born there was a piece of flesh on his arm which resembled an arm-guard. . . . Thus it was known that even in the womb he ruled the land." *Kojiki* 2:91:6-7.

18. *Yudate-no-mai*: (lit. hot water round dance) Further explanations follow in the text.

19. *Katsugi* Lit. catch.

20. *Shimenawa*: A sacred rope strung before the presence of a god or sacred area in order to mark off the entrance to the area and keep impurities out of the boundary. Made of twisting new straw into rope, to which is hung paper strips called *shide*.

There are no hereditary roles except perhaps in the artistic field, but even there it is not necessarily so. Talents and the desire to use them are the only essentials. The greatest care is taken in the construction of the mountain. Its shape is in the form of the Japanese ideograph meaning 'eight'. This symbolizes the eight directions (*hakkô*), a word which means universal dominion for Japan. The soil must be pure, that is not used before (*hinatsuchi*). Twelve men with A-frames on their backs bring in the soil from twelve directions, representing the signs of the zodiac or the months of the year. Water is brought from a spring, underground water being considered sacred and mysterious. Several bundles of rice straw are collected and cut into 365 pieces, corresponding to the days of the year. Thirty balls of clay and straw, representing the days of the month are molded into a mountain. The rope which binds the mountain represents the number of stars in the universe. Using their hands to measure the length of the rope, they count the mystic numbers 7, 9, 28. The two cauldrons (*saguri gama*) represent the sun and the moon.²¹

Fire in ancient times was not only important but mysterious. The most onerous positions in the village were the fire-keepers who were appointed to see that the village fire remained alight. As fire and water are essential for life they are considered sacred during the *matsuri*. Fire must be clean and new, that is good wood should be used, and the fire should be sparked from flint. The combination of fire and water is, at first, a gesture of entertainment for the *kami*, asking them to refresh themselves in the hot water, so the whole area must be carefully prepared. This is done in the *Yoi-matsuri* (Eve) when the fire is lit and the water, cauldrons, roads, forest and shrine are thoroughly purified. To welcome the *Kami* various *Kagura*²² are danced. *Michigiome* (cleansing the road) is sung while salt

21. Information about this construction was supplied by the *Shamori*, the caretaker of the shrine for the past 50 years, whose special duty it has always been to oversee this work. However in the brochure supplied by the village office slightly different ways of construction are given.

22. *Kagura*: A performance of classical, religious, and ceremonial music and dancing in Shinto. Origin is attributed to the performance of the heavenly gods on the occasion of *Amaterasu-O-Mikami*'s seclusion in the cave, by which they succeeded in causing her to re-appear; performed in order to pacify, console and give pleasure to a deity.

is thrown and the *harai*²³ is performed with *harai-gushi*²⁴ on all that is used and on all the area along which the various *kami* pass on the way to the *matsuri*. *Kamimukai* (Welcome to *Kami*) is sung as all are seated, waiting for their guests: "We have purified all for you, so please come to the festival." In *Niwanarashi*²⁵ they sing: "We have prepared the mats. Please seat yourselves." Sacred wine (*omiki*) is then offered, and the *kami* are asked to step on the area and drive away all evil. Preparations for the *Hon Matsuri* are now completed. They have invited many *kami* from far and near, read out the names of the big shrines of Japan so that when these *kami* come to the feast tonight, the people can ask them for many things. Then very simply, they ask all the *kami* to go back once in the *Kamikaeshi* (sending back *kami*). Now as darkness falls, all is in readiness for the great moments of special communion between *kami* and man. . . .

7 p.m. The tempo of the big drum increases, young and old pour into the main hall of the ancient shrine.²⁶ It is not the usual shape of the *Haiden* as the main room is specially designed for this *Shimotsuki* festival, and the *Honden* is enclosed within the outer walls of the *Haiden*. Paper cut in a special way is festooned everywhere. Those representing *Kami*, man, nature, the shrine, fertility symbols hang from rope (*shimenawa*) which marks the centre of the room as the sacred place for the cere-

23. *Harai*: The purification ceremonies of Shinto; the removal of all sins, pollutions, and disasters by praying to the gods; the return to a condition in which one can approach the gods, by purifying body and mind. *Harai* always precedes religious ceremonies. By *harai* also, evils and mishaps are removed from the whole nation and people, by which new life begins and the blessings of the gods are brought down.

24. *Harai-gushi*: One of the implements used in *harai*. It is a wooden stick to which paper streamers or linen cloths have been attached; by waving it to the left, right, and left, pollution is purified.

25. *Niwanarashi*: Lit. making the garden flat or smooth.

26. Shrine: The shrine is composed of three types of buildings: the *Hondon*, where the spirit of the deity is enshrined; the *Heiden*, or *Noritonden*, where the religious rites are performed; and the *Haiden*, where the faithful worship and offer prayers. The *Honden* is sometimes called *Shinden* or Sanctuary, and in the Grand Shrine of Ise it is called *Shoden*. The various shrines of today are all constructed in different styles, according to their various histories, but it is safe to regard them as being, in general, variation on this fundamental style. The first shrines consisted solely of a *Shinden*, as we see in the Grand Shrine of Ise, the spiritual head of all shrines where there are no buildings corresponding to the *Heiden* and *Haiden*, but the *Shoden* stands in the centre of many layers of enclosing walls.

mony (*yudono*; hot water area), and symbolizes the *kami* who protect them. In the centre of the *yudono* the sacred fire is now blazing in a cave of a small earthen *yama* (mountain) with a *gohei*²⁷ decorating it, indicating its sacred character. Two cauldrons (*saguri gama*) are encased in this *yama*. Around them also hank thick *shimenawa* (rope). The wooden lids have fresh bamboo leaves firmly attached. All is so simple and earthy, yet so full of symbolism and mystery.

The pure potentiality of water for regeneration needs to be activated with heat or fire. As we know from the Easter Vigil, water and fire have great significance in many religions. The *Kojiki* speaks of the birth of the fire-*kami* when he burnt Izanami and caused her death and descent to the underworld.²⁸ The cave in the *yama* could also signify Amaterasu's famous retreat into the cave when the *kami* danced for her and enticed her out.²⁹ December is the period when the sun is weakest and the *Kagura* is a re-enactment of the dance of the *kami* to entice the sun out of the darkness. The water-*kami* is connected with irrigation and fertility of every kind. So the *Yudate* rite is considered by some to be an hierogamy, the sacred marriage of cosmic powers—the elemental forces of fire and water, *yin* and *yan*, spirit and matter, sun and moon, positive heat and negative cold, male and female, life and death. The mountain and cauldron may mean the womb of Mother Earth. "*Yama o waru*" (split the mountain) in the song they sing, means to be born. The cauldron could signify death, purification or re-birth.³⁰ The whole *matsuri* takes place after dark until dawn because night is for *Kami*, day is for man. Another reason given is that phallic symbols should not be seen during the day.

As there is no resident priest (*kannushi*),³¹ the villagers

27. *Go-hei*: Paper or cloth offered to a god and attached to a stick. Believed originally to have been a method of presenting offerings of cloth. There is also a viewpoint regarding it as a *go-shintai*.

28. *Kojiki* I:7-10.

29. *Kojiki* I:17 also *Nihonshoki* I:40. "Therefore constant darkness prevailed on all sides and the alteration of day and night was unknown." See also Ernest Satow's "Revival of Pure Shintow", p. 29 and 50. Reprint. Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan.

30. Though this dualism is not pure Shinto, but is an ancient importation of Taoism from China, nevertheless it is frequently expressed in one form or another in Shinto *matsuri* today. See T. Immoos, "The Birth of the Japanese Theater", Mon. Nip. XXIV, 4.

31. *Kannushi*: The general term for all Shinto priests at present, but more correctly restricted to the chief priest in charge of the Shrine. The priesthood was for the most part hereditary; in many cases the priests

invite one from the nearest town to begin the *matsuri* with the simple ritual of opening the doors of the *Honden* and offering rice and rice wine (*osake*). He then returns home; everything else is done by the people of the village. The *Yudate* begins with the *uji-ko* leaders, dressed formally in white *joe*,³² gathering round the *yama* and dancing the *hano-mai* as they again invite the *kami* to the *matsuri* with flute and drum. The flute really speaks in the *matsuri*, always directing the people's attention to *kami*. . . . The notes can be the people's call to the *kami*, they can signify his presence among them, or the notes can be man's farewell to the *kami*. No matter what the pitch of excitement in the festivity, the notes of the flute immediately attunes one to the divine, they create an atmosphere of harmony and mystery. As a friend explained "Western music comes from the heart, Eastern music from another world." The experience of this *matsuri* helped me to grasp her meaning.

While the names of sixty six counties, each with its own *kami*, are chanted from the scroll of invitation (*jinmeicho*), several *go-hei* are ceremoniously stuck into the *yama*. In the *Moshiage* the *uji-ko* leaders ask for special favours in the ancient diction of the Asuka period. Some of these words are understandable but others are meaningless, as they have been passed down orally through the centuries. They ask for prosperity such that "the profit we get in the morning may likewise be ours in the afternoon, and the profit we get in the afternoon may likewise be ours in the evening." In other words a three-fold profit. A good harvest for the five grains³³ is requested and a definite amount of rice crop, as well as silk, is respectfully stipulated. These people are realists, and they expect the *kami* to be the same. Having invited the *kami* to refresh

could trace their descent from the chief god to whom the shrine was dedicated, a fact which is easily understood when we find that a large number of gods were simply deified ancestors. From this sense of ownership in the shrine sprang the term *Kami-nushi*, owner of the god, corrupted into *kannushi*. (Satow. "Ancient Japanese Rituals." No. 1 p. 117. T.A.S.J. Vol. VII Pt. I. Reprint.)

32. *Joe*: A garment worn in religious ceremonies. Worn from ancient times by Shinto priests, but also worn on occasion by laymen when visiting a shrine to worship or during religious ceremonies. Consists of white silk or cloth tailored in the same way as the old hunting garment of nobles and warriors.

33. Five grains were rice, millet (*panicum Italicum*), barely, 2 sorts of beans (*Phaseolus radiatus* and *Glycine hispida*). The Chinese use hemp instead of one sort of bean. (Satow. "Ancient Japanese Rituals." No. 2. Notes p. 444. T.A.S.J. Vol. VII Pt. I. Reprint.)

themselves, special *kimono* (*yugoromo*: hot water kimono), made of *aya* or *nishiki*,³⁴ are offered as they sing: "We are presenting this *kami* with a *yugoromo*."

Kami-asobi, the entertainment of the *kami*, begins with the children dancing around the *yama* in various groups for about an hour. These dances are the same as those the adults will dance during the night—an excellent method of handing on these age-old traditions. Though all have purified themselves before the *matsuri*, and the main actors have had a period of abstinence too, the *harai* or purification is performed several times during the *matsuri* as well. The first is done by pouring sacred rice wine (*omiki*) into the boiling water and then sprinkling the water on the people with the *go-hei*. *Omiki* or *osake* has always been considered a potent container of *mana*. Purification is the most basic of all Shinto ceremonies because they understand it to mean RENEWAL OF LIFE. The hot water becomes a temporary *go-shintai*, or receptacle for the divinity. The steam, the essence of the water so to speak, is also considered sacred by some—a kind of symbol representing the presence of *kami*—rather like the Pillar of Cloud in the Old Testament.

The dance of the sacred wand, *Gohei-no-mai*, follows. The dancer functions as a *shinza* or *kami-seat* when he carries the wand; he loses his identity and acquires that of *kami*, so he can purify the shrine, the *yama* and the people. Then a group of men use the *yuboku* (hot water stick), or two big *go-hei* stuck together. Several hold white paper between their lips, so that their breath will not sully the purity of the area for the *kami*. As they circle the *yama*, names of *kami* are called out at random, and all the people reply enthusiastically "We are about to prosper." Again increase in family, crops and business is requested. The *yuboku* are put into the boiling water and then used to sprinkle the people. The chant ends with the request: "*Kami*, as soon as you have refreshed yourselves ascend above us."—that is to the *shimenawa* above the *yudono*.

