

Theological and Scientific Thinking about Festivals

Reflections on the Gion Festival at Aizu Tajima

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The town of Tajima in Minami Aizu County, Fukushima Prefecture, is located a two-hour bus ride from Kinugawa Spa (not far from Nikkō) along the Ikari dam and over the Sannō pass, or a one and a half hour train ride on the Tajima line from the station of Aizu Wakamatsu through the gorge of the Aga river. Tajima might well be called the capital of the area. Formerly the site of the county office, it now accommodates various county agencies in a prominent government office building.

The town's most comprehensive division, Ōaza Tajima, once the site of a post road relay station and cluster of inns, stretches from east to west along the main road and serves as a trade center for the surrounding farm villages. The principal industries are lumber and sake production, the twenty-seven districts encompassing the town being engaged in farming and forestry. In 1971 Tajima counted 16,000 inhabitants, a decrease of 7,000 people since 1955 when the population reached a peak. Some 5,500 are concentrated in Ōaza Tajima, the seat of local government and central stage of the Gion festival.

The Gion festival, major celebration of Tade'uga Shrine where

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the tutelary kami of the town are worshiped, is held each year from 18 July through 21 July. This festival is not one of the famous tourist attractions. It may not even be particularly interesting to sightseers. At its climax on 20 July, observances start at four o'clock in the morning and continue without interruption till after eleven o'clock at night—a schedule that seems almost calculated to discourage casual observers desirous only of an overall view of the festival. This Gion festival is conducted according to strictly specified rules laid down in the *Bunsei hachinen shikisho* [Book of ceremonies of 1825]¹ and the *Meiji zōho saishiki kakurei* [Supplement to the rules for festival rites] (1890),² rules that stand in the way of simplification and, in a certain sense, of rationalization.

The image of a quiet little town surrounded by mountains, its people striving to conduct the festival in accordance with ways established in days gone by, the whole representing a quest for simplicity, for something familiar and pleasurable, or for a lost but unidentified quality or condition: sentimentality of this kind I want to avoid in this article. What I want to do, if I can bring it off, is to discuss the Gion festival of Tajima apart from its historical character as a Gion festival, apart too from its setting in the Minami Aizu County of Fukushima Prefecture, apart even from its role as a specifically Japanese festival. What I want to try here should perhaps be called a search for a prototype of the festival as a religious phenomenon. In order to indicate that I am not unaware of the dangers implied in this short-circuit method, I have given this article the somewhat

1. 文政八年式書.

2. 明治増補祭式格例.

unusual title "Theological and Scientific Thinking about Festivals." What is meant by "theology" and "science" in this connection will be explained shortly. The article might equally well have been called the "idea," "spirit," or "philosophy" of festivals—even a "metaphysical" approach to festivals. The point is to get at the subjective presuppositions operative in the study of festivals. I have deliberately chosen to use the term "theology," despite the fact that its connotations strike many as incompatible with the scholarly study of religion, which aims at objective, scientific understanding of religious phenomena. Yet underlying scientific studies of festivals there can be found, I would suggest, a kind of "theology," for the most part unconscious, only rarely finding conscious expression. In order to promote such studies, therefore, what is important is not to focus on a so-called "thoroughly scientific" form of research that will completely exclude theology but rather to become aware of where science ends and theology begins and to make conscious and constant use of this distinction. I would also surmise that just as there are many different theological theories, so too the scientific analyses based on them may proliferate in many different directions.

The Gion Festival of Tajima

Within ten minutes' walk of the center of Tajima lies a cluster of houses surrounded by rice fields and known as *miyamoto* ("site of the shrine"). As its name suggests, it is here that Tade'uga Shrine is located. The kami enshrined there are Uka-no-mi-tama, Waku-musubi-no-mikoto, Susa-no-o-no-mikoto, and Amaterasu-ōmikami. Legend has it that the first of these kami

once manifested himself at a certain spring (which still exists) situated in the rice fields. Accordingly, the shrine was given the name *tade'uga* ("Uka [Uga] risen from the rice field") and still exhibits many features which demonstrate a close relationship with this rice god. The Gion festival, however, is in most places observed in honor of Susa-no-o or his Buddhist counterpart Gozu-tennō. Nonetheless, given the holistic nature of the kami concept in Shinto, it would hardly be appropriate to regard it as a festival for Susa-no-o alone. In Tajima, at any rate, it has long been conducted as the major festival for all the kami of Tade'uga Shrine and, since 1879, as the major festival of the adjacent Kumano Shrine as well.

Though officially opening on 18 July, the Gion festival at Tajima can be regarded as beginning on 7 July, the first day of the period of religious purification. From that day the priest,³ for the duration of the festival, eats no animal foods, and on 12 July he moves into separate quarters, sleeping apart from his family and using only his own, ritually pure fire.

The people whose turn it is to be in charge of the festival for a given year, the *otōya*, likewise abstain, at least in principle, from meat and eggs. On their homes they hang *shimenawa* (braided straw ropes from which are suspended strips of white paper cut in a zigzag pattern, the whole marking off an enclosure deemed at least temporarily sacred), and they observe the taboo of not entering a house where someone has recently died or allowing

3. For convenience the words "priest," "shrine," etc. will usually be rendered in the singular. The reader should bear in mind, however, that, as will later be explained in more detail, parallel to the Tade'uga Shrine festival, Kumano Shrine celebrates its own simultaneous Gion festival, complete with its own priest and organization. TRANSLATORS.

a person from such a house to enter their homes. With few exceptions, every household in the town sends a family member to take part in sweeping and cleaning the approach to the shrine, while those who live in the cluster of houses near the shrine entrance erect great lanterns and banners along both sides of the roadway.

One feature of this festival that should not be overlooked is the *doburoku* ("unrefined or raw sake"). It is the responsibility of the *otōya* (hereafter abbreviated *tōya*) to collect a certain amount of rice from each household in the town, brew the sake, and later supervise its distribution. On 12 July all the members of the *tōya* bring the rice to the worship hall of the shrine in an act of presentation and consecration, pour it into two wooden vats together holding nine *tō*, nine *shō* (178.2 liters or 47.5 U.S. gallons), and get the fermentation process started. The heads of two prominent families are then selected from among the *tōya* members, one for Tade'uga Shrine and one for Kumano Shrine, and their houses become the *otoyamoto* (hereafter abbreviated *tōmoto*) or centers for the activities of the two groups in charge of the festival for that year. On 17 July a "sacred bridge"—a small bridge of packed sand—is fashioned in front of the entrance to each *tōmoto* house. The two sacred bridges are set apart for the use of the priests when they visit the houses on 20 July.

