At the Sanctuary: Further Field Notes on the Shrine Festival in Modern Tokyo

By

A.W. SADLER

Sarah Lawrence College and Barnard College

The Japanese shrine festival is a flow of events, proceeding out from the sanctuary, with the outrush of *kami*-power in the *mikoshi* procession, and a gradual return to the sanctuary, through the folkdance in the village, and the bazaar on the shrine grounds. The boundaries of time are pushed gently by fairgrounds and folkdance atmosphere, and then with magic force by the sacred mime, *o-kagura*. Finally the priest approaches the sanctuary to thank the god, and seal him in for another year. Here he reverses the steps he took earlier, when he opened the sanctuary doors and invited the *kami* out. *O-Matsuri*, the festival, is a circle; and the rites done before the holy of holies occupy the still point where the flowing line doubles back on itself. The priest, alone and all but unnoticed closes the circle.

But from a priestly point of view, that closing of the circle may seem to be the ultimate moment of the festival, and hence the priest its principal actor. "*Norito* (liturgical prayer) is the core of the festival, one priest told me." "By this, the *kami* is praised. The music that is played there at the holy of holies is not an accompaniment for the *norito*, it is merely diversionary, an entertainment for the god while the offerings are being made." What is the importance of the *kagura* in the festival? I asked. "It is not integral," he said. "It is second-

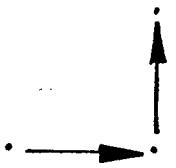
ary." Is the *mikoshi* procession tertiary? I asked. "Yes!" he replied. "It is just so that the *kami* can get in touch with the townspeople."

This priest, a man of great dignity who has palace responsibilities as well as teaching duties, clearly thinks of the holy of holies as the center of the power of the festival, the source from which it radiates in all directions. So the further you are from that sanctuary, the more diffuse is the power of *o-matsuri*: and the closer you are, the more intense is that power. The boys who carry the sacred ark are in the streets or at the town's resting place; the sacred mime is done on stage across the shrine grounds from the shrine itself; but the priest, reciting the liturgy, is in the inner room (or at least standing at the door), at once servant and master to the very force which is the center of the festival. It is a viewpoint one need not agree with; but it is a viewpoint that must be understood, as an ingredient in the multi-faceted event which is the festival. For the festival belongs to all the people: the priest, the mime dancers and musicians, the bazaar vendors, the boys who carry the sacred ark, and their fathers who remember carrying it, the girls and boys who dance the *bon odori*. To the boss of the neighborhood association, the *o-miki-sho* is the focal point of the whole affair; to the priest, it is the sanctuary.

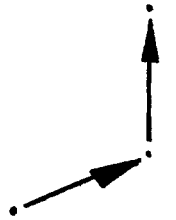
For this phase of my study of the Tokyo shrine festival, I spent my time shuttling between a classroom at the seminary for the training of future priests, and my neighborhood priest's front parlor, observing both the loftiest exposition and the simplest practical application of Shintoist liturgical principles. The contrast was doubly meaningful, for my friend the priest was himself a recent graduate of Kokugakuin, and himself intensely aware of the gulf that separates the seminary faculty, with their ties to the major shrines and to the imperial family, from the humble neighborhood priest, working alone in his parish, barely managing survival for his shrine and for himself and his family.

That classroom at Kokugakuin University was something more than a classroom. It was an enormous practice room. At the far end, as I recall, were three perfect replicas of the in-

terior of a shrine *honden*, or holy of holies, so arranged that three teams of student-priests could practice the liturgy, step by step, under the watchful eye of a master priest. It was there that I took the photographs that illustrate these jottings; for of course the use of the camera is forbidden in any authentically consecrated sanctuary area. The students wear white kimono, *hakama* (ceremonial culottes), and *tabi*. All sit in the most formal manner (almost a kneel), sorted into was rows. The junior professor, a priest at a shrine in Yokohama, calls the roll (each student answers to his name with a peppy "*hai*!"), as the senior professor paces back and forth, making random commentary on the students' appearance ("Ha! Suzuki! So you're growing a moustache now, eh?" Suzuki blushes deeply). Now it is one student's turn to address the imaginary *kami* in prayer. He rises (is a bit wobbly about getting up), and then approaches the sanctuary by walking to the center of the room, taking a ninety-degree turn to the left, and then walking straight to the sanctum doors, thus:



The master priest calls out from the rear: "No, no, Watanabe, not a right angle; you do it like this"—and he executes the correct maneuver:



The young man does it correctly this time, and begins the prayer. All chant it along with him, and the senior professor

goes between the ranks, straightening backs. Two or three students who have not yet memorized the prayer hold folded texts before them. Suzuki, the young man with the moustache, is of course one of them. He is told to hold it up stiffly, not limply. The master priest fussily straightens the white kimono of another boy: collar up, smooth and even; shoulders out, starched, like wings. These are second-year students, all about twenty years of age.