Another form of purification, *Yubiraki* (opening of hot water), with salt and flint is performed by the two most important men of the village, one being the 80 year-old *Shamori*, the man who has looked after the shrine for the past fifty years, as his father did before him. They sprinkle salt, strike fire from

34. Very expensive silk. *Aya* has been found in tombs of the Kofun period. Skill taught by some Koreans who came to Japan in 712. Very colourful, used by the court, woven by craftsmen living in Toneri matchi, north of the Imperial palace. *Nishiki* is the same kind.

flint to purify the area and use *gohei* to drive out evil spirits. The use of special hand positions, *mudra*, is very prominent and indicates *Yamabushi* influence. The *yudono* is purified in five directions in a rather complicated way. As we know the stress on directions is a Taoist importation from China. According to the rules, the first direction is east, as this is considered the source of life. However in Japan the old shrines faced south as did the Emperor as well, therefore all the people faced north. So the *Shamori* and his assistant begin from the north, which is really considered east, as they chant what they should be chanting were they facing east. As the centre is taken up by the *yama* the fifth direction is their original position. This form of purification takes place three times during the night.

Around midnight, during the *Go-ichi-mon*, several sacred dances are interspersed after the five *kami* of water, wood, earth and metal are again specially invited. Spears are used in the *Hoko-no-mai* (round dance of the spear) in honour of the time when Izanagi used his spear to make the "Eight Islands" of Japan. It was originally danced when a shrine was being rebuilt at the time the *go-shintai* was moved. Therefore the four dancers use spears to drive away evil. It is a very simple version of *Azuma-asobi*,³⁵ used in *Gagaku* today, as is also the next dance, *Tasuki-no-mai*. After further invocation of the *kami*, the water is solemnly offered (*Ageyu*). From now on, several times during the night, a long-handled cup (*hishaku*) is used to take water from the cauldron which represents the sun, and bring this solemnly to various houses in the village, first to the old *Shamori*, then to sick persons or to any other house which requested it. Originally the whole *matsuri* used to take place in each home as in the shrine today, but the practice gradually diminished to this purification rite with the hot water, and the offering of special food on the *kamidana*.³⁶

During the *Yu-no-hana* (hot water flowers) they purify the shrine once more and thank the *kami* for protection against sickness and dangers of every kind. The spirit of the *matsuri* has

35. *Azuma-asobi*: Lit. "music and dancing of the Eastern countries." The ancient inhabitants of the Eastern provinces, of whose loyalty anxiety was felt, offered their music as a token of submission to the Court. Still performed in Court and shrines.

36. *Kami-dana*: An altar (lit. *tana*, shelf) provided for enshrining a deity in a part of the house of a Shinto believer. It is customary for amulets of Ise Shrine, the tutelary deity, or of the shrine usually worshipped, to be enshrined on this altar and for worship and offerings of food to be given morning and evening.

to be experienced, it cannot be described. The people are quite uninhibited, sharing in the ritual and enjoying themselves thoroughly at the same time, understanding the sacredness of the ritual yet encouraging the performers with banter and good humour. The village doctor explained, "During the *matsuri* each one returns to his primitive self, spontaneous, free, fun-loving and he forgets about other things. He is thoroughly involved in the *matsuri* as his ancestors have been before him over the centuries." While the *Norito* is chanted, however, there is a sense of urgency—the young men carefully listening to the older chanters and joining with them in the refrain.

1.30 a.m. Mats are placed around the *yudono* and all are invited to the *Nakabarai* or sacred meal. The *Ageyu* ceremony has heated the *omiki*, so this is passed around in tiny bowls and then *omochi* (rice cakes) and small dried fish are eaten. *Omochi* symbolizes the produce from the land, fish that from the sea and river. By sharing in the *kami*-containing food, the COMMUNITY is united with the *kami*. This is the heart of the whole *matsuri* dynamics. "The essential motif of the *matsuri* is the renewal of the life-power of the deity and simultaneously of human beings through a set of symbolic collective actions in which the people invite the deity and do their best to enrich his benevolent power so that their own lives might participate in it."³⁷ As I watch these radiant faces around the fire I recall St. John: "The Word was the True Light that ENLIGHTENS ALL MEN . . ." the mystery of the Word made Flesh dwelling among us here and now . . . it is still a mystery but a very dynamic one as I sit here and watch the steam enveloping us and hear the people asking *Kami* to do the same through his protection. . . . "If the *kami* are happy, men should also be happy and should show it," explained the old *Shamori* with a beatific *Okina*³⁸ face. The *Kakiyu* dance follows in which the water is twirled with wand and bell—both symbolic of *kami*. The steam is called *yubana* or water-flowers, and from the manner of its ascent can be divined the harvest of the coming year—another Taoistic influence. In the *Sasamai* the sacred water is again sprinkled on the people.

Around 3 a.m. the *Shizume-no-yudate* is performed. This

37. Minoru Sonoda, "Shinto Festivals in Urban Society" unpublished paper.

38. *Okina*: Old man. In the world of legends, a god often appears in the form of a venerable old man. This is true also in the world of music and drama. The *Noh* play, *Okina*, revered as sacred, is especially famous.

is Ryobu Shinto, as they call on Buddha, as well as the *kami*, ancestors, animals, plants, insects, mountains, rivers, books, machines, farm instruments, kitchen utensils, anything of importance to them, to bring them peace, to soften their hearts, to live in harmony together. Again the feeling of urgency is evident, for this ceremony must be done very carefully otherwise the *kami* may punish their families. Here they propitiate the *ara-mi-tama*, the wild spirit of *kami*, and call out the *nigi-mi-tama* or benevolent and peaceful spirit.³⁹ The final prayer is the *Shinrabansho* in which they call on the spirits of all the dead, even the animals, offering them consolation and entertainment during the next few hours in the masked dances, the *Shiryo Matsuri*. A deep sense of gratitude towards their ancestors is but another way of showing appreciation for the gift of life, so very naturally they ask for the help of these ancestors during the coming year, so that they, too, may pass on this wonderful gift of life to the next generation.

Those who are going to dance with masks perform *misogi*⁴⁰ once more, by purifying themselves in the icy river below the shrine, then they return and dance. Now that the community have become one with *Kami* through the sacred meal, *Kami* comes in the form of these masked dancers to show appreciation and to promise protection. As each dancer puts on his mask he becomes a *shinza* or *kami-seat*, so that *Kami* functions through

39. *Ara-mi-tama* is a spirit empowered to rule with authority; *nigi-mi-tama* is a spirit empowered to lead to union and harmony; *kushi-mi-tama* is a spirit which causes mysterious transformations; and *saki-mi-tama* is a spirit which imparts blessings. These are called together *shikon* or "four spirits." A *kami* possesses all four spirits. In ancient Japanese, beside the word *tama*, the words *mono* and *mi* also meant spirit. *Mono* and *mi* are low spirits, but there are many points that are not clear about their meanings and mutual relationship. *Tama* is a divine or semi-divine spirit, such as the *mi-tama* of a god or a person, the *mi-tama* of a land. The object of religious worship in Shinto is the *tama*. *Mono* seems to be the spirit of animals, and *mi* seems to be a concept viewing objects or bodies as spirits. At present, *mono* is used simply in the sense of being or object, and *mi* means body, fruit or contents of a container.

40. *Misogi*: A practice of removing sin and pollution from body and mind by use of water. Its origin is attributed to the god Izanagi who purified himself by bathing in sea water. There is widely practised a form of austerity in which *misogi* is combined with the Buddhist practice of *mizu-gori* (cold water ablutions). People who have been to a funeral sprinkle salt on themselves; water is sprinkled before the gate of a home or shop morning and evening; and restaurants put little piles of salt at their entrances: all these practices stem from *misogi*. The Japanese customs of washing and bathing are also related to *misogi*.

him. *Kan-tai-yu* is an old man representing the sun, and his nameless old wife represents the moon. They are on their way to Ise⁴¹ and pass by a village *matsuri*. They greet *Kami*, become young again and remain in the village. Is not this sympathetic magic depicting the decline and renewal of the sun's strength?

In the *Hazoroe-no-mai* eight masked figures, representing the Toyama Clan, the *daimyo* or lord of the area, dance to console the spirit of one Lord Toyama who was killed by some of the farmers. A curse fell on them, several calamities occurred because they had killed their lord. Though all the dancers are men, one is dressed as a woman, supposed to be Miya-su-hime-miya, a female *kami*, but actually the wife of Lord Toyama. All the masks look very sad, almost like death masks.

The fox capers around very cleverly to the delight of all in the *Inari*⁴² dance. He is the messenger of *Inari*, the *Kami* of fertility, prosperity and wealth. *Yama no Kami* next dances with a sword. As many of the villagers work in the mountains cutting wood, they feel the presence of the mountain *Kami*, though they do not know his name or anything about him; but they feel the need of his protection. Is not this, perhaps, another example of the "unknown God" of whom St. Paul speaks to the Greeks?

Mizu-no-ô, the King of Water, comes in with the mask of *Tengu*, the long-nosed goblin. He is followed by *Tsuchi-no-ô*, the King of Earth. As water and earth cannot be hurt by fire, they are stronger than fire. Therefore they approach the fire, mix the water, cool it, and splash it on themselves and the crowd. Hot water, they say, is very powerful, dangerous and strong, only *Kami* can control it. They also explain that when ripples

41. Ise: The Grand Shrine of Ise, the *Naigu* and the *Gegu*, are the holiest and largest shrines in Japan. In the *Naiku* is enshrined the Imperial Ancestress Amaterasu-O-Mikami, and in the *Geku* the goddess Toyo-uke-O-Mikami. The *Naigu* was legendarily founded in the year 5 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Suinin; and the *Gegu* in 478 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Yuryaku. It is rebuilt in exactly the same style every 20 years. The Grand Shrine is the spiritual centre of all shrines in Japan, and the rallying point for the faith of the Japanese people. There are many historical evidences of the widespread popular devotion to the shrine, such as the popularity of spontaneous mass pilgrimages and the widespread use of Ise amulets on family altars.

42. *Inari*: The protector of rice cultivation as well as the five grains. In Shinto classics he is designated as Uka-no-mitama-no-kami. This god is enshrined in the Fushimi Inari Taisha and many other Inari shrines; prayers and thanksgiving concerned with fertility are offered.

develop on the water, it is 'cool' enough to put your hand in without being burnt. However, if you are afraid, your hand does get burnt, even then. I noticed most of the masked dancers put their hand into the water, perhaps all of them did. *Hi-no-ô*, the King of Fire, and *Ki-no-ô*, the King of Wood follow Water and Earth to activate the fire again and dance energetically around the *yama*. The crowd catches the spirit and joins in enthusiastically. These four dances form an ensemble called the *Shimen* or *Yo-mote*. Other masked figures of folk lore arrive and dance to the great delight of the crowd. In fact it seems to be a panorama of the whole history of Japan from mythological times to the present. I sensed their feeling of responsibility towards this long tradition which must be transmitted into the future.

Metal is the last of the five elements to be honoured. As dawn nears *Kinsan-no-mai* is danced. *Tenpaku* comes in all his masked beauty and dances among the enthusiastic throng, solemnly making the ideograph for "granted" with his head in answer to all their petitions. This can be a truly ecstatic moment as the villagers formally send him off in *Kami Okuri*. New life and hope are the gifts he leaves. The old *Shamori* took this part as he has done for many years. When I talked with him later I felt he did not need the *Tenpaku* mask, as he himself radiated the same beautiful smile.

Next a dancer with a sword appears, symbolically cuts the *shimenawa*, destroys the *yama*, faces the five directions, thanks all the *kami* and asks them to return next year. Dawn breaks over the mountain peaks . . . *Asobi-nusa* begins. Each one throws specially cut paper up to the *shimenawa* decorations above the *yudono*. As many of these are phallic symbols, good luck comes to those whose paper remains up there. All clap their hands, sit around the *okama* and share a simple meal, while a few devotees put their hands into the water in their ecstatic desire to become one with *Kami*.