On 18 July the second phase of the festival begins. The *doburoku*, in a ceremony held at the *tōmoto* in the presence of the priest, is divided into two shares, one for use at the shrine, the other for use at the *tōya*. This ceremony, called the *miki biraki* ("the opening of the sacred sake"), is attended by officials representing the town: the mayor, the vice-mayor, the superin-

tendent of the revenue office (which licenses this brewing of the *doburoku*), the chief of police and others. Following the ceremony, a *naorai* ("festival feast") is held at which the *doburoku* is tasted for the first time that year. On the same day a *kamidana* ("god shelf") is established in the *tōmoto* houses. The priest provides the god shelf with a *gohei*, a vertical wand on a wooden base with zigzag strips of white paper attached to its upper end. The *gohei* symbolizes the presence of the kami, and the ceremony of presentation is called *kamidana tsuri* ("hanging the god shelf"). "From this day forward the *kamidana* is regarded as equivalent to the shrine itself."⁴

The day of 19 July is known as the vigil day of the festival. At ten o'clock that morning, an annual ritual is performed at the shrine. Among the formal shrine ceremonies, this ritual is one of the most important. It is not mentioned, however, in the *Bunsei hachinen shikisho* [Book of ceremonies of 1825]. Some Tajima people say it probably started in the early Meiji period along with the institutionalization of State Shinto. There is nothing particularly distinctive about the ritual itself: representatives of the parish, of the town wards and precincts and of the *tōya*, the mayor, the head of the town council, and invited honorary guests simply present in turn a sprig of the sacred *sakaki* tree before the altar. From noon until dusk, people set up street stalls on both sides of the main road, and the *yatai* ("floats") are pulled up and down the street. Each of the ponderous floats, however, stays in its own neighborhood. Vigil day is a comparatively quiet affair nowadays. Until 1946,

4. Muroi Hiroshi, 室井博, *Aizu Tajima gionsai gaisetsu* 会津田島祇園祭概説 [General description of the Gion festival of Aizu Tajima], p. 13.

though, when some of the old ways were discontinued, vigil day lived up to its name. The priest went in procession to the house of the *tōmoto*, and all the parishioners of the district were invited for the midday meal. The priest and *tōya* members later took their evening meal together, and still later a midnight meal. The *tōya* members spent the night there, dozing off from time to time, but “the priest left the house secretly during the night and returned to the shrine. It is said that nobody knew what route he took and also that if by chance anybody should encounter him on the way, that person would meet with an accident.”⁵ Tajima people say that the discontinuance of this custom after the war, occasioned by the food shortages and straitened economic circumstances of that time, has made the financial burdens and labors of the *tōya* considerably lighter. Yet even today there are many people who stay up all night getting ready for the next day's events. This is particularly true of the women who have to dress up for the procession, though the shortage of trained people in the beauty parlors also plays a role.

On 20 July at about half past three in the morning, the members of the *tōya* for the festival of the ensuing year, one person from each household, gather at the *tōmoto* house for the ritual of *sakaki mukae* (“going out to meet and welcome the sacred trees”). Once assembled, they go to the Gion grove at the edge of town, fell several young oaks, and—according to the rules prescribed in the *Meiji zōho saishiki kakurei* [Supplement to the rules for festival rites]—deliver them to the *tōmoto* house no later than 4:43 a.m. It is considered auspicious if those who carry

5. Ibid., p. 13.

the trees back on their shoulders raise the rhythmic cry “*washoi, wasshoi*” as exuberantly as possible. One tree is made fast to each corner of the stand on which the *mikoshi* (“portable shrine”) will later be placed. At this point the members of the *tōya* for the festival of the preceding year also join the group, and at about 6 a.m. they all go to the shrine and with liberal quantities of water clean the portable shrine. Meanwhile, preparations for the procession are under way at the *tōmoto* house.

This procession, called the *nanahokai*, is one of the chief attractions of the festival. Only persons with living parents may participate. Men wear the ceremonial dress of feudal-age samurai. Married women wear a formal kimono with a chignon coiffure signifying married status, while unmarried women appear as brides, their hair done up in *shimada* style, signifying unwed status, partly hidden by a bridal hood (*tsunokakushi*).

The name *nanahokai* (“seven vessels”) derives from the fact that three casks of sacred sake (*doburoku*), one stand bearing seven mackerel, and three containers of the festive *sekihan* (cooked rice with a pink tinge, made by soaking it with red beans) are carried at the head of the procession—the fish by a man, the sake and *sekihan* by women. Because the procession becomes more colorful when many women participate, especially those dressed as brides, this becomes the focus of a tacit rivalry between the *tōya* of successive years. The procession sets out from the Tade’uga *tōmoto* house at about 7:30 a.m. and makes its way to the shrine where the vessels are presented as offerings before the altar. Among the offerings, the *sekihan* is particularly important. It is first divided into seven lacquered tubs, then presented at the altar. The worship hall of the shrine,

not overly large to begin with, becomes packed with parish representatives and *tōya* members. After the ceremony, the *doburoku*, fish, and rice are consumed by the participants in a festival meal (*naorai*). Preparations then begin for the kami to make their ritual circuit of the town in the portable shrine.

Tōmoto representatives are required only to take part in the presentation of the *nanahokai* offerings. Responsibility for the ritual circuit falls to the *tōya* members for the preceding and succeeding year. First, however, the symbol of the kami must be removed from its place in the inner sanctuary of the shrine and lodged in the portable shrine—the rite of *mitama utsushi* (“transferring the sacred spirit”). This rite is performed behind a rattan blind by the priest alone. There is no way of learning, therefore, precisely what the kami symbol is. After the transfer, the priest, in a traditional exchange with those assigned to attend the portable shrine, charges them to keep careful watch over it, and they respond in unison with a clear acknowledgement of their responsibility.

The portable shrine sets forth at about 10 a.m. Particularly noteworthy are the *oshitaku bure* and the *otachi bure*, two men in conspicuous attire whose job it is to announce the departure of the portable shrine to the onlookers, and (since 1950) the *chigo*, thirteen-year old girls born in an unlucky year according to the zodiac. Together they lead the procession. No other females take part.

Formerly, the portable shrine made its first stop at the *tōmoto* where a religious rite was performed. Nowadays, however, since the *tōmoto* site is determined on a rotation basis, the procession, to save time, makes a clockwise circuit of the town, stopping

for rites at specified places including, but not starting with, the *tōmoto*.

On reaching the *tōmoto* house, the bearers rest the portable shrine on the stand purified by the sacred trees fastened to it early in the morning. Coarse straw mats are laid in the street, and on them the *mikoshi mae shinji* ("rites before the portable shrine") are performed. The priest then crosses the sacred bridge built on 17 July and enters the *tōmoto*. There the noon meal is served not only to the priest but to all who follow the portable shrine. Some fifty low tables used for serving food are passed along each year from one *tōya* to the next. As approximately 260 people were provided with lunches on these tables in 1971, it is easy to see that serving and reserving the assembled guests keeps the *tōya* members busy. After the meal, there is a ceremony called *ohachimai* which involves flinging handfuls of the uncooked rice earlier presented before the *kamidana* of the *tōya*. Then the procession resumes its march from this house that, as just noted, once marked the beginning of the ritual circuit of the town.

There is no pushing or shoving among the bearers of the portable shrine as one finds in some festivals. Instead the procession advances with quiet solemnity. People along the road still toss offerings of money onto the porch of the portable shrine and perform an act of obeisance, receiving in return a religious charm, but the number of people doing so has dwindled in recent years. Another form of charm is the *horobana*, an artificial flower made of paper at the *tōya* and fastened to the eaves of houses to ward off evil spirits. Since these flowers are said to be good for what ails one, there is also a bit of tussling and

snatching. The number of places where the portable shrine stops and the priest recites *norito* ("archaic ritual prayers") is seven according to the *Bunsei hachinen shikisho* [Book of ceremonies of 1825], eight according to the *Meiji zōho saishiki kakurei* [Supplement to the rules for festival rites]. It is about five o'clock when the procession returns to the shrine. There another festival meal is served, following which the participants disperse. At this point the priest concludes his period of abstention from animal foods, a period which required him to use only his own, ritually pure fire, and enjoys a meal of eggs prepared over an ordinary fire.

That evening, when the floats begin to roll, is the time when the town comes to life. From four different precincts—Moto ("old town"), Naka ("central"), Kami ("upper"), and Nishi ("western")—the floats sally forth. As these massive, highly decorated vehicles are being pushed hither and yon, special festival music, *gionbayashi*, is played (nowadays by taperecorder on all but the Moto float), and children of all ages climb on the floats, riding along and calling out in rhythm, "Oh! San! Yarikakero!" At prearranged stops before certain homes, the children climb down for a five- or ten-minute drama scene. It used to be that these scenes were performed by children of the town and other local talent, but recently festival leaders have started inviting itinerant theatrical troupes. In 1971 it was the Gunma Prefecture "Grand Kabuki of Tokyo" troupe that divided its members among the four floats for the performance. The stops where the scenes are performed are called *geiba* ("drama sites"), and detailed programs are prepared showing what scene from what play will be performed in front of what house at

exactly what time.