Today's lesson, we are told, will be how to open the sanctuary doors at the *taisai*, the annual "big festival" of the shrine. That is the third step in the *taisai* liturgy. (The prior two, purification or *o-harai* and the bow of adoration, had been covered in previous lessons.) The master priest shows us two ceremonial keys, one large and one small. His colleague demonstrates, approaching the big wooden doors in a kneeling posture. He bows, and places the small key in a removable latch that is set across the massive double doors, and turns the key. He removes the key, and places it on the *hassoku-an* or liturgical table beside him. He removes the latch, and places it on the table. He takes up the large key, bows (Plate I), and places the key in the keyhole located in the lower righthand side of the righthand door. The righthand door is opened first, then the left. In each case the officiating priest opens the door by first placing both hands firmly on its edge and drawing it towards him until it is half open, then turning slightly and (again with both hands) slowly pushing the door away from him until it is fully open. As he does this in one smooth motion, he utters a low moan, which rises to a slight crescendo. That plaintive sound is an invitation to the *kami* to emerge from the holy of holies, and is called the *keishitsu*, or the "cry of awe." Then open doors reveal a hanging bamboo curtain, which the priest now rolls up, in turn revealing another set of doors. The priest bows again (Plate II).

"That is your introduction to the opening of the doors," says the instructor; "now we will demonstrate the closing of the doors." He bows deeply, lowers the bamboo curtain, closes the lefthand door (Plate III), then the right, each time with the "cry of awe." In closing the doors, he pushes from behind,

all the way. He lifts the large key to eye-level, and goes to turn the lock in the right side, then restores and locks the latch-bolt. Taking the two keys with him, he descends the short sanctuary steps, bows, steps backwards three steps, turns, and walks back to his place.

After class I was told: "The body must become part of the door. If it is apart from the door, it will struggle against the door." Daisetz Suzuki did us all a disservice in labeling the Japanese respect for discipline (and all its spiritual consequences) as "Zen." It has nothing to do with sectarianism, and is surely no monopoly of the Buddhists. As I attended these classes in applied priest craft, I often thought to myself: this is a kind of *samurai* training for shrine priests. But I also formed the impression (watching the instructor going about straightening backs during the recitation of the *norito*, for example) that the goal is a priestly formalism that falls short of, or is different from, a military ("parade") formality. That what is sought is formality without rigidity. The back is straight, but the shoulders are relaxed.

The quantity of rules the young priest must learn at first seems staggering. Here is a rambling assortment, selected at random from my lecture notes, and representing no particular logical order:

1) Never turn your back to the *kami-sama*. If you are not facing in his direction, keep your body at an angle, facing away from the sanctuary.

2) When carrying the *sanbo* (offertory tray), hold it at eye-level with the foot on the far side of the sanctuary. (Thus in the little diagrams shown above, the priest would set out on his right foot.)

3) When carrying the *sanbo* (offertory tray), hold it at eye-level, to keep the food offering free from the impurities of your breath.

4) When you are seated on the *tatami* and the offertory tray is before you, pick it up by first placing your left hand under it, then your right. (I asked for the rationale of this maneuver, and was told that when the priest is seated and in repose, his hands rest in his lap, the left on top of the right. He therefore

raises the left hand first, because it is smoother to do so.)

5) In ascending the steps to the sanctuary doors, take one step at a time, baby style. If you are ascending the left side, begin with the left foot. If you are ascending on the right, begin with the right foot.

6) In walking, see that your foot is always touching the floor (that makes the priest's walk more of a slide, as in *noh* and *kagura* theatre). Take four steps for one breath cycle (two as you inhale, two as you exhale). "That," I was told, "is the customary pace for the ordinary priest. But priests of high rank take only two steps with each cycle of breath." To which the master priest added: "And no prancing steps! It's not so noticeable on *tatami*, but when our priests put on their ceremonial wooden shoes (*asagutsu*) outdoors, we can't have them going about *goran-goran, goran-goran*!"