Life . . . how strongly Shinto affirms LIFE. . . . The central dynamism of its ritual is the communication of man with *Kami*, its festivity excites the life-animation of both *Kami* and people. The deeper the ritual communication, the more dynamic the life-enrichment. As I walked through the rain-drenched village and smelled the freshness of the pines in the crisp early morning air, it seemed to me that I had caught a glimpse of the vitality, harmony and strength of Japanese life down through the ages by this great experience of the *Shimotsuki* festival.

*Ochiai Harukoma Festival*⁴³

Situated in the mountainous region of Yamanashi Prefecture near Mt. Kaikan, the little village of Ochiai lies at the junction of two sources of the Tamagawa River. In olden times the inhabitants mined gold from Mt. Keikan, but when the ore gave out about 400 years ago, the miners moved to the present site of the village and became fire farmers, growing grain for soba. Beginning to feel the need of money in Meiji Era (1868–1912), they cut down the great trees of the surrounding forest and sold the wood in Enzan, the nearest town—quite a dangerous journey over the mountains. This first contact with the economic life of the nation wrought many changes in their way of life. The forest was national property but they continued to steal the wood. In Meiji 40 (1908) after serious typhoons and floods, the central government gave this area to Yamanashi Prefecture. Five years later this prefecture sold the area to Tokyo because the Tamagawa River is an important source of Tokyo's water supply. Since then the inhabitants are employees of Tokyo *To* as forestry guardians, cutting and replanting trees whenever necessary.

Three festivals are celebrated each year: *Harukoma* (January 14th), *Suijin* (May 20th) and *Gionsai*, a small autumn festival on September 29th of the lunar calendar. In July two people from Ochiai are sent as representatives to worship at Mt. Fuji. As the mayor explained there used to be many crazy people in the village "because of the influence of bad foxes. The people prayed to Fuji Sen Gen Daijin⁴² and a Shinto priest put the foxes

43. *Harukoma*: Lit. a spring horse, usually considered the horse that *Kami* rides on. All important shrines have at least one or two horses kept with great ceremony, for example at Ise and Kasuga. Fine horses were supposed to appear out of the water. There are many legends about water-gods, or messengers of water-gods, appearing mounted on horses, particularly white horses. The coming of a white horse, as in this *matsuri*, is also supposed to be connected with the presence of enlightened rulers and the appointment of wise men to important posts in the government. When praying for rain it used to be the custom to cut off a horse's head and throw it into a deep part of the river, or to present black horses to various shrines. If fine weather was desired white horses were presented. See Ishida Eiichiro, "The Kappa Legend". *Folklore Studies*: Publ. by the Museum of Oriental Ethnology, The Catholic University of Peking, Vol. IX. 1950.

44. *Fuji-Sen-Gen-Daijin*, the popular name for *Fuji-Sen-Gen-No-Kami*. In the beginning Fuji San itself was worshipped as *Kami*; later a shrine was erected for the *Kami* of the mountain. The *Kami* was called

in bamboo *tsutsu* and buried them in the earth." In gratitude for this deliverance the village sends pilgrims to Mt. Fuji every year in summer. The problem of insanity through close consanguinity in such a closed society has been solved since the Meiji Era, when brides began to come from Enzan and even Kofu. At present the people appear to be very healthy, and the children remarkably alert and active.

The original shrine or *motomiya* dedicated to *Yama no Kami* is up on Mt. Keikan where they used to dig for gold. No one knows the specific *Yama no Kami* to whom the shrine is dedicated, but there are two golden mirrors as *go-shintai* in the shrine. This is rather surprising information because the *go-shintai* object, kept with such care in each *Honden* is or should be a closely guarded secret, to prevent any possible idea of idol worship creeping into Shinto. In the village there is no shrine building or priest, but a very simple sacred place or *seichi*⁴⁵ on a small hill overlooking the river. It consists of a few stone steps leading up to a sacred stone (*iwasaka*⁴⁶) and a sacred tree (*shinboku*⁴⁷). Unfortunately Tokyo Municipality has erected a tall steel fire tower on top of this very hill. However it is still the sacred place for the village and with typical adaptability the villagers installed a beacon light on top of the tower and floodlit the area for the *Harukoma Matsuri* of January 14th.

Around the end of the year the people begin preparations for the *matsuri* as they have done for centuries, but on January

Kono-Hana-Saku-Ya-Hime-No-Mikoto (female) (meaning: open flowers on the tree). The inner shrine, the Okumiya Shrine, is on the top of Mt. Fuji and is the root shrine of some 1,016 shrines all over Japan. The sacred place for the appearance of *Kami* is from the eighth station to the summit. The original shrine is at Fuji no Miya city in the Sen Gen Jinja where the *Kami* of Fuji is enshrined.

45. *Seichi*: "Sacred place", a holy area separated from common ground by religious tradition. There are various types, such as natural forests, mountains, and rocks, as well as artificially produced *iwa-saka* or stone circle, and some of them reveal the most primitive form of Shinto shrines. For example, the Omiwa Jinja even now has the mountain as its *shintai* or symbol of the divinity; in other places it is a waterfall.

46. *Iwa-saka*: A place where a deity is worshipped in the open: a spot of unpolluted land is chosen and surrounded with stones. *Kojiki* 1:35, n. 13, 14.

47. *Shinboku*: A special tree or trees inside the shrine precincts. Sometimes *shimenawa* is strung around a tree that is regarded as sacred; and there are also many examples of worshipping a sacred tree as the symbol of deity in the absence of any shrine buildings. Believed originally to have been a tree to which the spirit of the deity descended.

11th things really begin to happen. As they say “*Kami* moves into everyone” (*noruutsuri*). The whole village works together earnestly to make the decoration (*Kikkunji*). Each household makes *ofuda* and the *Kami* comes to each *ofuda*.⁴⁸ These are amulets made of paper with the name of the *Kami* cut into each, and enshrined on the *kamidana*. The *ofuda* are symbols representing the presence of *Kami* and are revered morning and night, praying for *Kami*’s protection.

The *Harukoma* (horse) is made of two baskets. The head-basket is covered with Japanese paper on which are painted eyes and nose. The mane is also made of the same paper. Reins and bit are attached and the basket is tied to the waist of the dancer. Brilliantly coloured material hangs from the belly of the horse to which is attached the *go-hei*. The tail-basket is attached behind the dancer, and sports a handsome linen tail. On the head of the dancer is a wide, white colourfully-decorated *himorogi*.⁴⁹ Both the *go-hei* and the *himorogi* indicate that the *harukoma* is a *go-shintai* or *mi-tama-shiro* in which the spirit of the deity is believed to reside during the *matsuri*. The *Kami* of this *matsuri* is Saruta-hiko-no-mikoto or Michi-no-Kami,⁵⁰ the famous guide of travellers. A visit to this mountainous region would quickly reveal how very important such a *Kami* would be. Another dancer, called *tsuyu-barai*, in a blue *happi*⁵¹ coat decorated with flowers and a *hachimaki*⁵² around his head, holds a kind of wand about two feet long with coloured paper decorations at both ends

48. *O-fuda*: A tablet or amulet on which is written the name of a deity, distributed to the faithful by a shrine. Made of paper or wood. Generally regarded as a symbol of the god, enshrined on the *kami-dana*, and revered morning and night to pray for divine aid.

49. *Himorogi*: A type of *mi-tama-shiro*, believed to be the primitive form of the shrine. A piece of unpolluted land is chosen, and a sacred seat is erected there, surrounded by evergreens. Today it has been abbreviated to an area of the purified floor, where straw mats are spread out and eight-legged tables are set up; in the centre a branch of sacred tree is set up and white paper is strung on it. In *matsuri* these are abbreviated further to what looks like large hats carried on the head, indicating that the person has become a *shinza* or *kami-seat* for the procession period. They are also carried on long poles to attract the *kami* to the procession.

50. Saruta-Hiko-no-Mikoto: When Hiko-Ho-No-Ninigi-No-Mikoto descended from the heavens to take possession of the Central Land of the Reed Plains and rule it, Saruta-Hiko met him and served as his guide. He is popularly represented as *Tengu* the long-nosed goblin. Michi-no-Kami: Lit. *Kami* of the Road. *Nihonshoki*: 11, 17-19. *Kojiki*: 1:38.

51. A short, loose-fitting coat.

52. A piece of cloth, usually white tied tightly round the head.

of the stick. In the *matsuri* he brandishes this wand from left to right before the horse, dancing all the way.

The most prominent decorations for the procession are two big *dashi*,⁵³ ten-foot high poles, ornamented in the five festival colours. *Dashi* are usually pulled on wheels, as in the famous Gion festival of Kyoto. In other places these specially decorated poles are called *mando*⁵⁴ (10,000 lights) as they contain a big lantern and sparkling coloured paper is used on the streamers. As the roads in Ochiai were, until recently, too narrow to pull *dashi*, they use *mando* but call them *dashi*. They are an important part of the fertility rite as a phallic symbol.

While the village is getting ready for the festival, a few people make the arduous trip in the depths of winter to the *motomiya* on Mt. Keikan. All is now ready for the great day, the most genuine expression of the people's religiosity of the year.

January 14th . . . A cold, snowy winter's night amid the pine-covered mountains, only the beacon lights and the lanterns in the two *dashi* lit up the blackness of the night as the people of this tiny village all converged on the sacred shrine area, set between a dark, snow-covered mountain path and a rushing torrent below. As we arrived a bonfire was kindled, lighting up the expectant faces of young and old, many little children and even a baby on her mother's back . . . about eighty people in all. The whole group welcomed the two foreigners with great warmth and gracious dignity, and the children grasped our hands and made friends immediately. All chattered excitedly, asking us many questions until the clear notes of the flute were heard calling the *Kami* to come to the festival. Then the drum beat, the *surigane*⁵⁵ clattered, the procession through the village had begun. The *dashi* at the head of the line was followed by the musicians, the *harukoma* and *tsuyu-barai*, the other *dashi*, then the village people, all walking through the snow and ice with the

53. *Dashi*: Large ones are decorated like a stage; pulled or carried over the shoulder. Welcome to *kami*, a sign for *kami* to know where to descend. Originally from *te-dasu*, meaning 'hand held out in offering'. *Kami* descends to mountain, or tree or the top of the *dashi*.

54. *Mando*: Buddhistic word meaning repentance for sins, or light in darkness. Used first in Nara period with the idea that one light of a poor person shines more brightly than 10,000 lights of a millionaire. On top the flower hat or *hanagasa* is the remainder of the top of the *dashi* to invite *kami* to come from heaven.

55. This particular *surigane* was in the shape of a saucepan and was struck with a wooden mallet. There are many types.

haunting music of the flute and drum re-echoing in the silence of the night through the surrounding mountains. It was quite a distance over the bridge, an enchanting walk along the river and up the hill to the first group of houses, where we paused and the women began singing a special song: *Harukoma no Uta*.

Five-*shaku* dyed towel
 Who could it be given to, dyed in the middle?
 Rather than give it to anyone, leave it with the wife.
 If the wife is good, give it even to the horse groom
 Who spends the day at the reins of the horse
 In cold December and sunny June
 With horse bowl at the waist and horse shoe in hand . . .

After the formal request of the householder, the *harukoma* and *tsuyu-barai* entered the first house and danced to the accompaniment of flute, drum and *surigane* while all the women sang outside in the clear night air. In a house where a child was born during the previous year, a little sword was given for a boy, a mirror for a girl. The child then officially became *uji-ko*. Before each dance of the *harukoma* the *tsuyu-barai*, with his special *go-hei*, cleansed the house of evil spirits in the *tsuyu-harai*, for *Kami* rides on the horse and brings new life and health and happiness to each home he visits.