On the previous evening (19 July), the floats moved up and down the street, but each stayed in its own territory, so things did not become particularly boisterous. On the night of 20 July, however, it is a different story entirely. Each float moves to *geiba* not only in its own section but in other sections as well. As a result, the floats, each weighing several tons, are brought into close proximity to one another. If a float in front does not move, the float behind cannot proceed. Moreover, since the way of placing a float in position at the *geiba* involves a complicated series of maneuvers and many moves to left and right, there is much danger of collision. Perhaps this may be most easily understood as a ritualization of the kind of traffic congestion one would expect from a situation in which four sizable vehicles have to move up and down a single, rather narrow road. Before 1868, when two floats passed each other on the street and it became a question of honor as to which should pull over and make room for the other, it sometimes happened that people were killed. The Tajima festival then became known as a *kenka matsuri* ("brawl festival"), a designation which clings to it to this day. The high point comes between 7 and 10 p.m. By midnight all is quiet.

At about ten o'clock the next morning (21 July) is the rite of *otana kowashi* ("dismantling the god shelf"). For this rite the priest is invited to the *tōmoto* house, a brief ceremony is held symbolizing the departure of the kami, the *kamidana* is taken down and its paraphernalia turned over to the *tōya* for the succeeding year. The *gohei* is returned to the shrine, and everybody is invited to the priest's home for a lunch offered in appreciation

of their festival labors. The people from Miyamoto ("site of the shrine") perform the sacred *daidai kagura* dance, and with this the festival comes to an end. Some of the street stalls, though, are still doing business, and the festival atmosphere still lingers.

The foregoing has been a description of the Gion festival of Tajima based on research previously published in such sources as the *Aizu Tajima gionsai gaisetsu* [General description of the Gion festival of Aizu Tajima],⁶ the *Fukushima-ken shi dai-23 kan minzoku hen I* [History of Fukushima prefecture, vol. 23: Folk customs I]⁷ and on direct observation. The name "Gion festival" indicates, of course, that this institution was brought to Tajima from without. According to the *Sashidashi chō*,⁸ a brief scroll dating from 1645 prepared by the shrine to justify its request for tax exemption and including an account of the festival, Lord Naganuma, head of Tajima Castle, caused a shrine dedicated to Gozu-tennō to be moved into his castle sometime during or about the twelfth century. To celebrate this event he instituted this festival in Tajima, modeling it after the Gion festival in Kyoto. When a horse market was established, it was the kami of the horse dealers in whose honor the festival was observed. With the fall of the castle lord in 1590 the festival was briefly discontinued, but in 1603, at the beginning of the Tokugawa period, it was revived through petition to the government.

Another account of the origin of the Tajima Gion festival,

6. 会津田島祇園祭概説.

7. 福島県史第二三巻民俗編 I.

8. 差出帳.

undertaken by folklorists, goes back still further in history to detect in Tade'uga, the kami worshiped at Tade'uga Shrine, traces of the old kami of the rice fields. However, if one asks why this long celebrated festival continues to be maintained by the people of Tajima even today, historically oriented investigations cannot provide a sufficient explanation. But historical investigation can be complemented by observation and analysis of the festival as it presently exists. It is in this connection that knowledge of the theology of festivals and a distinction between theological and scientific thinking about festivals becomes necessary.

Theology I will define, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, as a scholarly discipline which assigns the status of ultimate cause to factors that do not permit of experimentation, observation, or proof. Science, on the other hand, may perhaps be defined as a scholarly discipline which investigates the relations between directly observable data. This would seem to be an obvious principle. In fact, however, at least in the area of research into religious phenomena, the boundary between theology and science is often unclear. Take, for example, the hypothesis that social and spiritual anxiety engender religious behavior. According to Malinowski's well-known "theory" of this type, magic functions to eliminate or reduce the anxiety men experience when, as in gardening or fishing on stormy seas, they have to commit themselves to ventures the outcome of which they cannot predict. Radcliffe-Brown, in criticism of this theory, turned to the subject of taboos and contended that knowledge of a taboo leads to the fear of violating it, hence that magic, far from dispelling anxiety, actually creates it. Nonetheless,

with reference to what Malinowski called religion, the dominant theory is the one which seeks its origin in anxiety.

Difficulty emerges, however, when one asks whether it is possible to put religious behavior and anxiety on the same plane and observe them both. Religious behavior, whether in the performance of festivals or in the development of new religious organizations, is manifestly capable of being observed. But what about anxiety? How can this vague feeling be observed either in qualitative or quantitative perspective? Furthermore, if it may be assumed that not every kind of anxiety always and in all circumstances gives rise to religious behavior, then what kinds of anxiety do have connections with religion? This may prove difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain. If so, one must take cognizance of the fact that his scientific observations rest on a "theology of anxiety"—and be on guard. This also implies the possibility of basing one's interpretations of such scientific observations on yet other kinds of theology.

Science, in this case the scientific study of religion, need not be ashamed of its connection with theology. We should beware, however, of what calls itself science but is actually theology. There is of course no clearly established field of study that goes by the name "theology of festivals." This is simply an adaptation of the subtitle of a work by Harvey Cox to which reference will be made later. But from my present vantage point, I think I can discern three ways of thinking theologically about festivals.

The Festival as a Bond of Interrelation

The *Minzokugaku jiten* [Folklore dictionary] gives the following definition for the term festival: "Used with reference to divine

spirits to indicate human actions of invoking, encouraging, and assuaging them; also with reference to such actions performed for spirits of the dead. Festivals range from small-scale ones of which the household is the unit to large-scale ones spanning several districts.”⁹

In its first half the definition tells us that a festival serves to link kami and human beings. The second half indicates that even when the smallest unit is the household, festival observance involves a plurality of people and consequently serves to confirm their interrelation. This is the idea first formulated by such founders of the sociology of religion as Robertson Smith and Fustel de Coulanges, later brought forth by Durkheim as a full-fledged theory of the integrative function of religion. In his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* Durkheim argues that the totemic rites of the Australian aborigines rest on an ostensibly utilitarian purpose, namely, to assure the reproduction of totemic plants and animals. He rejects, however, the view that the rites incorporating this purpose derive from ignorance or from a mistaken understanding of cause-effect relationships on the part of the aborigines. In Australia there is a rainy season and a dry season. During the dry season, families, in order to obtain food, live separately in scattered locations. This gives rise to the fear that such a way of life will lend strength to selfish interests and weaken social solidarity. Accordingly, when the rainy season comes, people feel it necessary for the entire tribe to assemble and, through holding a festival, to reaffirm their oneness. Thus it is, he contends, that behind the imaginary purpose of causing

9. 民俗学辞典, p. 539.

totemic plants and animals to increase lies the hidden but real purpose of reinforcing the tribe's moral or spiritual solidarity. This is by no means the whole of Durkheim's theory, but this part, by assigning a socially integrative function to religion, attributes to the religious factor the status of an ultimate cause—an attribution that cannot be factually verified. According to the definition proposed earlier, this is a form of theology. It must be acknowledged, however, that this theological approach provides an acute explanation of one aspect of religious festivals.

Festivals revive people's bonds of interrelation. For those who one-sidedly emphasize the sense of desolation that inheres in contemporary urban life, the human bonds quickened through festivals, which serve no practical purpose whatever, become a nostalgic longing for something lost.