7) When food offerings are cooked and arranged on the plate, the better part should face the *kami-sama*. Thus the back of the fish should face *away* from the deity. This is invariably correct for offerings made at the sanctuary; the most beautiful side faces the deity, for him to see. But for outdoor offerings, away from the sanctuary, the most beautiful side should face the worshippers.

8) Sometimes you may find yourself offering a live fish (just out of the water). Since it may jump about, place a piece of paper over its eyes, and it will become quiet. (Mauss and Hubert write of the need to quiet the sacrificial animal, but this surely is the most delicate form of sacrifice imaginable.)

9) For important occasions, prepare two complete sets of offerings. Then you will have a spare, in case a sudden wind should blow dust in the food and render it impure, or in case a cat or a bird gets into the food.

10) To carry the *an* (table for offerings), place the right hand on the forward righthand supporting post, then place the left hand flat *under* the table, and lift. In this manner, the right hand grasps and steadies the table, while the left hand lifts it.

11) Each shrine has its own customs with regard to the foods offered to the *kami*, but the emphasis is on rice and rice products. The offerings are for the most part vegetarian, and fish.

But if one were offering the whole gamut of foods, they should be offered in this sequence:

1 Rice
2 Sake (rice wine)
3 Mochi (rice cake)
4 Fish
5 Birds (hen, dove, . . . but this is rare)
6 Animals, if any (deer, wild boar, . . .)
7 Seafoods (seaweed, shellfish, . . .)
8 Vegetables
9 Cakes
10 Salt
11 Water

Even if only a few of these foods are offered, the same order must be preserved.

Before sitting in on classes at Kokugakuin, I had attended services in the offertory hall of many a shrine, and was struck repeatedly by the graceful movements of the priests performing the liturgy. I think it was that grace of movement that brought me to Kokugakuin's class in priestcraft in the first place: I wanted to see how it was learned. I wanted to see how a seminary trains its students to move poetically, so that all their actions are harmonious. At first it troubled me that all the students seemed to be learning were the taboos of their trade: don't get off on the wrong foot, avoid breathing on the offering, sit up straight, and for heaven's sake don't spill the *sake*. I could see however that much of the secret lay in the way the liturgical culottes hang loosely over the *tabi*, the way the priest seems to float as he walks, and in the *tabi* themselves, which somehow make walking an art form. With *tabi* (Percival Lowell called them "cloven footwear," as I recall), the big toe rises with each step, and falls when the foot is placed down, then rises again; that one (separated) toe seems to guide the whole foot—it leads, and then the whole foot glides along, as over ocean waves.

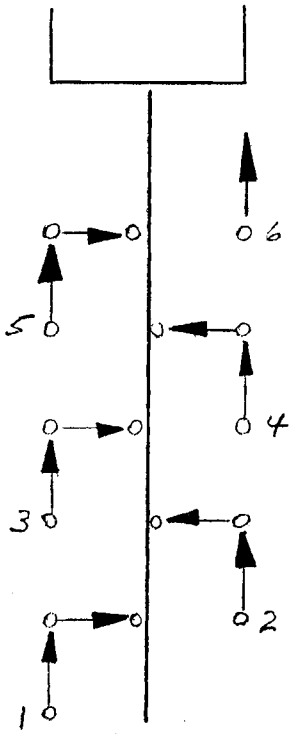
But after a few sessions I began to sense that it was perhaps that flood of sacerdotal rules which, in the end, makes for the brisk, measured, decisive movements which make for the

gracefulness of the liturgy. That the taboos are in fact the source of the grace. This thought came to me as I watched a young seminarian practising the removal of the offering trays from before the sanctuary. He was doing quite well, but the hem of his *hakama* started to catch on his *tabi*, and he paused to straighten out his robes and re-arrange his *hakama* so that he would not trip and stumble. It was most distracting, and most ungracious, happening as it did in the middle of the ritual, and it dawned on me that a rite is most truly a rite when there is no action in it thtat is not relevant to the rite, no action to divert attention from the work at hand. It was then that I appreciated all the good-humored rigors imposed on the students by the master priest. On one occasion, the students were to practise bringing cups of *sake* to the holy of holies. The head teacher filled each cup brimful, so that the slightest jarring would cause them to spill; and then he hovered over them like a hawk ("Careful, now, Suzuki, you'll spill it! Oh, watch out there Watanabe, it's dribbling all over the *sanbo*! Come, come, Suzuki, it isn't *that* full!") Each boy was a picture of concentration, his tray at eye level, his thoughts on where his feet were stepping: soon they were all smiles, but trying desperately not to laugh.