The same procedure was followed in each house as we moved along the mountain paths until we reached the final house where a bride had come the previous year. This was the climax of the procession, called the *mizushûgi*. Here prayers were chanted by a small group of the older men of the village, holding fans in their hands as a sign of congratulations. A little boy, called Benkei,⁵⁶ was then brought across the threshold five times with great ceremony and singing. The first song described how Benkei, holding a sword with a four-*shaku* handle and a four-*shaku* blade, hit Lord Yoshitsune one night, in the middle of Gojo Bridge, Kyoto. Next they sang of a sculler from Kajikazawa who, with a boat made of a mortar with a pestle mast and loin cloth as a sail, journeyed towards the west. The final song was:

A swallow from *Tokiwa no Kuni* came here and made a nest in this house, laid seven eggs and loved them dearly. Male birds were born and loved dearly. Female birds were born and they ate the food. When these birds (children) grow up and become fully fledged, together with their parents, this house will flourish.

56. Benkei: The famous follower of the hero Yoshitsune during the civil war between the Minamoto and Taira Clans.

This whole performance was really a fertility rite. The rule is that the child may be brought across the threshold any odd number of times—3, 5, 7 or more. Some villagers came only for this and offered more *osake* just to see it continue. At the height of excitement, called the *okazaki*, the drum and flute changed tune, and the horse did a final dance. In fact the two *dashi* danced also with their five-coloured streamers, waving in the breeze, scintillating in the light of the lanterns. Everyone danced in the snow and thoroughly enjoyed it. Then we moved back to the shrine area, the bonfire was rekindled, snow began to fall but nobody seemed to notice. The two big *dashi* were back in place, the bonfire lit up the happy faces of the people, children played in the snow, the flames illumined the dark outlines of the pine trees, sparks flashed amid the darkness above and the invisible torrent rushed on below us. A few minutes of "quietening of the spirit" followed when *omiki* was passed around in a wonderfully harmonious atmosphere. All were obviously very happy to share this great experience with two interested foreigners, and after making sure that we were comfortably settled in the village *ryokan* (inn), all dispersed to their homes.

In Showa 29 Enzan City was officially organized from one *machi* and five *mura*: Enzan *machi* and Kamikanemura, Okunotamura, Matsusatomura, Tamamiamura, Ofujimura. One ward (*Ku*) of Kamikanemura, Ichinose-Takahashi *Ku*, consists of three villages: Ochiai, Ichinose, and Takahashi with a population of 100 households in all, of these 30 households are in Ochiai.

As Ochiai extends over a fairly large area, the village is divided into three groups, according to location: *Kami no Kumi*, *Naka no Kumi*, and *Shimo no Kumi*. Each group has a *Kumi-Cho* and a *Betto*. The *Kumi-Cho* is chosen by election in each group; he is responsible for planning and directing any work, while the *Betto* carries out his orders, buying necessary equipment and animating the whole group in village projects. The seven *Kumi-Cho* of Ichinose-Takahashi *Ku* elect a *Ku-Cho* and a *Sodai*. The latter is a kind of general deputy, while the *Ku-Cho* functions rather like the mayor of the ward. Enzan City notifies the *Ku-Cho* in any village business, he in turn notifies each of the seven *Kumi-Cho*, indicating that all seven are equal and each one is completely responsible for his group. Village leaders are chosen for a two-year term of office on January 15th, the day after the *Harukoma* festival. No special requirements are needed for eligibility though officials are usually over forty years of age. All have approximately the same profession, edu-

cation and cultural background so there is real equality. Within Ichinose-Takahashi *Ku* are two primary schools and one middle school to serve the 100 households. Three or four children from Ochiai live in Enzan or Kofu each year in order to attend high school. No one of the village has, as yet, been to College.

There are no hereditary offices in any of the festivals. The three Ochiai *Kumi-Cho* give directions but the three *Betto* really do the work of preparation and keep the musical instruments and other festival gear. After the children graduate from primary school, each boy is asked what role he would like in the *matsuri*. His ability is then tested accordingly, and if he shows aptitude he is prepared for the role of his choice through long years of practice. Musicians learn to play the flute, drum or *surigane*. The girls are taught the songs, and the *harukoma* and *tsuyu-barai* are trained to dance. Each role in the *matsuri* is therefore performed with accomplished artistry, reverence and infectious joy.

Only in Sado Island and around Enzan are horses used for this *matsuri*, which in other parts of Japan is the well-known *Shishi-mai* (lion dance). Takeda Shingen, Lord of Kai no Kuni, present-day Yamanashi Prefecture, before departing for war just before the time of Hideyoshi had the people perform the horse dance, asking *Kami* for protection. Was this the origin of the use of the horse in this festival? Or did the custom come from the Keikan miners? And if so, why? These questions have not, as yet, been answered. However the custom continues in the area today, though Ochiai holds to the tradition more strongly than in the surrounding villages.

The only other important festival of the year is *Suijinsai* on May 20th. All the people of the ward come to Ochiai to share in this *matsuri*, and the expenses are paid by Tokyo Municipality in gratitude for Ochiai's protection of Tokyo's water supply. Underground water and, therefore, the source of a river is always a sacred place. Formerly the *Shikai-giin* used to arrive from Tokyo on 20 horses, bringing entertainment and food, and were responsible for the whole festival. Around 1945 a law was passed forbidding government officials from taking part officially in festivals, so Tokyo now gives money instead. Formal invitations are sent to the *Shikai-giin* and *Shôbôdan-in* (fire department) of Enzan and to the neighbouring mountain villages of Tabayama and Kosuge which belong to another district.

Tokyo officials and the *Sodai* of the ward first discuss the general character and entertainment of the *matsuri*, the *Sodai*

then notifies the *Ku-cho* who in turn notifies the *Kumi-cho*—three from *Ochiai*, one from *Takahashi* and three from *Ichinose*. The encumbent *Sodai* is from *Ochiai*. Each *Kumi-cho* then notifies all in his group about the necessary preparations and roles, and explains what form of entertainment will be provided. Dancers usually come from Tokyo. Before the *matsuri* the *Sodai*, *Ku-cho* and the seven *Kumi-cho* get together and sweep the shrine area, purify it and put up flags and *shimenawa*. Purification of the people is done with the *go-hei* and by the drinking *omiki*. There is no *misogi* for any of the festivals, probably because the water is at the source of the river and therefore sacred. The sellers of food, toys and other amusements are also purified by drinking *omiki*.

The *Gionsai* in September of the lunar calendar is a very small home festival in honour of the *uji-gami*. Village life and entertainment revolves around these festivals; for death and burial they go to a nearby Buddhist temple of the *Zen* sect. Without the help of any Shinto priest or even a shrine building they carry on the age old worship of *Yama no Kami* because they have experienced him in their lives, feel the need of his protection, and wish to express their gratitude and joy for the gift of life.

*Shimoakatsuka Ta-Asobi*⁵⁷ Festival

Shimoakatsuka is a fast developing suburb on the outskirts of Tokyo near Narimasu. Until recently Akatsuka Castle stood nearby. About 500 years ago the lord of this castle, Chiba Yoritane built the shrine, dedicating it to *Take-mi-na-kato-no-kami*. This is a branch shrine of the famous Suwa Jinja in Nagano Prefecture. According to *Kojiki* *Take-mi-na* opposed the messengers of *Amaterasu-no-mikami* when the *Kami* asked for the submission of the Central Land of the Reed Plains. "He came bearing a tremendous boulder on his finger tips and said, 'Who

57. *Ta-asobi*: A performance carried out around the full moon of the New Year in which the whole process of rice-cultivation is carried out in pantomime from beginning to end in order to pray for a plentiful harvest. There are three components of *Ta-asobi*: the unseen Spirit on the mountain who comes to give fertility; the secular inhabitants who are begging *Kami* for fertility; the relationship between the *Kami* and the desires of the secular inhabitants. This is realized by imitative magic of what the people want to happen during the year: to enjoy fertility of every kind in peace and prosperity.

is it who has come to our land and is talking so furtively? Come let us test our strength. I will first take your arm."⁵⁸ Take-mikadzuchi, one of the heavenly messengers quickly changed his arm into an icicle, then into a sword, and grasping Take-mi-na's arm he easily crushed it. Pursued by the messengers, Take-mi-na fled to Supa in the land of Shinano (present-day Suwa) where he settled down and cultivated the land. As he taught agriculture to the people, he was highly respected and eventually became a *kami* of agriculture, enshrined in the upper Shrine of Suwa, though his belligerent tendencies made him a special *kami* of the *Samurai* as well.

Though the shrine at Shimoakatsuka dates back 500 years, the origin of the *Ta-asobi matsuri* is lost in antiquity. The rite began in the rice fields before ever shrines were built or Shinto organized. By imitative magic the farmers acted out what they wanted the *Kami* to do for them during the year—ward off evil in the form of natural calamities, sickness or death, and give bountiful life and fertility in flourishing descendants and agricultural productivity. These primitive people experienced *Kami*'s presence in nature and in their work, so they marked off an area sacred to *Kami* and worshipped him there, where they found him most easily. This was the beginning of the shrine area, though it was a long time before shrine buildings were erected, possibly only when Buddhism came to Japan with its statues and temples. Shinto, with neither statues nor idols, did not need buildings. The term *Shinto*, the *Kami* Way, came to be used only then to distinguish it from *Buppô*, the Way of Buddha. Organization of the shrines began, but the people continued to hold their festivities in the fields and forests as they had always done.

During the Heian Period (794–1185) the music and dancing of *Ta-asobi* was developed into *Dengaku* which later became *Dengaku Noh* with much influence from *Sarugaku Noh*.⁵⁹ However from a dramatic point of view, the Medieval Period (1450–1600) saw its gradual decline because its *raison d'être* was ritualistic performance rather than dramatic development. True to its origins, *Ta-asobi* is still performed by farmers in the rice fields even today. In Shimoakatsuka the farmers held this *matsuri* for many centuries before the shrine was built, and even then only gradually did they begin to use the shrine garden for the celebration because of more intensive cultivation of the land.

58. *Kojiki*: 1:36.

59. Inoura Yoshinobu, *A History of Japanese Theater 1*, Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, Tokyo, 1971, pp. 49–50.

All the *uji-ko* of the area take part, though the Dai Mon area, contiguous with the shrine, plays the main role in the *matsuri*. The parish is divided into eight regions, corresponding to the same divisions of the *chokai* groups. The *Chokai* has nothing to do, officially, with the shrine, but is a self-governing body of men who try to make the town a happy place to live in, so they assume many functions such as youth organizations, fire prevention, and road construction. The shrine has strong ties of friendship and co-operation with the *Chokai*, but shrine affairs are conducted by the *Sodai* and the *Sewanin*. The *Sodai* is a decision-making body of ten members who are elected from believers who also belong to the *Chokai*. They can be of any age over 20, but in reality they are over 35, the average age is 55 and the oldest is 78. The *Sewanin*, with a membership of fourteen, are chosen from the same group of believers who are also *Chokai* members, but they are a little younger as they carry out the decisions of the *Sodai*. Both groups are influential people who are *Chokai* officers or who are likely to be some day. They have a three-year period of office. One *Sodai-Cho* or President is elected according to intellectual ability and economic or political influence.

The *Somakanai*, an hereditary position, is the general manager of the *matsuri*. As he explained, the *matsuri* is always held on the same date with the same people and the same events, so there is not much need for special long-range planning. They even have a special word for it 'seshu', meaning the same thing from generation to generation. Money for the *matsuri* is collected in differing amounts according to the number of *uji-ko* in each of the eight regions, then the *Somakanai* who receives it, buys what is needed for the *matsuri*—rice, paper, rope, *osake*, bamboo and wood of various kinds. His home is a beautiful century-old farm house set in a lovely garden beside the shrine. The kitchen was the scene of much activity on the day before *Ta-asobi*. A group of about ten middle-aged farmers in dark blue *happi* coats were there, making *omochi*, singing and pounding in the traditional way, and shaping it into rice cakes and farm implements—hoe, plough and saddle.