If festivals as bonds of interrelation are considered in a scientific way, that is, through investigating the relations that exist between phenomena, then we are led to examine the interrelations between festivals and social groups, social institutions, and social structures. In empirical research carried out under the aegis of sociology and social anthropology, this approach is frequently employed. On this view ancestor worship, to illustrate, is understood as a form of religion that functions to give spiritual strength and order to kinship groups. Even in modern cities and nations new festivals are established to arouse in people a sense of belonging to the society and to the state.

In 1955 the two adjacent villages of Hizawa and Arakai merged with the town of Tajima, thus creating one large district border-

ing on Tochigi Prefecture. The parish of Tade'uga Shrine covers most of the town as it existed prior to merger. In Tajima the major section of town and the small communities that cluster around it are separately designated as *ku*, heavily populated areas like Tajima *ku* being further broken down into units called *tsubo*. It is appropriate, therefore, to identify the *tsubo* with the built-up, central section of town, the *ku* with the rural outskirts. Till 1889 the parish of Tade'uga Shrine embraced what was then called Tajima Village with its twelve *tsubo*, plus two *ku*. Nine of the twelve *tsubo* (leaving out three near the outlying farm lands) have been named "precincts" (*machi*). From west to east (or as Tajima people put it, from "top" to "bottom") the nine precincts are: Shinmachi, Nishimachi, Kamimachi, Ushiomachi, Kami Nakamachi, Nakamachi, Motomachi, Higashimachi, and Yokomachi. From these names Tajima residents recognize immediately the order in which these precincts sprang up in relation to the old post road. The two oldest precincts are Motomachi and Kamimachi. The remaining precincts developed in the space between them as well as to their east and west (with some marginal development to the south and north).

With the exception of Shinmachi, which till 1869 existed as an independent village known as Shinmachi Mura and still retains its own peculiar customs, each of the eight remaining precincts or *tsubo*—plus Miyamoto, the cluster of houses on shrine-owned land near the entrance to the shrine—participates in the *tōya* system, the portable shrine procession, and the manning of the floats. Each precinct also maintains its own *tsubo* shrine or shrines: in Nishimachi, Nishinomiya Shrine; in

Kamimachi, Atago Shrine; in Ushiromachi, Koyasu Kannon; in Kami Nakamachi, Hachiman Shrine; in Nakamachi, Fudō; in Motomachi, Yakushi Temple; in Higashimachi, Ryūjin Shrine and Raiden Shrine; and in Yodomachi, Itsukushima Shrine and a shrine dedicated to a mountain divinity. The Buddhist figures, Koyasu Kannon and Fudō, are said to be divine guardians of their *tsubo* just like the Shinto kami of the other *tsubo* shrines. Since, with one exception, a special festival is held in honor of each tutelary deity every year, these divinities, at least in principle, can be understood as symbols of spiritual integration within each *tsubo*.

When festivals are viewed as bonds of interrelation, the Tajima Gion festival can be seen as unifying the several *tsubo* areas on a large scale. As mentioned above, those who present in offering a paper-decked sprig of the sacred *sakaki* tree at the annual shrine ritual of 19 July include: one parishioner representative from each *tsubo* and *ku*, the head of each *tsubo* (equivalent to a precinct head), and the head of each *ku*. Again, the same parish representatives make up the suite that attends the portable shrine during its procession. In this way all the *tsubo* and *ku* are bound together through the symbolic agency of the Gion festival. This way of putting it, however, is too abstract, too confined to theory, too much concerned with external arrangements. It is essential to examine, in a more concrete way, the "mechanisms" through which the festival is actually effected: the *tōya*, the portable shrine, and the floats.

From the description of the Gion festival presented at the beginning of this article it will be recalled that the *tōya* teams played a role of central importance. Constituted by people from

neighboring households, the *tōya* team is an organization formed specifically for the festival. It has no connection whatever with the *tsubo*. As has already been observed, the town of Tajima is built mainly along one east-west road, its houses standing side by side in long strips, some close to the road, some set back, and some clustered in other positions. By established convention, the houses ranged along a thirty-three *ken* stretch of road (approximately 65 yards or 60 meters) from one *tōya* team. The number of members per team varies, therefore, according to the size of the houses occupying a given stretch, in some places the number of houses being as few as three, in others as many as ten or fifteen. Because the row is the basis of reckoning, houses on the north side of the road belong to one *tōya* team, those on the south, even though just across the street, to another. In clockwise order each group of households becomes in turn a *tōya* team.

The number of *tōya* teams is not fixed, for the decision as to who will serve as team members is usually made only as the turn draws near. Normally this takes place two years in advance of a team's duty year.

Which house will become the *tōmoto* or headquarters of the *tōya* is almost predictable because of the conditions that must be met: frontage on the main street if at all possible, rooms of ample size, etc.

Whether one is a longtime resident of Tajima is of no importance in determining *tōya* membership. New arrivals, in the interest of establishing good relations in the neighborhood, also take part. After a *tōya* has been formed, a reserve fund is set up to cover anticipated expenses.

Till recently the number of *tōya* teams ran from about

twenty-one to twenty-three, but since 1965, mergers of formerly distinct teams have occurred with some frequency. It is conjectured that a reorganization will take place in future, with the result that there may be only about sixteen *tōya* teams. From the outset Nishimachi (2 teams), Higashimachi (1 team), and Yokomachi (1 team) formed their teams on the basis of the *tsubo* (though using only volunteers), and in recent years a tendency to rely on the *tsubo* has also appeared in the chief precincts: Kamimachi, Kami Nakamachi, Nakamachi, and Motomachi. Originally, however, *tōya* teams had no connection with the other organizations of society. They were formed solely for the festival. At the present time, through a ceremony called *otōya osendo* ("the *tōya* a thousand times," that is, the *tōya* members make a thousand trips from the shrine torii to the worship hall, each time performing an act of worship) followed by a banquet with generous amounts of sake, both on 15 January of the year it is to function, the *tōya* is ritually established and its members bound together.

Because the *tōya* system occupies such a prominent position in the Gion festival, it is important to inquire into its character. The first point to be noted is that the *tōya* has an extreme aversion to the pollution associated with death. During our 1966 field trip, it so happened that a man from a different village called at the home of a relative in Tajima to notify him of a death in the family. This man was a *tōya* member, and since 7 July his house had been strung with the braided straw *shimenawa* ropes. In delivering his message the visitor put one foot into the entryway. As a result the Tajima man withdrew from the *tōya*.

Those active in the more visible jobs are not the experienced

oldtimers but people in their twenties, thirties, and forties. This is due to the requirement that those in the *nanahokai* procession should be people whose parents are alive and well. This emphasis on purity does not mean, however, that the *tōya* includes people who take the role of a kami or are regarded as kami representatives. It does not happen that old people, women, or children in particular are singled out for symbolic treatment as kami-possessed persons. In the *nanahokai* procession the only role is one of carrying offerings. Only the horse in the procession is regarded as kami-possessed. Moreover, even the *tōya* members conduct no religious ceremonies by themselves. For this they always call the priest.

This means that the main role of the *tōya* members is to erect the *kamidana* in the *tōmoto* house, thus turning it into a temporary shrine, and to prepare the food and sake for the festival and see that it is properly served. This involves more, however, than kitchen work alone. Sake and food constitute an important medium by which the bonds between people are confirmed. Take the *doburoku*, for example, which can be brewed for special events like these by government permission only. If, after it has been consumed, one were to check back, he should be able to see what kinds of people were brought into connection with other kinds of people through the medium of sake. Particularly since it is served with foods established by convention as festival foods, its importance as a connecting bond becomes even more evident.