And so I began to suspect that the point of all this training was to mechanize one's movements to such a degree that you don't need to think of yourself, and where to step, and how to avoid accidents—so that all your thoughts are concentrated on serving the kami. I asked the master priest whether that was so. He answered in character: "*Sô deshô nê*! (a long pause) Some of them will never be graceful! (another long pause) But after the training, experience helps." I asked him his opinion on the question raised by Confucius, regarding the relationship between ritual and human heartedness ("A man who is not human-hearted what can he have to do with ritual?"). He replied: "When it becomes unconscious, the *kokoro* (heart) can express itself. (pause) After a time, they do not think to themselves: now the left foot, now turn..."

There is one difficulty inherent in the training given at the seminary. It would not have occurred to me if I had not got-

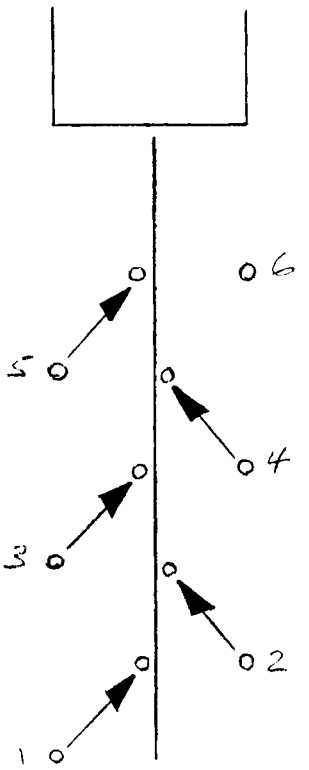
ten to know my neighborhood priest so well. I shall try to illustrate it with one further example from my notes on priest-craft. Summer vacation was approaching, and the students were relaxed and quite chatty as they came in. There were nineteen present (one or two absent), who promptly divided themselves into three groups. The exercise for the day was the proper method for conducting three different kinds of offering to the sanctuary, when there is a full complement of priests on hand to perform the duty. Since each practice group had at least six students, there were adequate numbers. The instructor drew a box at the top of the blackboard to indicate the holy of holies. Then, straight down from its center, he drew a heavy line in pink chalk, which he identified as the Center Line. The student priests were to be arrayed down the length of this center line, evenly spaced, half on one side, half on the other. Each group would pass three offering trays, in



sequence, up along the center line, toward the sanctuary, there the end priest would offer them to the *kami*. Group I would offer *sake*, then fruit, then a cup of water. Group II would offer *sake*, then a rice-cake, then a cup of water. The third group would offer *sake*, a fish, and a cup of water.

First the lecturer illustrated on the board how the task would have been carried out by a team of six priests, thirty years ago:

In this scheme, the first priest, standing furthest from the sacred dwelling place, walks toward it till he is abreast of priest #2, then turns ninety degrees, walks to the center line, and hands the tray to priest #2, who faces front, goes forward until he is abreast of priest #3, faces sharp left, goes to the center line, hands him the tray, and so on down the line, for each of the three trays. Note that no priest ever actually crosses the center line, which appears to be a taboo line, as though the divine



presence projects a kind of magnetic field out in front of the sanctuary, which is most intense along this line emanating perpendicular to the sanctum, from its center. (These speculations of mine, needless to say, do not have the blessings of the seminary faculty.)