In the shrine garden (*mogari*) another group were preparing a 20 ft high bonfire (*Okagari-bi*) of pine and bamboo with *daruma*⁶⁰ and other old New Year decorations. Others were

60. *Daruma*: Bodhidharma, the Zen master who sat in meditation until his legs fell off, is remembered as a legless doll called *Daruma* in Japan. He always rights himself no matter how he falls.

making *yonabo*, straw figures to be used in the fertility rite and then burnt on top of the bonfire. A huge *bonden*, about 15 ft high was prepared—a thick wooden, highly decorated pole with a flower basket (*hanakago*) on top. Both this and the arrows which are carried in the procession, are phallic symbols. The *matsuri* flag (*ho-sai-shinki*) has the year 'Kyoho 20' written on it. The people surmise that the *matsuri* may have been transferred to the shrine in that year. *Hoko* (halbert) of the sun and moon, symbols of agricultural fecundity, were also brought out. The special *matsuri* garden or rice field (*Shinden*) was prepared immediately in front of the *Haiden* with *shimenawa* all around, indicating a sacred place where the *Ta-asobi* would be performed the following day. There was no special *misogi* or purification rite beforehand. Formerly the people did not eat meat, only rice and vegetables (*shojinryori*) for several weeks prior to the *matsuri*, but they do now. Even those who perform the masked dances and other special roles simply practice their singing and dancing in preparation.

Unlike the other *matsuri* I had seen, the priest seemed to be apart from the people and did not participate in the usual manner. While all were busily engaged in the work of preparation, he was sitting peacefully in his home beside the shrine doing some beautiful calligraphy. He even explained to me that he did not agree with some of the things done in the *matsuri*. In fact he appeared to be an outsider, uninvolved but necessary for the beginning of the *matsuri*. The shrine is on the outskirts of Tokyo in an area that is being quickly urbanized. Few farms remain, I could see no rice fields, and roads have been cut right through the shrine area, so that little of its former natural beauty remains, except around the immediate precincts of the shrine. The original shrine was burnt down, but the present *Honden* is about 100 years old. The *heiden*—a small room between the *Honden* and the *Haiden*—contains a big mirror to recall Amaterasu-no-Mikoto's words when sending Ninigi-no-Mikoto to earth: "This mirror—have it with you as my spirit and worship it just as you would worship in my very presence."⁶¹ All the other buildings of the shrine were built in Taisho 10.

On Sunday, February 13th, it rained furiously all day, but it did not dampen the spirits of the participants. When I arrived around 7 p.m. many people were already standing under their umbrellas amid the mud and slush even though the *matsuri*

61. *Kojiki*: 1:39.

was not scheduled to begin until 8 p.m. and it actually started at 8.30. A large proportion of the crowd were young adults. I went into the priest's house where the *Sodai*, the *Sewanin* and those there by hereditary right were formally assembled and were listening intently to the last instructions of the Dai-Mon Chokai President. The *mikoshi* bearers wore special white clothing and were quite old, as this is an hereditary privilege in Suwa Shrine, unlike most places where the *mikoshi* is very heavy and needs strong men to carry it. Fortunately this *mikoshi* was a small one. For the first time I understood the importance of hereditary offices in a *matsuri*. They were really in touch with their ancestors in a special way, living their life, doing the things they did, and therefore in the *matsuri* renewing the life-activity of *Kami* and man together. Communion with their ancestors is one of the most important aspects of this *matsuri*.

After a little *osake* was passed around, these men began chanting; this happened three times after which the priest entered, formally drank the sacred wine and then went to the shrine for the *harai*. By the time we followed through the mud and rain the *harai* was over and the priest was standing in front of the *mikoshi*, dripping wet, chanting a special prayer, absolutely oblivious of everything else. Then the *Chokai* President stood on the big drum, addressed the crowd briefly, and was answered with real enthusiasm; the procession had begun.

The *bonden* with its *hanakago* moved off first, followed by a man carrying bow and arrows (*hamaya*). These phallic symbols and the masked lion (*shishi*) and deer (*shika*), which came next, all drive away evil in every form—sickness, death, natural calamities, pests, accidents, failure in business and the like. The *hoko* of the sun and moon, the flag (*ho-sai-shinki*) and torches came next, with the musicians and other masked dancers. The *mikoshi* with its un-named female *kami* was carried by a group of white clad old men, then the priest, followed by the people—all in the pouring rain. As we reached the crossroads just outside the main *torii*,⁶² the *bonden* was whirled around, the drums beat, the flute echoed through the night and the men called on the *Kami* to come to the festival. Then we moved back another way to the front of the shrine where the *Shinden* had been prepared. At this point the priest left and was not seen again.

62. *Torii*: A distinctive feature erected at the entrance to the sacred area of the shrine, symbolizing the shrine, and separating the sacred precincts from the ordinary ground surrounding it. *Torii* are also erected here and there along the avenue of approach.

Tengu, the long-nosed goblin, representing Saruta-hiko-no-mikoto, the guide of travellers, began the *Ta-asobi* by dancing, but the heavy rain wrought havoc with his red nose and white beard and white costume; he soon looked a gory mess so the masked dances which should have followed were reluctantly called off. The musicians and *Ta-asobi* players then proceeded to the *Kaguraden*⁶³ where they acted out the work of the year with their *omochi* implements to the haunting refrain of old farm songs, accompanied by the big drum. There was a wonderful feeling of good fellowship among the crowd and the actors.

The two main actors were *O-ina-moto* and *Ko-ina-moto* who led the singing as they stood beside the drum which represented the rice field. Prince Shotoku in the early seventh century ordered that land be equally divided among the people and that all farms be registered. Officials were to check this regularly.⁶⁴ The *Ta-asobi* began with the investigation of the farm by officials. Then the men, in dark blue farmers' *happi* coats, went round the drum with hoes made of *omochi*, singing 'Yonanzo,' a song handed down through the ages by word of mouth, which tells how they put the yoke on the oxen for ploughing, how they furrow and sow the seed. Then the narrow passages between the rice fields (*shirokaki*) are strengthened, the fields are flooded, the shoots begin to appear, first two, then three leaves are seen, the seedlings are planted out and the birds are sent away. The words were only partly understandable because of their oral tradition and ancient origin.

At the moment the harvest song began, the big bonfire (*okagari-bi*) was lit and soon was blazing fiercely, despite the torrential rain. The sparks looked beautiful against the black sky,

63. *Kagura-den*: Building in which *Kagura* is performed before the deity. In ancient days *Kagura* was performed in the open place before the shrine, but together with the development of Japanese theatrical arts such as *Noh* and *Kabuki* the same type of stage came to be built in the shrines as well.

64. This is the legend passed down in the area. However I could find no such law passed by Shotoku Daishi, but later Emperors made these rulings: Emp. Kotoku: "Some engross to themselves many tens of thousands of shiro (15.13 acres) of rice land, while others possess in all patches of ground too small to stick a needle into." He tried to combat this evil by forbidding any further sale or rent of land. *Nihonshoki*: XXV:12.

Later came the ruling: "Let the rice-lands which are received and measured be granted equally to the people without distinction of persons." XXV:35.

Emp. Temmu: Let mountains, marshes . . . granted to Princes (and nobles) be all done away with from first to last. XXIX:7.

but I understood why so many shrines have been burnt down over the years. Two masked figures, *Tarooji* and *Yasume*, did a fertility dance. Though *Yasume* was fairly young and pregnant-with-a-cushion, *Tarooji* wore an *Okina* mask which implied not only fertility but longevity and a rich, bountiful harvest.⁶⁵ Two straw figures, tied together, were brought in and danced like puppets, again implying fertility and abundant ears of rice. By now the crowd was thoroughly soaked but obviously enjoying every moment, especially the last two dances. The *okagari-bi* was roaring away, punctuated by small explosions as the fire reached the fire crackers. It was only then that I realized the origin and meaning of fire crackers. Evil was being burnt away, while life was once more renewed for *Kami*, man and nature for the coming year. Though this *matsuri* took place in Tokyo, it was a good example of a *Taue* folk festival. As agriculture gives place to business one wonders how long this situation can continue. At present the old farmers are still there, but their sons are professional or business men. Many newcomers to the area, both young and old, came to the *matsuri* to watch, but they had no roles as these are hereditary. However in true Shinto fashion all caught the spirit of joy and good fellowship and obviously enjoyed the evening.

Renewal of life, purification, communion with *Kami* and man, harmony of nature, man and *Kami* . . . such are the recurring themes in Shinto *matsuri* . . . the basic needs of man are the same . . . we have much to learn from a study of Shinto.

Kurokawa Noh Matsuri

Kurokawa is a little village of about three hundred families on the edge of the Shonai Plains in Yamagata Prefecture. Usually the snow in early February is several feet deep in this area, but this year unseasonable rain had left only a sea of mud, except for snow-covered Dewa Range nearby. Few inhabitants were visible when we arrived; an atmosphere of urgency, of dedication, of pre-occupation with other things was reflected in the faces of those we did see. Silence and expectancy was the prevailing mood of the many visitors as we waited for this famous festival to begin.

65. Rice planting is so intimately linked with *matsuri* that when a rice planting machine was invented recently, the instinctive reaction was one of repugnance—the machine was almost a desecration.

The village is divided into two groups, *Kamiza* and *Shimoza*,⁶⁶ and each puts on a full classical pre-*Zeami Noh* performance in the course of the *matsuri*. All the players are members of farm families so the practice for this event must take up most of their free time during the year. Originally the festival seems to have been *Kagura* dancing which gradually took the form of early *Noh* drama through the influence of travelling *Sarugaku* players. Further development into classical *Noh* through contact with either Kyoto or Kasuga Shrine in Nara seems fairly evident. Though the Muto Clan who ruled the district during the Ashikaga period (1338–1573) were patrons of these performances, today the whole *matsuri* is at the expense of the village. Both groups have their *Taiyu*, the master performer, and their *toya*, the host house where most of the ritual and *Noh* performance takes place. The *toya* for the year is chosen according to the age of the family's oldest member. Only after a life-time of practice and performance can one attain the dignity of *Taiyu*.

The *matsuri* begins just before dawn at the village Kasuga Shrine where all gather to watch the two *ogi-sama* being carried from the shrine to their respective *toya* where each group welcomes *Kami* in a simple ritual. An *ogi-sama* is a thick, long, white pole with a clump of paper strips at one end, representing a tree. This sacred tree is a *kamiza* or *kami-seat* which later becomes a *shintai*—a symbol implying the reality of *Kami*'s presence. In the *Kamiza*, the *ogi-sama* is placed vertically and the *chigo*⁶⁷ is dressed as a boy; while in the *Shimoza* the *ogi-sama* is placed horizontally and the *chigo* is dressed as a girl—suggesting the *yin-yan* principle. Later in the morning the roll call of all the male members of the group is made in ancient Japanese and then all share a simple meal, dressed in old-style *kami-*

66. *Za system*: The medieval merchants succeeded in meeting feudal hazards by forming groups known as *za*, which specialized in the production or transport of certain goods, such as paper, sake, vegetable oils, or salt, or else in certain trades or professions, such as those of carpenters, blacksmiths, or dancers and actors. Through the payment of fees, a *za* would obtain from the various local authorities in its area of operation not only official recognition and protection but also exemption from the barrier taxes. It gave handicraft workers, traders and members of the humbler professions much greater freedom and higher status than they had ever enjoyed before. Many started under the protection of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. (Edwin Reischauer, John Fairbank. East Asia: The Great Tradition. Tokyo: Charles Tuttle Company, Inc., p. 558).

67. *Chigo*: A young child who is permitted to stand very close to *Kami* because of his innocent heart. A symbol of *Kami*'s presence.

shimo.⁶⁸ The venerable host sits in the place of honour beside the altar where the *ogi-sama* has been set up.

When we arrived at 4.30 p.m. already the *Kamiza Toya* was filled with people sitting around the portable stage which had been erected in the main room. All the sliding doors of adjacent rooms had been removed, making it possible for nearly one hundred people to crowd into the home, while others looked in through the windows from outside.