In the *tōmoto* house two lists are always posted. One is the list of duties to be performed, starting with those of the *nanahokai* procession. The other is the list of festival foods (prescribed

in the Book of ceremonies of 1825): *fuki* ("butterbur"), *akaza* ("goosefoot"), *nishin* ("herring"), etc. The menu is specified for five meals: the 18th, 19th, the evening of the 19th, the 20th, and the 21st. Nowadays, however, the two meals scheduled for the 19th (one to which all the residents of the precincts are invited, the other the vigil meal alluded to above) are no longer held. The meal on 18 July accompanies the *miki biraki* ("opening the sacred sake") and the erecting of the *kamidana*, that on 20 July is the noon meal served on the occasion of the procession of the portable shrine, and that on 21 July is held in conjunction with the ceremony of dismantling the *kamidana*. Each is a festival meal or *naorai*, and each takes place after a religious rite. None of these meals is for the *tōya* members only; they are the hosts and are expected to attend to the guests. On 18 July these guests are the priest, the mayor, and other civic officials; on 20 July the priest, representatives of the parish, and the retinue for the portable shrine; and on 21 July the priest and the *tōya* members for the preceding year and the ensuing year. (The discontinued meal of 19 July used to bring together people from every household in every precinct, but today the arrangement is that throughout the festival whoever goes to the shrine for an act of worship is treated to a drink of *doburoku*.) At each of these festival meals the men stay out in front, serving and attending the guests, while the women stay in the kitchen preparing what is to be served. In every case people of differing social position and differing roles in society are joined together, and it is the *tōya* members who do the work of mediators.

The people who do the physical labor of bearers in the portable shrine procession are neither townspeople nor parishioners.

They are hired from outside with funds put up on an apportionment basis by the shrine, the *tōya* for the current year, the *tōya* for the previous year, and the *tōya* for the year to come. The honor guard for the kami in the portable shrine is arranged for by the same groups and in the same way. Because the portable shrine retinue includes representatives of the entire parish and the heads of every precinct, and because the purpose of the circuit is to purify the town, the integrative effect, at least ostensibly, should be great. Quantitatively, however, this integration is achieved not by the portable shrine but by the floats.

Each of the four floats is supported by its own float association. The sections of town that provide the manpower for these associations do not necessarily coincide with precinct territories, but they are pretty well fixed. Members of the Moto float association come from Motomachi and Orihashi, those of the Naka float association from Nakamachi, Yokomachi, Higashimachi, and the Miyamoto hamlet, those of the Kami float association from Kamimachi, Kami Nakamachi, and Ushiromachi, and those of the Nishi float association from Nishimachi and Shinmachi. In each case the first *machi* named stands at the center of the organization.

Every association is divided into teams which take turns handling the various responsibilities connected with the floats. Both children and adults receive assignments. Among the children who ride on the float, the most prestigious roles are: simply to ride along and join in the rhythmic shout that helps and encourages the pushers, to snuff and change the candles, and to raise and lower the curtains for the dramatic performances. The children, however, have no organization.

Among the adults, the general term for those with roles to perform is *sewanin* ("stewards"), but distinctions are made between the *ōsewanin* ("chief stewards"), the *unten kakari* or those in charge of float movements, the *geiba kakari* or people with responsibility for the drama sites, etc. *Unten kakari* are further divided into two: those wearing ceremonial samurai costume direct float movements and take charge of the negotiations shortly to be described; those wearing *happi* or float team jackets do the actual pushing. The former are supposed to be eloquent, persuasive speakers so as to gain advantage for their float during negotiations with other teams over the right of way, while on the other hand the young people who push the float are supposed to hold their excitement in check. The negotiators hold their paper lanterns high and conduct the negotiations in language that smacks of ceremonious pageantry.

As for the *geiba* or drama sites, to take the example of the Kami float in 1970, on 19 July there were three performances before the evening meal and six after, while on 20 July there were six before and ten after, twenty-five in all. In many cases several families act jointly to constitute a single drama site. The number of houses involved in the Kami float dramas of 1970 came to ninety-four. When a float stops at one of these sites for a performance, it is the responsibility of the household members to provide congratulatory gifts and sake. The stewards take a break, enter the house or houses, and are treated to food and drink. Children, young adults, and people in the prime of life come from the float and mingle with the people in the drama site houses. On the night of 20 July there is in addition considerable interchange with other floats. As a

result of all this activity, interpersonal communication becomes uncommonly extensive, and the festive atmosphere builds up to a climax. There are even moments when things become explosive, when it looks as if fists would fly, but in the end differences are usually settled peaceably. It is in this context that one can observe people shaking hands or even hugging each other, forms of fraternization not normally seen in a Japanese country town.

The Festival as a Sacred Drama

Seen as bonds of interrelation, festivals function to support and strengthen the solidarity of the town as a whole, the precincts, and other organized bodies. If the terms "sacred" and "profane" be employed, it could be said that the festival utilizes sacred symbols—kami, portable shrine, food, drink—in order to reinforce the profane. This functionalist approach is widely used. There are times, though, when the townspeople meet and hold a ceremony to commemorate some event, following which they go out to have a drink or two. This too supports and strengthens the group. One is led to wonder, therefore, if this complex, high-priced phenomenon called a festival cannot be approached from some other perspective.

Durkheim, while pointing out the immense potency of symbols, goes on to say that in the last analysis their power is simply a derivative of "society," the reality behind the symbols. Eliade approaches the problem of the sacred and profane from a completely different angle. His theory is somewhat mystical and hard to grasp, but his way of putting it is that a festival is the "reactualization of a sacred past," "a return to primordial time."

When a ritual is held depicting, in accordance with some creation myths, a war between benevolent and malevolent gods, the victory of the good, the driving away of chaos and the creation of a cosmos, this ritual, he avers, is not simply a matter of commemoration. It effects an actual repetition of creation. The explanation of the anthropologist Lloyd Warner is easier to comprehend. Analyzing the celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of Yankee City, he says that the numerous floats in the parade representing events in the history of the city are not faithful depictions of the past but results of an unconscious selection process whereby only those events are portrayed that conform to the image of a glorious Yankee City. The celebration is a "ritualization of the past," a past brought to perfection in the present. History is not so much remembered as revived.¹⁰

Both Warner and Eliade explain festivals by reference to the category of "time." Both have the idea that festivals, in emphasizing the division between sacred and profane, suggest that profane time comes to a halt and that time of a completely different dimension begins. This too comes to an end and one returns to profane time. There is an opening and a closing. Since, in addition, actions are performed, the whole can be likened to a drama. Its myth can be called the script.