Then we were shown the modern method, with all the corners taken out. Again the center line stands as a kind of line of force, and the priests hand the *sanbo* back and forth across it, zig-zagging it towards the sanctuary, but never themselves setting foot on the line, let alone crossing it:

Now, this is dandy training for a man who can look forward to serving at Meiji or Yasukuni Shrine. But the truth is that most priests cannot look forward to that sort of appointment, at one of the bigger, more prestigious shrines. The average student here will end up at some little shrine, either in a country village or a city neighborhood, where he will be the only priest. True, he may (especially if he is a city priest, living near a prestigious shrine) be called upon occasionally to assist at the *taisai* of a large shrine. But otherwise his liturgical life is rather a lonely one. As a student, he worked in a team with five other priests (one day only twelve students came to class; they were divided into two teams of six each, and the third practice sanctuary was simply not used). That is the familiar pattern in Japan. Everything is learned in a group, and is done in a group afterwards. But the neighborhood priest, once he is out of school, must work alone; and there are little clues in his conversation that suggest that he is a bit lonesome in his work, that he misses having company as he performs his liturgical rounds. And so, whenever I asked the priest in my neighborhood (and this was true of other priests as well) how he performed this or that detail of ritual, he answered fully and honestly, but always with a suggestion that he felt his performance was somehow incomplete, and that I would do better to go see the same rites at Meiji Jingû, or Yasukuni, to see them done properly. He always left me with the feeling that his performance, as a solitary priest at a shrine of no consequence, was somehow inadequate, and inevitably so. Here are some excerpts from my conversations with him:

Q. As the festival approaches, are there any special preparations you undergo?
Ans. "Yes, the priest just observe silence for one week, and he must prepare himself with a ritual bath of purification. But here, I am one man alone. If I were silent for a week, I couldn't talk to the *ujiko* who are planning the festival! And then again: the big shrines have a special facility for ritual ablution. I have to make do with the family tub!"

Q. I was told, by a professor at Kokugakuin, that the moan you do when opening or closing the sanctuary doors is a kind of warning cry, which tells the people to be respectful. He said it "requires much devotion on the part of the priest performing it, or else it may sound comical."
Ans. "Yes, it is a very important bit of ceremonial. As I perform it, I think to myself: I must do this very slowly, very elegantly. Unfortunately, sometimes I am in just too much of a hurry to do it properly."

Q. About music at the liturgy: the priest over at Fuji Jinja tells me that since his is a shrine especially for downtown (*shitamachi*) people, he has no *gagaku* during the *taisai* ceremonies.
Ans. "Yes, it is a very important bit of ceremonial. As I priest in the neighboring parish even has *dai-dai kagura.*"

Q. One of the palace priests left me with the impression that only the larger shrines can afford to have the Imperial Household musicians come and perform *gagaku.*
Ans. "Yes, well, we have *gagaku,* but only at the *taisai.* And even then we do not have the full complement of musicians. We have three musicians to play as I present the offerings to the *kami*; there should be seven. We have only *shô, fue* (flute), and *hichiriki.* So we have no *taiko* (drum), and no *koto.*"
Q. Who provides the musicians? Where do they come from?
Ans. "The Ono Gagaku Kai."

This ancient classical music, for those who are not familiar with it, is not easily described. It has always struck me as having an eerie, unearthly, ghostly sound. It has been described quite eloquently by the musicologist William Malm, who calls it

Plate I. Approaching the outer door of the sanctuary with the large key.

Plate II. Bowing before the newly opened doors.

Plate III. At the end of the festival, closing the doors to the sanctuary. Note the careful placement of the hands.

Plate IV. A final offering of thanks to the *kami* for his presence at the festival.

"a block of sound" which "does not move but allows other things to move through it."[1] It is "serene and subtle," he says, and because of its "archaic flavor" may recall Monteverdi.[2] "Much of the pleasure of *gagaku* is in its rare and archaic flavor," he writes. "To those who are accustomed to the dynamic drive of Western symphonic music the static beauty of *gagaku* may seem very strange. In the West, music has been defined in terms of aural form in motion, but in *gagaku* both the formal and progressive elements have been minimized, leaving only the beauty of sound, the exotic creature in a slightly clouded group of amber."[3]

The preservation and protection of this fascinating musical relic of the past has been accomplished largely through the efforts of the Imperial Household, which maintains a full *gagaku* orchestra, a school for the training of musicians, and a very beautiful and very modern recital hall on the palace grounds, with semi-annual concerts open to the public (by invitation only). Because of a trick of fate and an ironic turn of history, the eighteenth century American deist principle of the separation of church and state has been imposed on the ancient culture of Japan; and so the palace musicians cannot "officially" perform at shrines! And so the musicians, both those in the palace "household" and some outside it—some of them Shinto priests, and some of them not—have formed voluntary associations. One is the Ono Gagaku Kai, which I found was performing at shrine services all over Bunkyo-ku (and no doubt other parts of town as well). The president of the association is himself a priest, in his forties. Another is the Gaku Yu Kai, the Associated Friends of Music. A priest at the palace told me that "Requests from shrines for sacerdotal music may be sent to the head of the Friends of Music, but not to the Court. He is at the Court, however, and the court musicians belong to his association. He weighs the request, and then makes the necessary arrangements." Not every priest can be bothered with