Light quickly faded in the dusk of a wintry day, huge candles were lit around the stage, all other lights were extinguished. *Shimenawa* hung around the room inviting the *Kami* to come to the performance, and making the home a sacred place for the time of the *matsuri*. Silence fell on the expectant crowd. The musicians and chorus took their usual places at the back and side of the stage. Then a little child, the *chigo*, clad all in white, raised his clear, pure voice, chanting about incidents of the village and praying for peace for the world, safety for the country, and blessings of prosperity and fertility for the coming year, in what is called the *Daichi-bumi*. The *chigo* unbound the big *ogi-sama*, revealing it as three-in-one, and then it was carefully arranged in the place of honour at the *metsuke* pillar (front left of the *Noh* stage). Then the child purified the stage with a *go-hei*; flute notes were heard, solemnly calling *Kami* to come once more.

Okina appeared all in white, ceremoniously put on his mask, and danced very prayerfully, asking for peace for the world and blessings for the country. The tempo of the music quickened as *Sanbaso* danced, stamping his feet, symbolizing *Kami*'s desire to get in touch with man. Just as the sounds of the stamping reverberated through the stage, so *Kami*'s influence spread throughout man's life, especially in bestowing abundant fertility. He wore a dark blue *kimono* with a phoenix embroidered in front and a tortoise on the back, symbols of long life and happiness. With fan and bell he danced in the five directions, bending towards the earth, sewing the seed and shaking the bell to drive away any evil.⁶⁹

The full classical performance of five *Noh* and four *Kyogen*⁷⁰

68. *Kamishimo*: The stiff, square-shouldered jacket of the *samurai*.

69. Thomas Immoos, "The Birth of the Japanese Theater", XXIV, 4, p. 409.

70. *Kyogen* reflects the feeling and mode of life of the common people. *Noh* and *Kyogen* differ antipodally in idea, subject-matter, and expression, the relation being that of elegance versus vulgarity, classic versus realistic,

were enacted before an enthralled audience lasting all through the night until 6 a.m. the next morning. As the *Shimoza* was not far from the *Kamiza* this year, it was possible to go from one to the other during the night; but the performance was such a unity that most people stayed in the same place for the whole fourteen hours. Before us were enacted famous myths and legends; *Ama-terasu-no-Kami* danced her joy after leaving the Heavenly Cave; *Tennin*, the divine maiden, poured out her loneliness and homesickness for heaven, and then with revival of hope, her dance became joyous, ethereal, a heavenly moment out of time and space as she disappeared into the mist. Warriors appeared, maidens, dragons, messengers from the Emperor, pilgrims, *yamabushi*, demons, *onigami*,⁷¹ charming little monkeys and a very clever fox, each with a special atmosphere and symbolism to which the audience reacted with understanding born of long years of intimate acquaintance with this superb art. In the final scene, *Shojo*, the sea spirit, danced and praised a simple village boy, *Kaufu*, for his simplicity and filial piety, and then bestowed on him the spring of *osake* which is unchanging and inexhaustible . . . the fountain of Living Water for which all men thirst.

Dawn had crept over the plains as we all quietly left the house. Though further ritual and contests were to take place at the shrine that morning we regretfully had to return to Tokyo. Competitions are often an important part of a *matsuri*. They give an opportunity to set free the *mana* power of the participants and they are also a kind of divination because the winning team gets a good harvest. Everything in this *matsuri* was a competition. The two *Noh Za* not only performed the full classical *Noh* programme during the night, but also in the shrine that same morning each group acted one *Noh* drama. The *ogisama* were returned to the shrine, hoisted on the rafters, and *omochi* (rice cakes) were thrown down from the rafters all in exciting competitions. Homely touches of gracious hospitality were everywhere in evidence, despite the great number of guests. Noodles and *osake* had been passed around among the performers and the audience all through the night, and now a young couple

dance-centred versus conversational, poetic versus prosaic. The two arts of opposite qualities enhance the effect of each other by their very contrast. *A History of Japanese Theater*, 1, *op. cit.*, p.111.

71. *Onigami*: Spirits possessing fearful countenances, great strength and almost human forms. The mental image held by the Japanese of these monsters differs with each period. In general spoken of as a kind of devil.

drove us back to Tsuruoka as no taxi could be found. We had experienced a night of wonderful fellowship with these people: the intimacy of having prayed together, of hearing the pure notes of children's voices chanting in our name to *Kami*, of laughing over the comedy of everyday life in *Kyogen*, of sorrowing together at the 'tears in the heart of things' as each *Noh* drama unfolded, and above all of sharing in the purifying and ennobling solemnity of this profoundly beautiful *Noh* festival.

Each one of us, too
Has a moon of enlightenment
That shines on unclouded
Though we live out our lives
Never suspecting its presence.⁷²

*Kashima Jingu Saitosai*⁷³

Kashima Jingu, one of the oldest shrines in the country, was founded, according to legend, in the first year of Emperor Jimmu's reign. The Jingu is the principal abode of Take-Mika-Duti-no-Kami who became a deity from the blood which dripped from Izanagi's sword-hilt when he slew the Fire-Kami, *Kagutsuchi*. Futsu-Nushi-no-Kami is also venerated in the *Aidono*.⁷⁴ According to *Nihonshoki* he is the descendant of a nameless *kami* who appeared by the Ame-no-Yasu River at the same time. Later when Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami and Futsu-Nushi-no-Kami were dispatched from the heavens to persuade Oho-Kuni-Nushi to surrender the Central Land of the Reed Plains, descending "they unsheathed a sword ten hands long" and proceeded to subdue the land after which they returned to the heavens.⁷⁵ Much has been written about these two *Kami* who are closely associated with each other in shrine worship. The main shrine of Futsu-Nushi-no-Kami is at Katori a few miles from Kashima, and there Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami is venerated in the *Aidono*. Both are worshipped at Kashima and in innumerable other shrines. Though

72. Donald Keene (Ed.) *20 Plays of the Noh Theatre*. New York: Columbia Uni. Press, p. 137.

73. *Saitosai*: lit.: Sacred Leader *Matsuri*.

74. *Aidono*: In cases where several deities are enshrined in the same *Honden* of a shrine, the principal deity is enshrined in the centre, and the altars to the left and right are used to enshrine the subordinate deities. These subordinate altars are called *ai-dono*, and the deities abiding in them are called *ai-dono-no-kami*.

75. *Kojiki* 1:8 and 1:35. *Nihonshoki* 1:16.

in popular worship through the ages they have been considered two separate *kami*, they may be one and the same deity. The *mitamashiro* of both *kami* are swords.⁷⁶

When Kamu-Yamato-Iware-no-Mikoto, Emperor Jimmu, was engaged in founding the Empire, the whole army fell into a strange slumber from poisonous vapours in Kumano district where there were many rebels. The Clan leader of Kumano, Takakuraji, came bearing a cross sword which he presented to Emperor Jimmu. Immediately after this the chieftains surrendered in great numbers and "the rebels vanished like a mist." When asked how he had obtained the sword, Takakuraji replied: "I dreamt the two deities Amaterasu-Oho-Mi-Kami and Taka-Kino-Kami summoned and commanded Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami, saying: 'The Central Land of the Reed Plains is in an uproar. Our offspring seems to be in difficulties. Since this Central Land of the Reed Plains is the land which you alone subdued, you, Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami, ought to descend.' Then he replied: 'Even if I do not descend, here is the sword with which I pacified that land. Send it down! . . . The way to send it down is to open a hole in the roof of the storehouse of Taka-Kuraji and drop it in through there.' Then I was told in the dream: 'When you wake up in the morning, take the sword and present it to the child of the heavenly deities.' When I looked in my storehouse in the morning, as I had been instructed in the dream, a sword was really there. This is the sword which I have presented to you."⁷⁷

This story has great significance in understanding the cult of Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami at Kashima. Though Kitabatake Chikafusa in his *Jinno Shotoki* mentions that the spirit of the sword, Futsu-no-Mitama-no-Kami was removed to Kashima from the shrine of Iso-no-Kami where its sword is enshrined according to *Kojiki*,⁷⁸ the shrine authorities are not certain about the truth of this statement of *Kojiki*. However the National Treasure, Futsu-no-Mitama-no-Tsurugi, is displayed at the shrine but definite records are lacking as to how or when this awe-inspiring sword came into the possession of the shrine. A huge, beautifully-wrought sword with a blade about ten feet long, it is pure and unsullied, a symbol of strength and pacification, rather than blood and battle, according to my priest-guide. In the *Hitachi*

76. Richard Ponsonby-Fane, *Visiting Famous Shrines in Japan*. Ponsonby Memorial Society, Kyoto, 1964, p. 225-6.

77. *Kojiki* :49.

78. *Kojiki* 2:49, 10.

Fudoki, the ancient records of the area, we find a legend recorded: "At the time of the beginning of Heaven and Earth when trees and grasses spoke, a deity who was called Futsu-no-Kami descended from Heaven, and made a tour of Ashihara-no-Nakatsu-Kuni, and when he had pacified the savage deities of the mountains and rivers, he felt a desire to return to Heaven. He, therefore, left his staff, and armour, spear, sword and jewels which he wore, in this place, and riding on a white cloud, ascended to Heaven."⁷⁹ Satow interprets this as the death of Futsu-Nushi-no-Kami.⁸⁰ Be that as it may, legends in the area claim that after Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami had made gentle those who were wild in Yamato and returned to heaven to report to Amaterasu-Oho-Mikami, he came again to the East and made his dwelling in the fertile and beautiful Kashima area. He subdued the wild tribes, taught agriculture to the fishermen and hunters and opened the way to the development of the area. If according to the *Fudoki*, Futsu-no-Okami then returned to heaven, this could be interpreted as his death. His tomb would then probably become the site of his early worship. However this poses a problem. Kashima Jingu is supposed to have been founded in the first year of Emperor Jimmu's reign which was before Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami sent his sword from heaven to help in the Imperial conquest. Was this cult, then, a pre-historic one of a great leader who later, through divination, myth and legend developed into the cult of Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami? The sacred deer of the shrine also point to a much older ritual found in other parts of north-eastern Honshu. Though much of this story is shrouded in myth and mystery, it is quite evident that Kashima Jingu is one of the oldest and most important shrines in the country, emerging from the mist of pre-history as a well-established shrine with a powerful *Kami* who had greatly helped in the development of peace and prosperity of the country.

Another reason for the importance of Kashima is its close connection with the powerful Fujiwara family. According to legend a spirit clad in white garments and armed with a white spear appeared on Osaka-yama and said: "If thou wilt order things aright before me, I will make the country which thou rulest tranquil Oh Kikikatsu and will grant unto thee large countries and small countries." When this divine oracle was

79. Richard Ponsonby-Fane, *Vicissitudes of Shinto*. Ponsonby Memorial Society, Kyoto, 1964, p. 187.

80. Satow: "Ancient Japanese Rituals," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. VI. 1877-8. Reprint. p. 416-7.

interpreted by Kikikatsu as "Amatsu-O-mi-Kami in Kashima says that he will give thee Oyashima-no-Kuni to rule over," Emperor Sujin appointed Kikikatsu the first chief priest of Kashima and sent a sword, mirror, horse saddle and other treasures to the shrine. From this Satow concludes that Kashima was founded in the reign of Emperor Sujin.⁸¹ Kikikatsu was an important member of the Nakatomi family and was chief adviser to the Throne on all liturgical matters. The Nakatomi family subsequently adopted Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami as their *uji-gami*. In the *Hitachi Fudoki* Kikikatsu's great grandson, Nakatomi-no-Omisayama-no-Mikoto, is recorded in a conversation with Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami regarding the boats of the shrine in the reign of Emperor Keiko. Kashima was then an important port for the area. The most influential man during the reign of Tenchi was Nakatomi-no-Kamatari who lived at Kashima for some time; he may even have been born there though sources differ on this point. The site of his house is still shewn at Kashima where a small shrine is dedicated to his honour. In recognition of his great services, Emperor Tenchi bestowed on him the *Kabane* or tribal name of Fujiwara.⁸² It was through this famous Fujiwara family that the cult of Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami gradually assumed much importance, not only in far away Kashima in Hitachi, but also in Kasuga Shrine in Nara which was originally a simple shrine for the Fujiwara *uji-gami*. From Kashima also came the cult of the deer, which was to become so integral a part of the religious life of Nara.⁸³

Messengers from the Emperor and Empress visited Kashima yearly to offer *go-hei* and various gifts. As the Empress was usually a Fujiwara this explains the importance of her offering to the main shrine of her *uji-gami*. The famous *Hitachi-no-Obi* or girdle worn by the Empress at the birth of her son, Emperor Ojin, is still one of the shrine's greatest treasures⁸⁴ and explains why many go to the shrine today to pray for an easy child-birth.