The idea of analyzing dramas rests on the assumption that a common structure can be found in them. Van Gennep distinguished what he thought of as three stages in the structure of ritual: separation from the profane, a transition process, and return to the everyday world.¹¹ In the coming of age rites,

10. Warner, *The Living and the Dead*, Part II.

11. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*.

for example, a youth is separated from his mother, undergoes several ordeals, and finally joins the company of those who have attained manhood. With specific reference to festivals, the scholar who has done the most to refine this scheme and put in the hands of researchers a guide to the understanding of this class of phenomena is Edmund Leach. The second of his "Two Essays Concerning the Symbolic Representation of Time," an article bearing the odd title "Time and False Noses," is a mere four and a half pages in length, but for the study of festival structure, its content is of first importance. He begins with a puzzle. Why is it, he asks, that in their festivals people dress up in formal clothes on the one hand and in funny costumes on the other, that they eat special foods or fast? He explains these contradictions by distinguishing three types of ritual behavior in festivals: formality, role reversal, and masquerade (A, B, and C). In A social status is ostentatiously intensified, while in C, its mirror opposite, social status is hidden. In B what happens is the exact opposite of what happens in profane time. It is marked by a reversal of roles, the inversion of normal standards of behavior. Men act as women and women as men, kings as beggars and servants as masters. Incest, adultery, and *lèse majesté* are openly performed. Festivals beginning with A pass through B and end with C, while those starting with C pass through B and end with A. In this sense festivals can be viewed as dramas oriented to the passage of time, sacred dramas in three acts.¹²

The Tajima festival fits precisely the classic scheme of a three-part dramatic structure. The curtain rises on 7 July

12. Edmund R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, p. 135.

when the people of Miyamoto, in the shadow of the shrine, put up the tall banners and lanterns. The festival ends on 21 July when the same people perform *kagura* dances at the shrine, costumed miming of ancient myths to the accompaniment of music. The ceremonies between 7 and 19 July are carried forward for the purpose of preparing the place the kami are to visit, the *tōmoto*. Gradually the ceremonies take on a certain intensity, particularly noticeable in the *nanahokai* procession. Leading the procession are the boys who take the part of the *nanado no tsukai* ("messengers who go seven times"). These are boys selected from the upper grades of elementary school, and the symbolic importance of their role is suggested by the fact that their names are included in the duty roster posted at the *tōmoto*. Setting out for the shrine at about 6 a.m., the boys make six trips back and forth from the torii through the shrine precincts to the priest's house, each time entreating the presence of the kami and of their representative, the priest. The seventh time they lead the entire procession. The *nanahokai* procession puts the finishing touch to the entreaty. This much of the festival comes under the heading of "formality," a step-by-step process by which men approach the sacred.

Yanagita Kunio, well-known as the founder of Japanese folklore studies, visited Tajima in 1915 to observe its Gion festival. This is the point of his allusion to "an old shrine in Minami Aizu" in his *Nihon no matsuri* [Festivals of Japan].¹³ A brief reminiscence of his visit there appears in his "Kokyō shichijūnen"

13. *Yanagita Kunio shū* 柳田國男集 [Collected works of Yanagita Kunio], vol. 10, p. 264. Cf. also, in the same volume, his "Shintō to minzokugaku" 神道と民俗学 [Shinto and ethnology].

[Seventy years away from home],¹⁴ and he also describes the *nanahokai* procession in a piece on the *daijōsai* or thanksgiving festival.¹⁵ Given the distinction between purity and pollution he thought of as fundamental, the Tajima festival seems almost made to order for his theory that Japanese festival structure is to be understood by reference to purificatory abstentions on the one hand and the sharing of food on the other.

But this is only one stage in the festival process. After the rites in the worship hall and the taking of a photograph in memory of the occasion, those who participated in the *nanahokai* procession leave in twos and threes. The procession itself was only the first half of the journey. A second half follows, the leading role now shifting to the kami whose presence has been so arduously besought and who now begin their processional tour of the town. The portable shrine with its retinue now leaves the shrine.

The purpose of the Gion festival is purification. While the spring festivals have petitionary prayers for the rice crop and the autumn festivals have harvest thanksgiving rituals, the summer festivals are usually explained as purificatory rites. Susa-no-o and the god fused with him, Gozu-tennō, precisely because they are such violent, dreadful kami, are turned to in the hope that their immense power can be redirected to the cleaning away of pollution. The primary purpose of the festival is fulfilled when the kami, borne in the portable shrine, visit every quarter and thus purify the whole town.

The ceremony of *ohachimai* held at the *tōmoto* house, in which

14. 故郷七十年 in *ibid.*, suppl. vol. 3, p. 360.

15. “Daijōsai to kokumin” 大嘗祭と國民 [The great thanksgiving festival and the citizens of Japan] in *ibid.*, vol. 31, p. 373.

uncooked rice is thrown about by the members of three *tōya* generations (the year past, the current year, and the year to come), is also for the purpose of purification. This is the only occasion on which all the participants, reading from woodblock-printed sheets of paper, recite in chorus the archaic *ogami kotoba* ("words of worship"): "Before the great kami who have established their dwelling at Tade'uga Shrine and whose protection encompasses all of Tajima town of Aizu county in the land of Iwashiro, in awe we humbly and reverently offer our worship. To the end that the kami not inflict us with pestilential diseases or cause bodily injuries to our households but grant us the aid of their blessing and favor throughout a long life, we clap our hands in humble expression of awe and reverence."

Originally, the portable shrine procession first stopped at the most sacred place in town, the *tōmoto*, ritually purifying it and only then visiting the other sections of town. The notification procedure concerning the departure from the *tōmoto* is fixed by long-established convention. First, a man of one particular family lineage, in formal dress, comes to the *tōmoto* and ceremoniously announces that preparations are complete, that the various quarters of town stand ready. In response the *oshitaku bure* and *otachi bure*, two men of the retinue (also of specified family lineages), each wearing the prescribed comical attire of "an open coat bearing a pattern of waves and birds, a five-colored cord to hold back the sleeves, underneath the coat a summer kimono closed with a woman's sash tied back to front, on his head a wooden crown, in his right hand a war fan, and straw sandals on his feet"¹⁶ and each moving with dramatically exaggerated

16. Muroi, *Aizu Tajima gionsai gaisetsu*, p. 20.

gestures, notify the townspeople by crying “*Oshitaku nasare mashō*” (“let us make ready”) and “*Omikoshi no otachi*” (“the portable shrine is about to leave”). This juxtaposition of the stiff messenger from town and the comic figures from the portable shrine retinue form a pointed contrast between formal and masquerade dress.

There are eight places where the portable shrine stops. Of these eight, the four stops to purify the Higashimachi, Yokomachi, Nishimachi, and Ushiromachi areas indicate what used to be the northern and southern, eastern and western boundaries of the town. The *Meiji zōho saishiki kakurei* [Supplement to the rules for festival rites] of 1890 contains the following passage: “From of old the portable shrine has proceeded to the boundary of Yokomachi but not gone in and made a stop there. However, in view of the unanimous request of the Yokomachi parishioners. . .” And again, “Once every twenty-one years the portable shrine, in accordance with established practice, has gone only as far as the bottom of Nishinomiya. . . This practice is now revised. Henceforth the portable shrine will go all the way into Nishimachi. This route is hereby formally and permanently established.” From this it may be seen that these more recently developed sections of town were accorded the same privileges as the older ones. If, as Eliade might put it, the rites conducted at these four stops are to be understood as signifying the demarcation of a sacred space, the distinguishing of cosmos from chaos, and the driving away of all impurity from this area, then the remaining four sites are better understood as clues by which to trace the course of Tajima history. Before identifying them, however, one further point should be noted. At the

house in Higashimachi where the portable shrine makes its stop, it is the custom to offer loach soup to the priest. This custom has its origin in a legend to the effect that once when the founding ancestor of the house was catching loaches in his rice fields, there appeared before him a bright and shining stone, which was Gozu-tennō. This legend of the birth or appearance of the kami Gozu-tennō is also part of the record.

The remaining stops are: (1) the place where the tutelary deity of Naganuma, the old castle lord, was worshiped; (2) the house of the head of Tajima when it was still a village; (3) the building that housed the old criminal court; and (4) the house of the official in charge of lacquer ware. The houses at these stops no longer have any connection with their former use. In fact two of the stops now take place at vacant lots. Nevertheless, the rites are performed as demanded by custom. By following in the train of the portable shrine, one can discern something of the eminence Tajima had when lacquer was one of its most important commodities, when Tajima was a flourishing stopover village on the old post road.

There is room to question whether anything having to do with the purificatory procession of the portable shrine corresponds to "role reversal." We can consider this procession, however, as a drama of the "roaming" of the kami. By nature, sky kami or kami induced to live peaceably in a grove, responding to the wishes of the people, venture forth to make a circuit of villages and towns and drive away malignant spirits. Given the primary purpose of a Gion festival, the portable shrine procession, as over against the *nanahokai* procession and the activity of the floats, clearly has the more central role.