---

1. William P. Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (Rutland and Tokyo, 1959), p. 30.
2. *ibid.*, p. 103.
3. *ibid.*, p. 104.

these bureaucratic niceties, however. An independent and self-assured old priest of the pre-war generation, in what is now the financial district of Tokyo, told me: "Yes, we have *gagaku* music at every *taisai*. It is played by the Imperial Household Agency. I know the boss of the palace musicians, so he arranges it. They also come once a month, to perform at the *ennichi* service. But we don't have the full orchestra for *ennichi* (one day of the month, always on the same date, when the faithful visit the shrine), just three musicians or so. For the *taisai* we have five or six."

I went to hear this same priest recite the *norito* at his shrine's *taisai*. I told him afterwards that his movements reminded me of a *kagura* dancer's, and asked if there was a special way of walking in the presence of the *kami*. He said yes, he had learned it at school, from a Mr. Aotonamiya (who has since died). Before the war, he said, there were many schools of walking-styles for priests. After the war, they were all combined into one. I told him I thought his style in declaming the prayer was the most extraordinary I had heard. It began in a whisper, barely audible, and rose in a steady crescendo until his deep voice was booming out the ancient words, the halls resounding with his awesome thunderings. "There is some room for personal style," he said modestly. How would you characterize your style? I asked. Now he became quite annoyed with me: "It's not a show, you know! It's not like *kabuki*!" (He had seen through my questions, and perceived my private thoughts. What I had noticed was that he sounded exactly like a *kabuki* actor. And what a magnificent *kabuki* actor he would have made.) "It's a prayer," he continued irately, "and when I recite a prayer, I think only of the deity I am addressing, and of the purity of my own heart, not of my style!" Which seems to me quite consistent with what I was told at the seminary: First you master the forms, and then perhaps the *kokoro* shines through.

The seminary staff is quite liberal about allowing for personal tastes in liturgical forms. I noticed at one class that one boy, as the *norito* was recited, clasped his hands and closed his eyes, in the Christian manner. It was quite conspicuously

different from what all the other seminarians were doing. I asked about it afterwards, and was told that this lad was from the Hiroshima area, and that he had learned this practice from a Shinto sect. He had not joined the sect, but continues to use their prayer posture "as a personal preference." "It's all right with us," his teachers volunteered; "we don't mind if he wants to do it that way."

R.H. Blyth comments that the Nichiren sect of Buddhism recite their sutras "threateningly," the Zen sect "with a kind of vigorous indifference," and he quotes an Edo period poem that says the Jôdo Shinshu Buddhists read the sutras "as though fawning upon Amida."[4] This last phrase caught my eye, because it reminded me a little of the style of my neighborhood shrine priest, whose voice seemed to tremble and whine as he chanted the *norito*. His is a decidedly plaintive tone, almost tearful. The effect can be quite eerie, on a dark night, in that empty hall, as he recites the prayer quite alone. Not to mention the creeking and groaning of the sanctuary doors as he opens them, uttering his moaning "cry of awe." (All sanctuary doors seem to squeak loudly in Japan, even the newest, with shiny brass hinges. It is not for lack of oil, and neglect. It is intentional.)

This same priest is on rare occasions assisted by his father-in-law, the former priest of the shrine, now in retirement. The old priest's style presents a striking contrast. He barks out the words, like a military officer giving commands. His posture is stiff and angular, his voice incisive and brisk, his actions mechanical. "That is the old style," I was told at the seminary. "Movements were more angular. Now they are smoother, more refined. Prayers were barked, not smooth." When did the change come? "In Showa 17 (1942). In Showa 15 we had

---

4. R.H. Blyth, *Edo Satirical Verse Anthologies* (Tokyo, 1961), pp. 230–231. Theodore Gaster (*Festivals of the Jewish Year*, New York, 1952–53, p. 153) mentions that at the Yom Kippur services, the Kol Nidrei "is recited three times: first, in a whisper; then in a somewhat louder voice, and finally, in clear, resonant tones, symbolizing the initial trepidation and gradually developing confidence of the suppliant who approaches the throne of God." The same attitude is suggested by shrine priests who begin their *norito* in a whisper, and end in a glorious crescendo.