Kashima, at the end of the Tokaido, is over 500 kilometers from Kyoto and took about thirty days to reach, yet in spite of these difficulties the Imperial messengers arrived regularly each year until the chaotic years of the Muromachi period (1333-

81. *Vicissitudes*, p. 191 also *ibid.*, p. 41 ff.

82. *Visiting Famous Shrines*, p. 230. See also Satow: "Revival of Pure Shintau", T.A.S.J., Vol. III, Part 1, 1874. Reprint.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 231 ff. also *Engishiki*, Monumenta Nipponica Monograph, Sophia Uni., Tokyo, 1970, p. 68, n. 213.

84. *Vicissitudes*, p. 210-1.

1568), when despite every effort such traditions could not be continued. Until this period also, the shrine was rebuilt every twenty years as at Ise⁸⁵; but this also was discontinued because of unfavourable economic conditions. At the beginning of the Edo Period (1600–1867) Tokugawa Ieyasu rebuilt the shrine and fourteen years later his son, Tokugawa Hidetada, built the splendid shrine which still stands today. At that time Ieyasu's shrine building was moved further into the shrine precincts amid the magnificent cryptomeria forest and became the Inner Shrine, and the most sacred place of worship at Kashima.

Because of Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami's pacification of the land prior to Hiko-ho-no-Ninigi-no-Mikoto's descent, he became an important *kami* in any military expedition. Before departing for war the general and his men assembled at Kashima Shrine to ask the *Kami*'s protection, and then marched off in battle array. Today this scene is re-enacted every year in the *Saitosai Matsuri* of March 9th. The sixty-six villages of the area are equally divided into two groups, called the villages of the left and the villages of the right. One village from each group is chosen by divination to organize the *matsuri* for the year, so that a specific village will have this honour about once every twenty five years. On the night of divination all the villages that have not had the privilege for 20 years or more are written on paper and then one from each group is drawn. The first man to reach the village with the news that they are chosen by *Kami* to prepare for the next *matsuri*, is called the *senji* and has the privilege of leading his village to the *matsuri* the next year. Divination was a more complicated method in the old days as a visit to the shrine museum will reveal where various divination instruments are on display. The shrine also had a strong tradition of a *monoimi*⁸⁶ or virgin priestess until the Meiji Era (1868–1912). Several other shrines had such a tradition, especially the well-known one at Ise, but none held a position of greater importance than at Kashima.

Once the two villages are named, a year's preparation begins. Arai and Aou were the chosen villages for 1972. Mr. Noboru Nagaoka, the leader of the Aou group explained that about 200 villagers actively participated in the *matsuri* preparation of his village. A meeting of the whole village was called and by concensus they chose the members of the different groups. Criteria for choice is age to some extent, but mostly personality

85. *Engishiki*, p. 117.

86. *Vicissitudes*, p. 213–8.

and involvement in the life of the village. The president and vice-president are chosen from those who have belonged to the ward office. Though the president, the *saiji-iincho*, has the full responsibility of the *matsuri* preparation, he is helped by the vice-president and thirty members of the *iin* (committee) who discuss important matters together and again arrive at decisions by consensus. A small group, called the *Shomu*, are chosen for secretarial work. The fifteen members of the *Kanji* group carry out the decisions of the Committee, especially in training the children for their part in the *matsuri*. From early January until March 9th, the children are gathered in a public hall and taught to sing and make a procession carrying their wooden swords. Five of the oldest inhabitants belong to the *Komon* which is an advisory body, a very necessary group considering the fact that the village prepares the *matsuri* only once in 25 to 30 years. For this reason also there are no hereditary roles in *Saitosai*. The incumbent president was in the middle school the last time the village participated and though he joined in the singing and procession, he did not understand the content. This time as *Saiji-iincho* he needed to consult the *Komon* (advisers) on many points.

Though Arai village by the sea is smaller than Aou which is well inland, it is older and better organized. The village is divided into five groups corresponding to the *kumi-kai* in secular village life. About four from each of these groups are chosen either by consensus or election to form the *Hyogi-in*. A committee set up by the *Hyogiin* chose the president and the three vice-presidents who in turn choose the members of the other groups. The *Sôdan-yaku* consists of three older people who held the office of president or vice-president previously; one older person from each of the five groups forms the *Komon*. Both the *Komon* and the *Sôdan-yaku* are consultative bodies. The five-membered *Kai-kei* and the Committee (*Iin*) carry out the decisions of the *Hyôgiin*. Unlike many villages in Japan today, there are plenty of young people around Kashima, because, with the new scheme for the development of the area, many big companies are moving in, so work is plentiful.

March 9th . . . *Saitosai* . . . As this *matsuri* is a re-enactment of the ancient military departure in time of war, each group assembled at their respective headquarters, not far from the shrine, which they call the *honjin* or admiral's quarters. Nearby the huge cryptomeria forest in which the shrine stands took on an added air of mystery and silence as the overcast sky

turned to a fine spring rain. Through the gloom a single note of the conch shell was heard, and slowly, silently, through the dripping trees came the procession under huge black umbrellas. The *senjin*, the mayor and vice-mayor led the group, each wearing *haori hakama* of the old *samurai* costume and special military hats called *jingasa*. *Gimpai*, lantern and flag bearers followed in the same garb. The centre of the procession was the *Shinbochi*, a solemn-faced little boy sitting astride a gaily-dressed middle-aged man. The boy was dressed in the ancient military attire of an admiral with the arresting V-shaped headgear of his rank. Beside him walked the president of the group, followed by the bodyguard, the go-between of the admiral and the village, and then various groups who had worked in the preparation of the *matsuri*. The silence was palpitating as they filed passed into the *haiden* where an *harai* was performed, *Norito* recited and offerings were made. Just as they left the shrine to return to their *honjin* the other group arrived for the same ceremony. In the old days all the famous military leaders of the country came here to pray for victory before going to battle. Here, too, the soldiers flocked and only after this ritual did they form up in line of battle, return to the shrine in full military regalia and then march off to war. Now the prayer is for peace and prosperity of the country, but the form of the *matsuri* is the same. The serene, innocent faces of the two children, symbols of *Kami's* presence, held a strong appeal by their simplicity and sincerity.

Normally it takes a couple of hours for the procession to reform and return to the shrine, but as the rain continued it was decided to put off the rest of the *matsuri* until the following afternoon, because of the very expensive costumes used. The gaily-dressed crowd of over 200 boys and men from 7 to 45 years old were already waiting in the two inns; they had not gone to the shrine with the 'admiral'. This year, for the first time, ten small girls joined the boys as 'soldiers'. Each costume was a picture. The village provided the basic undergarments for each participant, but the colourful short *kimono* and yards of multi-coloured silk cloth around head, shoulders and waist were paid for by the participants themselves. The cost for each village was at least three or four million yen, not including what was paid for, personally, by each participant. There is great rivalry between the villages as to which group is the best, as this is a kind of divination for a good harvest. All carry long, thick, wooden sticks or 'swords', called *kashi-no-bo*, which they strike together rhyth-

mically as they sing and shout. The town authorities take great care to see that the two groups do not meet, as they use the *kashino-bo* to fight with each other if they do. As the role of *Shinbochi* entails great expenditure, the child does not usually come from the village but from a wealthy family nearby or from Mito or even from Tokyo. Apart from the expensive clothing, the family of the child entertains most of the men of the village after the *matsuri*. Until about ten years ago the village used to give the first crop of rice to the shrine but now, they explained, through better management, the shrine helps the village instead.

Asked what was the significance of the *matsuri* to the village folk, the president of Arai village explained that since all are *uji-ko* of Kashima they have a special attraction to it, adding, "After all, it is *Kami* that the Japanese people rely on." They work for the *matsuri* to fulfill the duty of their turn and to pray for peace, prosperity in agriculture, fishing and business, and safe delivery of children. While agreeing with these remarks, the Chief Priest of Kashima added one more significant motive: "For the happiness and well-being of the people, especially the *uji-ko*," he said. "This renewal of life—*Nakaima*—means that the life of our ancestors is being handed down to our descendants. This life passes through us. We are in the middle of the process and have the responsibility to hand on this life. That is why *Saitosai* has been held for over 1200 years. Japan exists to pass on this life." *Nakaima* is the key concept of Shinto's view of history: the value or meaning of a human being is concentrated in the present which is the focus of the past and future.

Shinto Today

Social Relations

The earliest records we have of Shinto describe a state cult which had evidently emerged from a primitive tribal religion. The old word for government was *matsuri-goto*, meaning a religious observance or worship, thus indicating a lack of differentiation of function between political and religious spheres. The myths described in these records, particularly in *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, show an interesting communitarian aspect which is still found in village *matsuri* today. Though Amaterasu O-Mikami was the divine ancestress of the Yamato Clan and therefore of the Imperial Clan, there was no supreme *Kami*. When any decision was to be made or work done in the Age of the

Gods, all the *Kami* discussed the problem together and acted only when a concensus was reached. For example, the heavenly deities "all with one command" ordered Izanagi and Izanami to "complete and solidify this drifting land."⁸⁷ There was much consultation and divination, but no important work was begun on the initiative of an individual *Kami*. Again when Amaterasu O-Mikami retired into the heavenly cave, the whole group worked together to lure her out and restore the harmony destroyed by Susano-no-Mikoto.⁸⁸

In preparation for the descent of the Heavenly Grandchild, Ninigi, the deities met together. "Then Amaterasu-Oho-Mi-Kami said 'Which deity should we dispatch next?' Hereupon Omohi-Kane-no-Kami and all the other deities said: 'The deity named Itu-no-Wo-Ha-Bari-no-Kami, who dwells in the Heavenly Rock-cave in the upper reaches of the river Ame-no-Yasu should be dispatched. And if not this deity then his son, Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Wo-no-Kami . . .'" When Itu-no-Wo was asked, he replied: "With awe do I comply. However my son Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami should be dispatched on this journey." Not only was this intimate group relationship evident among the heavenly deities but among those of the Central Land of the Reed Plains as well. When the ruler, Oho-Kuni-Nushi-no-Kami was asked if he would surrender the land to Ninigi he replied: "I cannot say. My son Yae-Koto-Shiro-Nushi-no-Kami will say. However he has gone out to amuse himself hunting for birds and fishing at the Cape of Miho and has not yet returned." When enquiry was again made on his return, the son "spoke to his father the great deity, saying: 'With fearful reverence let us present this land to the offspring of the heavenly deities.'" Again they asked: "Do you have any other sons who ought to speak?" When the second son eventually yielded after a fight with Take-Mika-Dzuchi-no-Kami, the father replied: "In accordance with what my sons have said, I also will not disobey. I will yield this Central Land of the Reed Plains in accordance with your commands." Shortly afterwards Take-Mika-Dzuchi "ascended once more and reported on his mission, how he had subdued and pacified the Central Land of the Reed Plains."⁸⁹

Moving into early pre-history we have frequent example of the same group-oriented society where there was open discus-

87. *Kojiki* 1:3.

88. *Ibid.*, 1:17.