After the town has thus been purified, the center of gravity shifts to the nighttime floats so appropriate to a festive celebration. The gaiety and carnival atmosphere associated with them have already been discussed in the preceding section.

The Festival as a Coincidence of Opposites

The third way of thinking theologically about festivals is an elusive one. It is occasioned by the feeling that the first two approaches leave certain matters unresolved. Our starting point can be the ideas of Victor Turner, even though he is not a theologian.

While relying on van Gennep's three-part scheme, Turner emphasizes the anti-secular character of festivals and introduces the concept of *communitas* as an unstructured or even anti-structural world distinct from the structured secular world. The latter half of his book *Ritual Process*, to some extent a critique of culture, suggests that he would like to think of *communitas* neither as reinforcing the secular nor yet as set apart from it but as a principle for the reform of the secular. It is a reverse effect of the sacred on the secular. However, the distinguishing features of this modality of the sacred are not altogether clear. The opposite of secular structure may be thought of, on the one hand, as approximated by the unstructured immediacy of the hippies or, on the other, as analogous to the anti-structural orientation of criminal gangs—which of course have their own class structure. Turner himself indicates that he has not been able to formulate a satisfactory explanation.¹⁷

The idea that two antithetical principles can coexist in the

17. Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*.

same festival tends to make one lose his bearings. Yet there are those who say that something indicative of the nature of the festival is to be found in this coincidence of opposites. A. W. Sadler, in the course of studying Japanese festivals, was surprised to discover within the precincts of Yasukuni Shrine, during its Grand Festival, a booth erected for strip shows. This led him to suggest the interesting view that festivals include not only religious but irreligious elements as well.¹⁸ Of course the idea that opposites like purity and obscenity can intermingle appeared in Leach's scheme also. In that case, however, they appeared in chronological sequence. Here they occupy the same space at the same time.

W. E. H. Stanner, in his detailed study of the symbolic structure of the festivals of Australian aborigines, encountered a similar problem. In one part of the highly secret coming of age rituals called *Karwadi*, as part of a pattern that includes a pantomime and song about their totem the blowfly, a ceremony known as *tjirmumuk* begins. "It is a kind of horseplay... Men... push and jostle one another, snatch away small personal possessions, pluck at each others' genitals, and in laughing voice shout things which would ordinarily be obscene, embarrassing, and hurtful."¹⁹ If one takes as his point of departure the view that the sacred and secular are discontinuous, this phenomenon becomes inexplicable. In the context of sacred song and mime, people play pranks on each other. Moreover, both features com-

18. Albert W. Sadler, "The Form and Meaning of Festival," *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1 (1969), p. 10.

19. Stanner, "On Aboriginal Religion, I: The Lineaments of Sacrifice," *Oceania*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1960), p. 112.

bine to form one uninterrupted part of the *Karwadi* festival. The sacred, accordingly, becomes an equivocal concept that includes both the pure and the impure. On the other hand, the *tjirmumuk* stands in contrast not only to everyday life but also to the symbolic life represented in the festival. It stands as a *tertium quid*. In this way Stanner argues that in addition to the categories of sacred and profane there is need for a third category, neither sacred nor profane, which he calls "the mundane." In considering festivals it is important, on his view, to keep in mind all three.²⁰ (In the Japanese context this might call for distinguishing the sacred and profane from the vulgar. I suppose "vulgar" would then mean the fights and inebriation associated with the Tajima floats or the side shows at Yasukuni Shrine, but the definition and theoretical usefulness of this category is still not clear to me.)

The theologian Harvey Cox, who earlier published *The Secular City* has more recently come out with *The Feast of Fools: A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy*, which can be interpreted either as an evolution of, or a revolution in, his former position. Starting from the idea of festivity as a form of play, he expresses the wish that mystics and militants, both born of the world of the sacred, give some shock therapy to secular society. The main point of his argument is to call for a "rebirth of the spirit of festivity" in Christianity, particularly in Protestantism. According to Cox, in order to recognize Christ as at once harlequin and God, Christianity as at once comedy and tragedy,

20. Stanner, "On Aboriginal Religion, III: Symbolism in the Higher Rites," *Oceania*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1961), p. 109.

it is essential to return to the original festive experience. Borrowing from Susan Sontag a term she employs in her interpretation of surrealism, he speaks of the essence of festivity as "juxtaposition."²¹ By this he would seem to mean the coincidence of opposites, the binding together of elements normally deemed incompatible.

So far in this section no more has been done than to describe some of the ideas bearing on our problem as found in the writings of a few scholars. It is evident that they do not speak with one voice. They do agree, however, in trying to communicate the idea that the festival brings disparate elements into a single space at a single time. If the festival was previously likened to a drama, here it seems rather like a dream.

How can this "coincidence of opposites" perspective be verified in terms of the relationships between data? At the present time, the approach that seems closest to this way of thinking is that of structural analysis. This method begins by selecting polar opposites, elements that stand in diametrical relation to one another. With reference to festivals, a man who ventured quite some time ago to explore this way of seeing things, without waiting for Lévi-Strauss, is Matsudaira Narimitsu. He pointed out that among the characteristics of the Japanese festival is a centrally featured competitive contest, which he depicted as "a representation of a dichotomous thought pattern based on the composition of the village."²² Moreover, he noted, this

21. Cox, *Feast of Fools*, p. 135, citing "Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition" in Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1966), p. 269.

22. Matsudaira Narimitsu 松平齊光, *Matsuri* 祭 [Festivals], p. 38.

dichotomy is an unequal one depending on a division into superior and inferior as in the distinction between right and left or men and women.

In the Gion festival of Tajima the *tōya* organization is divided into two halves with one *tōmoto* for Tade'uga Shrine and another for Kumano Shrine. In the *nanahokai* procession the former carry as offerings three casks of sake, one tray of fish, and three containers of rice, a total of seven, whereas the latter carry only one of each, a total of three. Only the offerings of the Tade'uga *tōmoto* are counted in the naming of the procession. Since this division, so far as is presently known, does not derive from some old social antagonism, it would appear to be a dichotomy peculiar to the festival and visible only at festival time. This point, however, has not yet been fully established. Yet even if the foundation for the dichotomy were to come to light, it would still be important to carry forward the analysis of how this duality develops during the course of the festival.

To explain this development there are at the present time two main options. One is the Lévi-Strauss way, in which the opposition between antithetical elements is overcome by a messiah, a shaman, or a figure who plays the role of what mythology calls the trickster—in short, by a mediator. The other way sees this opposition building up to a climax, at which point it boils over or explodes, whereupon a new perspective opens up. Though not concerned with festivals, William James' classic statement of what happens in conversion is of this type, and closely related to it is the festival theory of Roger Caillois.

In the Tajima festival competition between the several float associations is far and away the most conspicuous form of anti-

thesis. It is evident, though, that this is for the most part a competition between *tsubo*, organizations closely bound up with people's daily lives. I should like, therefore, to point out two examples from which an antithesis, not easily discernible at first glance, may be hypothesized.