celebrated the 2600th anniversary of the founding of Japan. The department of shrines had just been raised in status, so everything was changed at that time." What was the point of this particular change, the change in liturgical forms? "To adapt to modern times, to simplify procedures—a kind of rationalization of the liturgy." One of my close friends prefers the old style, I told them; she finds it more moving, more dramatic. "The barking out of prayers may sound more dramatic to the laity, more mystical, more awesome.... You may have noticed the boy who lead the prayer in class today (not the same boy mentioned previously). He is a member of a Shinto sect, the Kurozumi sect in Okayama Prefecture. His manner is brisk, not smooth like the others. The brisk manner often goes with religious practices that have strong elements of divination mixed in."

For every festive occasion, each priest composes his own *norito*. I asked my neighborhood priest if he still had a copy of his *taisai* prayer, for the celebration just past. "No," he said, "too bad, it was burned. And I won't compose next year's till just before the festival. I can give you the rough format I follow each year, though." As he got out his notes he commented: "But you ought to go to a big shrine, and get a sample prayer written by a really famous priest." His papers arranged now, he explained: "A *norito* is like a letter. It is 'delivered' to the god on the morning of the first day of the *taisai* only. I compose a new one each year; but it doesn't vary much from year to year, really. Like a letter, it begins with a greeting. Being a *taisai* prayer, its main purpose is to offer thanks. The first part is the address to the *kami*—as though one were to begin, 'Dear Kami-sama,' but in a very polite, formal way. Then follows a greeting; then I praise the virtues of the deity. The fourth part is a little explanation of the origins of this particular ceremony we are performing: in this case, the *taisai* itself, how our shrine began to celebrate the god's anniversary on this particular date. Then we thank him for our daily lives. Then we tell him how we've decorated the sanctuary for him, and ask him to have a look and see what we've done for his day. Then I ask him to watch the entertainments we are about to

offer him: the *gagaku* music, and so on. I tell him how the farmers grew the rice that we are now offering to him. I pray for the welfare of the nation, and of the *ujiko,* and ask him to stay at this shrine forever. I thank him for our lives, for our good emperor, and for our good kami." Those are the ingredients of the standard festival—opening prayer. Aside from the initial address and greeting, the other elements can be presented in any order that suits the priest.

I did succeed in obtaining a sample *taisai norito* from another source. It reads as follows.

NORITO FOR THE GREAT FESTIVAL

Before the solemn presence of this shrine, I, chief priest of this shrine, do address you with dread and awe.

At this great shrine, our *kami* dwells, eternally, and in tranquility, and we do cast our eyes up to behold your holy grace.

Today is the delicious and sprightly day that comes once a year, in accordance with most venerable custom, and so your faithful *ujiko* gather before you, to serve you, and to celebrate this your day with festive rites.

Having cleansed ourselves before you, we place before you bounteous offerings, first of holy rice and rice wine, and then the fruits of sea and river, mountains and fields. And we offer too august offering from the *Jinja Honchô* (Shrine Federation), and words of thanksgiving.

Pray take these gifts, in a peaceful and tranquil manner. And look with merciful enjoyment upon the songs and dances, novel and delightful, which we have prepared for your august pleasure.

Bless the reign of our emperor. May it be enduring, and filled with dignity.

May the breadth and depth of your divine kindness embrace all the peoples under the heavens. And may it be felt among your faithful *ujiko.*

With your divine help, may we each fulfill your hopes for us, and in our work may our hearts be pure and plain, gentle and just.

Give us your protection; guide us in our quest for harmony, and community, and joy.

May our descendents know prosperity. May they be innumera-

ble as mulberry leaves, and mighty as oaks.
Extend to us the umbrella of your kindness, and allow us to serve you forever.
This humbly do I ask.

Acknowledgement

I am especially grateful to the staff of the Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, at Kokugakuin University, and especially to Prof. HIRAI Naofusa, Mr. UEDA Kenji, and Miss KUDO Sumiko. Special thanks also to TAKASAWA Shinichiro, chief priest of Meiji Jingu and member of the faculty at Kokugakuin, and to his photogenic and patient colleague, ONO Kazuteru. And to countless *kannushi* who showed us their special hospitality, both inside and outside Tokyo.