89. *Ibid.*, 1:35-37.

sion and concensus and where the Emperor was responsible to his ancestors and his people and made reports to them. Perhaps one of the seventeen clauses of Shotoku Daishi's directives gives the key to the attitude towards group discussion and action of the Japanese people: "XVII. Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone. They should be discussed with many. But small matters are of less consequence. It is unnecessary of consult a number of people. It is only in the case of the discussion of weighty affairs, when there is a suspicion that they may miscarry, that one should arrange matters in concert with others, so as to arrive at the right conclusions."⁹⁰

Turning now to the five *matsuri* under study we find in each case that specific groups of *uji-ko* were completely responsible for putting on the *matsuri*. Even when priests were in residence at the shrine, as in Kashima and Shimoakatsuka, they took no part in organizing the *matsuri*, except in their strictly ritualistic functions. When these were over they disappeared from the gathering. How then were such groups mobilized for action? In all cases an initial general meeting of all interested *uji-ko* took place, when smaller working groups were formed either by election or by concensus. These groups had a definite hierarchical order, the most important being the group that made the decisions; this group was usually called the *Sodai*. Though a president was either elected or chosen by mutual agreement, he had one, two or even three vice-presidents with whom he worked closely, in order to avoid a dictatorship, according to my informants. Leaders of the *matsuri* were usually also members of the ward or village office, chosen for their personality and influence in the community. Until 1945 the *Chokai* or town council usually organized the *matsuri* as a normal part of their service to the community. When this was prohibited by law, specifically religious lay groups were formed just for the *matsuri*, but the leaders are still chosen from the believers who are also *Chokai* members. These men are responsible for the mobilization of other groups according to the nature of the *matsuri*. The next most important group, called by various names in different villages, carried out the decisions of the *Sodai*, organizing the practices of songs, dances and other specialities of the *matsuri*, buying what was needed, preparing the *shimenawa* and other decorations. If it was a small village, as in Ochiai, this group also collected donations, but in bigger villages a special man or

90. *Nihonshoki*, Part 11, XXII:14.

group was charged with money affairs. The money collected might be direct contributions or appropriated from associations according to their budget. In all cases contributions were clearly listed for all to read at the *matsuri*. Balance accounts were also printed and distributed afterwards. In Kurokawa and Kamimura the drama and dances were organized and directed by village masters in the performing arts and needed constant practice throughout the year. Both *matsuri* have been named National Treasures and all the villagers take great pride and interest in encouraging the school children to become skilled in these arts according to their age and ability.

Throughout the discussions and preparations for the *matsuri* the keynote was harmony. Harmony between *Kami*, nature and man is perhaps the very heart of Japanese culture and nowhere is it more strikingly experienced than in a *matsuri*. In the discussions many of these old farmers knew experientially how to use group dynamics without ever having heard the name. Though there was an hierarchical ordering based on respect for elders, all contributed to the discussions and the decisions. Through these meetings the younger members begin to feel the unifying force which links their families into a larger religious and cultural group. Here too, they learn a sense of responsibility to their ancestors, and that "loyalty is not mere passive devotion but active service and performance."⁹¹ These primary values of harmony, loyalty and work which are centered in life within the community are enhanced by the cultural aesthetic-emotional values which are centred in the individual's personal enjoyment in preparing and performing in the *matsuri*.

The only hereditary office in the organization of any of these *matsuri* was in Shimoakatsuka where there was a general manager, called the *Somakanai*. As this gentleman lived beside the shrine in a beautiful farm house over a century old, it was obvious that his predecessors were closely connected with the shrine, perhaps as caretakers. Much of the preparation for the *matsuri* took place in his home, even though the priest's house was just as near, on the opposite side of the shrine. This typical rice-planting *matsuri* had a strong underlying rhythm of ancestor worship. All roles in the procession and *Ta-asobi* were hereditary. Stemming from the patriarchal structure of an agricultural society, ancestor worship formed an extremely strong personal bond unifying the *uji-ko* into a remarkably cohesive group, despite the rapidly changing society around them. This

91. Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*. Beacon Press, 1970, p. 14.

hereditary group had been formed around their *uji-gami* in such a closely knit whole that the newcomers to the area stood apart, acknowledged and welcomed in true Shinto fashion as *uji-ko* because they now lived in the same district, and yet unable to take a vital part with the original inhabitants because of the strongly hereditary nature of this *matsuri*. This also explained in part why the priest did not seem to be part of the *matsuri* as he was from another prefecture and therefore not in his role by hereditary right.

Mobilization of a social group must have motivation if the life and activity of the group is to be meaningful. The two most important motives for the *matsuri*, mentioned by both leaders and participants, were Kami worship and village life. Many villagers explained that they did not understand some parts of the *matsuri*, especially if they had come from another area, but they went each year because they felt *Kami's* presence there. Those with special roles, particularly the Kamimura masked dances, the Kurokawa *Noh* and the *Ta-Asobi* players, expressed their sense of responsibility to *Kami*, to their ancestors and to their community. Older members showed their concern for the youth of the village; many of the younger generation are working elsewhere and return just for the *matsuri*. Their elders want them to carry on these village traditions and to feel the joy and good fellowship of their particular community. Though the elders have important roles in the ritual, the young people are expected to show real leadership in the festivities. In small villages such as Ochiai and Kamimura there are no theatres or other forms of popular entertainment except television, so the preparation and performance of a *matsuri* is really the most important means of developing a communitarian spirit in village life.

Symbolization and Community

The *matsuri* is a ritual-festivity complex, which together forms a symbolic expression of life-enrichment. Both ritual and festivity are vitally important if the *matsuri* is to be authentic and meaningful. From a sociological point of view the clearly defined roles in the ritual show strong social classification, whereas in the festivity this stratification is lost in a fluid communication of life-animation among all the *uji-ko*, developing an internal integration of each member into a larger whole.

The symbolic resources of a *matsuri* constitute both its uniqueness and its basic authenticity as a communitarian reaction before the mystery of Life in all its breadth and depth. The

contextual beliefs are found in the myths at the heart of the particular *matsuri* as well as in the belief of the people in the deity connected with the *matsuri*. "The religious myth is one of man's greatest and most significant achievements, giving him the security and inner strength not to be crushed by the monstrousness of the universe. Considered from the standpoint of realism, the symbol is not of course an external truth, but it is psychologically true, for it was and is the bridge to all that is best in humanity."⁹² A study of the symbolism of the myths used in these *matsuri* is not possible in this paper, however it is important to state that the symbols which the psyche creates are always grounded in unconscious archetypes which are common to all humanity.⁹³ The forms in which these symbols appear reflect the culture of the people expressing them. "The symbol works by suggestion: that is to say, it carries conviction and at the same time expresses the content of that conviction. It is able to do this because of the *numen*, the specific energy stored up in the archetype. Experience of the archetype is not only impressive, it seizes and possesses the whole personality and is naturally productive of faith."⁹⁴

For these symbols to be productive of faith within the community however, they must be understood. With the internal migration from village to urban society going on at such a pace, lack of understanding of these symbols is everywhere evident. For centuries these traditional symbols have been explained and handed on from generation to generation. Now the youth are for the most part moving away from village life, they do not understand the meaning of the symbols used in the ritual and, because of urban entertainment, they do not feel the need for the festivity of the *matsuri*. If they do return to the village for the celebration it is out of loyalty to the community and to enjoy the festivity. Once the traditional symbols lose their real meaning for these young people, the *matsuri* will have little influence on their conduct, and the life-animation between *Kami* and man will be gradually weakened.

The *matsuri* is a rich storehouse of symbolism, not only in the contextual beliefs but also in word symbols, aesthetic symbols

92. C. G. Jung, Collected Works, Vol. 5, *Symbols of Transformation* (trans. R. F. C. Hull). Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1969, no. 343.

93. C. G. Jung, Vol. 9, Pt. 1, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Ch. 1. Also Vol. 11, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, Part 1.

94. *Symbols of Transformation*, no. 344.

and symbolic roles and status. Word symbols can be found as catch-words used on prayer flags, lanterns, symbol-vehicles as well as in the songs and *Norito* used. In each *matsuri* under study, symbolic roles were clearly in evidence. Perhaps the most striking was that of the *chigo* or child-symbol, expressing so beautifully "And a little child shall lead them" or perhaps "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." The masked dancers, the *Harukoma* dancer were *Kamiza* (God-seat) whom the *Kami* possessed with his spirit for the period of their performance. Through their voice and their actions *Kami* dispensed blessings and happiness to the whole community. These aesthetic symbols are a rich cultural heritage clearly illustrating how religion has been woven into every day life in Japan right through the centuries.⁹⁵ The need for *Kami*'s protection in concrete economic activities such as farming and fishing has been the basis for the development of all the performing arts as well as that of literature, architecture, painting and handicrafts. Each art has its own unique symbols used in the worship of *Kami*, expressing in essence *mono no aware*, sympathy with all creatures.

Conclusion

The unseen Being, in terms of Shinto, is expressed in the seen figure or phenomenon, incarnate in man or understood through symbol. Shinto is a religion of symbols. If a person wants to recognize the existence of the unseen *Kami* he needs to see the real being through which the unseen *Kami* is revealed. There is no single incarnation of *Kami*, but many types and varieties. If Shinto man wants to meet *Kami* he is not satisfied to meet an abstraction, he needs the seen symbol through which he grasps the unseen energy or force which is *Kami*. This is not idol worship. There is no special sacred object. Anyone and anything can become a symbol of *Kami* in a particular situation. The symbol represents the presence of *Kami*. For Shinto man the normal rhythm of life and action is from the profane to the sacred.

The nature of *Kami* is revealed principally in the social situation in which the people are gathering. The response is also within the social situation. Though we can discern a common pattern in Shinto *matsuri*, every expression of worship de-

95. See Thomas Immoos, "The Birth of the Japanese Theater", *Monumenta Nipponica*, XXIV, 4, p. 403 for a more adequate presentation of these aesthetic symbols.

pend on the desires of the group in a particular situation. As believers they want to meet *Kami* as a real being. Through co-existence between *Kami* and man they become more fully human. Sacred drama and other forms of *matsuri* expression function as mirrors or imitations of real life. These symbols are good opportunities to reflect on themselves. This reflection becomes the light of *Kami* working in the human heart.

Shinto makes little distinction between religious and secular life. The secularizing tendency in urban society today reveals a growing lack of concern for the basic meaning and value of life. In the villages, however, shrines are still used as spiritual centres of group life. With so much movement to the towns away from the group-life of the villages, and therefore away from their original *uji-gami*, the people often feel socially and religiously alienated. Only through a dynamic group life, can Shinto man experience *Kami* and find his own identity. Only through the community can he find real meaning in life and affirm Life in all its depth and beauty.

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List of some selected terms used in the text with
Chinese characters

<i>ageyu</i> 上げ湯	<i>nakabarai</i> 中払い
<i>ara-mi-tama</i> 荒御魂	<i>nakaima</i> 中今
<i>Azuma-asobi</i> 東遊び	<i>nigi-mi-tama</i> 和御魂
<i>gohei</i> 御幣	<i>norito</i> 祝詞
<i>hachimaki</i> 鉢巻	<i>ofuba</i> 御礼
<i>hakkô</i> 八詠	<i>saitosai</i> 祭頭祭
<i>harai-gushi</i> 祓串	<i>seichi</i> 聖地
<i>harukoma</i> 春駒	<i>senjin</i> 先陣
<i>hazoroe-no-mai</i> 羽摘の舞	<i>shinza</i> 神座
<i>himorogi</i> 神船	<i>Shinra-bansho</i> 森羅万象
<i>hoko-no-mai</i> 鉦の舞	<i>shimen</i> 四面
<i>honden</i> 本殿	<i>shimenawa</i> 注連縄
<i>Jingasa</i> 陣傘	<i>shiryô-matsuri</i> 死霊祭
<i>Jinmei-chô</i> 神名帳	<i>surigane</i> 擦金
<i>iwasaka</i> 磐境	<i>tenpaku</i> 天伯
<i>kagura</i> 神楽	<i>tsutsu</i> 筒
<i>kannushi</i> 神主	<i>tsuyubarai</i> 露払い
<i>Kinsan-no-mai</i> 金山の舞	<i>yoi-matsuri</i> 宵祭
<i>kotodama</i> 言魂	<i>yuboku</i> 湯木
<i>mando</i> 万燈	<i>yudate</i> 湯立
<i>misogi</i> 禊	<i>yudate-no-mai matsuri</i> 湯立の舞祭
<i>mizushûgi</i> 水祝儀	<i>yudono</i> 湯殿
<i>moshiage</i> 申上げ	