Earlier the existence of two *tōmoto* houses in the *tōya* organization was pointed out, but here another feature comes into a view, a feature which should perhaps be described not so much as a form of antithesis as a fusion between heterogeneous elements. I refer to the contrast between two principles at work in the *tōya* organization: the principle of territoriality and the principle of consanguinity. The *tōya* organization makes it a point of honor to involve as many people as possible in the *nanahokai* procession. Though there is a rule that only people with both parents living may participate, the *tōya* not only looks for people with these qualifications among its own households but seeks reinforcements from other households as well. But those who come from outside have to satisfy a further requirement: they must be blood-relatives of at least one household in the *tōya*. Looking at the breakdown of family lineages among the sixty-seven people who participated in the *nanahokai* procession of 1971, we find that twenty-six men and twelve women came from households within the *tōya* as over against fourteen men and fourteen women who were invited as relatives. In addition there was one exception: a person who had once worked for a certain family and was regarded by them as their own child. There are also examples of people who, because of having moved from one section of town to another, continue to serve as *tōya* members but in their new locality. From this it may be seen that the *tōya* organiza-

tion represents the union of a thoroughgoing territorial principle and a consanguineous principle, the latter specifying that people brought in from outside to participate in the procession must be relatives of some within (as a result of which, *tōya* members belonging to strong kinship networks can mobilize a large number of people).

A duality in the realm of concepts can also be supposed. This is a duality having to do with the location of the kami during the period of the festival. When the festival was interpreted as a drama, we perceived the kami following a script that called for them to proceed from the shrine to the *tōmoto*, make a circuit of the town, then return to the shrine. The thorn in the flesh of this interpretation is that among what can be regarded as kami symbols, there is considerable going back and forth between shrine and *tōmoto*. Let us look once more at the course of events.

1. (18 July) The day for the erecting of the *kamidana* in the *tōmoto*. The priest brings the *gohei* and stands it before the *kamidana*. From this day, the *kamidana* in the *tōmoto* is treated as equivalent to the shrine itself.
2. (19 July) The vigil eve of the festival. Though now discontinued, it involved the priest's going in procession to the *tōmoto* and returning unobserved.
3. (20 July) The horse in the *nanahokai* procession has a *gohei* fastened upright to his saddle and is regarded as the locus of the kami.
4. (20 July) The installation of the shrine's sacred symbol representing the kami in the portable shrine. At the *tōmoto* house, the portable shrine is left out in the road, but the priest crosses over the sacred bridge and enters the house.

5. (20 July) The portable shrine is returned to its starting point, and the sacred symbol is reinstalled in the shrine.
6. (21 July) The dismantling of the *kamidana* in the *tōmoto*, following which the *tōya* people invariably return the *gohei* to the shrine.

This frequent recurrence of the kami symbols is not so much like a drama as like a song with many repetitions of the main theme. If we look about for ways to explain this phenomenon, several interpretations come to mind as possibilities.

From a religious perspective it is quite possible for the kami to divide into any number of distinct spiritual forms. Though the kami are in the portable shrine during its processional circuit, this does not mean that the shrine sanctuary is left destitute. Nonetheless, even though there is a doctrinal basis for the view that the kami can be both here and there simultaneously, this does not explain why the kami must divide.

If, on the other hand, an interpretation is undertaken from the standpoint of folklore studies by locating the problem, as Yanagita Kunio would do, in the context of changes in the *miyaza*²³ (a *tōya*-like organization), it would doubtless appear, given his strong attachment to the theory of evolutionary stages of development, that earlier stages continue to survive in the form of strata. Originally, the kami did not have a permanent residence in the shrine but took up lodging in a private house every time a festival was held. With succeeding generations other ideas mingled with this way of thinking. The procedure one must follow in order to peel them away and discover the

23. "Shintō to minzokugaku," p. 353.

original form of the belief is precisely like that of the philologist trying to get to the original text of an ancient palimpsest.

Still another possibility, however, is to consider these ideas about the kami as parts of a single, coherent "production." From this perspective a different interpretation takes shape. It now becomes possible to interpret the locus of the kami as temporarily and "artificially" divided between the shrine and the *tōmoto*, the various festival rituals being assigned a place within the framework of this strained relationship. Take the priest's going to the *tōmoto* in procession but returning unobserved, for example. Could the implicit intention of these actions be to permit the coexistence of two mutually contradictory ideas, namely, that the kami are both in the shrine and in the *tōmoto*? Or take the sacred horse. Responsibility for providing the horse falls to the *tōmoto*. The horse accompanies the *nanahokai* procession, and later it also takes part in the portable shrine procession. If the portable shrine is thought of as a kami symbol provided by the shrine, the sacred horse is a kami symbol provided by the *tōmoto*. Again, it is the shrine that distributes charms during the procession, while the *tōya* people distribute artificial flowers. Moreover, on the night the portable shrine returns to the shrine, the floats (with the exception of the Nishimachi float) go to their *tōmoto* house, which becomes a site for dramatic performances. For the float associations it is practically obligatory to go to the *tōmoto* and pay their respects. The kami still reside in the town. This is not to say, of course, that the shrine and *tōmoto* stand opposed to one another like two human antagonists. However, in the midst of the tension that arises in the course of acting as host to sacred beings that detest

pollution and are hard to handle, two extremes of behavior, ceremonious propriety and impertinent discourtesy that would not normally be countenanced, come to life.

For this last point concerning the two kinds of behavior, I am unable to provide a satisfactory analysis. One of the other names by which this festival is known is the "take a bride festival" (*yome tori matsuri*). As the name suggests, those who stand on the sidelines watching the *nanahokai* procession are brutally frank in their assessments of the brides' charms. Again, the people from other towns and villages who bear the brunt of the burden in the procession that carries forward the ponderous portable shrine sometimes, partly with sake-inspired courage, allow their pent-up irritations to explode. It also happens occasionally that the verbal wrangling that occurs when one float draws near another develops into a real melee. Nevertheless, since the dimension of what Stanner calls "the mundane" does not appear in specific ritual form in the Tajima Gion festival, it has not yet been possible to work out a definite way of explaining the contrast between the solemn and the vulgar. But from the fact that the festival is held not in an atmosphere of friendly harmony and mutual reliance but in one of tension and strain, it may be perceived that the structure which produces this atmosphere has at its foundation the opposition between symbol and symbol, group and group.

NOTE: Research on the Tajima Gion festival was carried out with graduate students of the University of Tokyo, Department of Religious Studies, in 1966, 1970, and 1971. I should like to express deep appreciation to the people of Tajima who so willingly and cheerfully took

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Glossary

<i>chigo</i> 稚児	<i>ogami kotoba</i> 拝辞
<i>daidai kagura</i> 太々神楽	<i>ohachimai</i> 御鉢米
<i>doburoku</i> 濁酒	<i>ōsewanin</i> 大世話人
<i>geiba</i> 芸場	<i>oshitaku bure</i> 御支度触れ
<i>gionbayashi</i> 祇園ばやし	<i>otachi bure</i> 御立触れ
<i>gohei</i> 御幣	<i>otana kowashi</i> 神棚こわし
<i>horobana</i> 保露花	<i>otōya</i> 御党屋
<i>kamidana</i> 神棚	<i>otoyamoto</i> 御党屋本
<i>kenka matsuri</i> 喧嘩祭	<i>otōya osendo</i> お党屋お千度
<i>ku</i> 区	<i>sakaki</i> 榊
<i>machi</i> 町	<i>sakaki mukae</i> 榊迎え
<i>miki biraki</i> 神酒開き	<i>sewanin</i> 世話人
<i>mikoshi</i> 神輿	<i>shimenawa</i> しめ縄
<i>mikoshi mae shinji</i> 神輿前神事	<i>Tade'uga</i> 田出宇賀
<i>mitama utsushi</i> みたまうつし	<i>tōmoto</i> 党本
<i>miyamoto</i> 宮本	<i>tōya</i> 党屋
<i>miyaza</i> 宮座	<i>tsubo</i> 坪
<i>nanahokai</i> 七行器	<i>yatai</i> 屋台
<i>naorai</i> 真会	<i>yome tori matsuri</i> 嫁取り祭

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