

Scott SCHNELL, *The Rousing Drum: Ritual Practice in a Japanese Community*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999. xi + 363 pp. \$59.00 cloth, ISBN 0-8248-2064-9. \$33.95 paper, ISBN 0-8248-2141-6.

FURUKAWA IS A SMALL TOWN of around 7000 people in the mountains of the Hida region in northern Gifu Prefecture. In modern times it is perhaps best known for its colorful festival each April, which attracts the attention of large numbers of Japanese visitors, and which features prominently on tourist posters displayed both by Furukawa's tourist office (which sees the festival as a means of bringing visitors to the town) and by organizations such as JR, whose role in promoting rural festivals and the like as a means of increasing its customers, is well known.

The two most prominent (and, indeed, complementary) features of the festival are the formal and rather solemn, daytime, procession in which a *mikoshi* from the town's Ketawakamiya shrine is led through the town, and the rambunctious night time procession that precedes it, in which the *okoshi daiko* or "rousing drum" of the ritual's name is carted through the streets. These two events demonstrate different faces of the festival and its constituent community and social dynamics: the solemn procession emphasizes status and order, while the rousing drum rite, emanating more clearly from the folk religious world, illustrates the element of tension and contest within the community.

It is the raucous *okoshi daiko* ritual in which a large drum, bestrode by drummers, is borne through the various quarters of the town at night that is the primary attraction for the numerous tourists drawn to Furukawa by the festival. The honor of leading this procession and having its scions seated on and beating the drum, rotates annually between different communities and neighborhoods in Furukawa. Naturally this leading role and position both accords with and reflects social status within the community.

It also, as does the rite in general, engenders and allows for the expression of antagonisms and conflicts. Each year, as Scott Schnell shows in this masterful and scrupulously researched new book, the various neighborhoods and community groups of Furukawa express their symbolic opposition to the socially hierarchic nature of the community and society exemplified by the privileged groups pulling or seated atop the *okoshi daiko*, by mounting attacks on the rousing drum procession. In this process neighborhood groups, normally consisting of young men dressed in festival attire and bearing *tsuke daiko* (literally "attaching drums"), strive to attach themselves and their drum to the procession, preferably in the position of honor immediately behind the rousing drum, and in so doing they vie with their rival communities within Furukawa for this mark of status.

The whole procession is thus replete with signs and symbols of competition and conflict, and while these are generally symbolic in form, it is by no means unknown for them to spill over into actual contest and even violence. Indeed, the whole history of the ritual—and of the community of Furukawa—is replete with cases of open conflict and violent rebellion against the authorities. As Schnell shows, the *okoshi daiko* ritual serves as an arena in which the ordinary people of the town can give rein to their often pent-up feelings of frustration against, and resistance to, the economic and social elite within the town. It thus enables them to articulate their views and attitudes towards various authority figures and intruders who have threatened to undermine Furukawa's local autonomy. The ritual also provides opportunities for settling disputes and conducting acts of vengeance against those who have angered the community: during the procession, damage can be "accidentally" done to the properties of those who have refused to contribute to the festival or who have annoyed their fellows. Over the ages, such figures have included overbearing and intrusive new regional governors imposed on Furukawa in the Meiji period, whose policies met with severe resistance and riots, and, in the modern day, the tourists who come to gaze at the "exotic" nature of the ritual and who sometimes become embroiled in the mayhem.

While the ritual is thus a medium through which notions of resistance and opposition (to external influences and to internal social status) may be expressed, it is only part of the festival as a whole. While the rousing drum ritual is wild and provides the mechanisms for expressing dissent and fissure within the community, the subsequent *mikoshi* procession, with its parade of beautiful and ornate festival wagons (*yatai*) for which Furukawa, like the Hida region in general, is rightly famous, provides a means of reintegrating the community and affirming the structures of authority undermined in the earlier *okoshi daiko* ritual. As Schnell puts it, “the *okoshi daiko* divides the town into competitive segments; the *mikoshi* procession draws it back together” in a process of renewal (144).

Schnell’s main focus, however, is on the tensions and conflicts that can be expressed in this process, and in this he provides a welcome antidote to the pictures most commonly drawn in accounts of Japanese religion, of *matsuri* as predominantly demonstrations and symbolic restatements of harmony and cohesion. While Schnell recognizes that images of cohesion play a critical part in the Furukawa ritual process, he demonstrates that resistance, tension, and conflict are equal if not dominant forces within the wider festival performance.

Schnell’s book is not, however, simply a portrait and analysis of the festival as it operates in the present day, for he also provides meticulous detail on the preparations for the *matsuri* (for example, on the way in which the various structures used in the processions have been constructed) and on the social and political relations expressed in and through the festival performance. We are given detailed accounts of the politics of participation in the ritual, which affect such matters as who can serve in the exalted position as drummers of the *okoshi daiko*, who may walk in the procession, and what roles are played by local organizations and interest groups such as the fire brigade, the police, and the shrine itself. Schnell examines such organizational principles both at the town level, where a form of equality prevails as leading roles in the festival process are rotated annually through the various neighborhoods, and at neighborhood levels, where hierarchical considerations relating to status and position in the community help determine the individual roles played in the ritual. In these respects, the book is as expressive and informative about Japanese political, economic, and social relations at local levels as it is about religious dynamics.

It is also a book rich in historical detail for, although Schnell operates primarily from an anthropological perspective, he demonstrates none of the historical naïveté that so frequently characterizes anthropological studies of religion. Rather, he demonstrates a real grasp of historicity, weaving together historical, social, cultural, and anthropological themes admirably, and making particularly good use of documentary and photographic records to indicate how the ritual has developed and changed in the past century or so. It is in this interplay between historical and anthropological study and analysis that the ritual (like any ritual process) needs to be understood; and it is in such terms that Schnell pursues his purpose, showing how the *matsuri* has developed along with the community itself, and illustrating how changing patterns inside the community and between it and the outside world have

reflected on and influenced the developments within the *okoshi daiko* and the festival in general.

Through this historical analysis Schnell amply demolishes any notion that “tradition” is in any way static or enduring: as he shows, the intensely “traditional” ritual of the *okoshi daiko* that proves so attractive to tourists has only recently developed as a dominant element in the Furukawa festival. Moreover, it has itself changed in form since its emergence as a relatively minor festival event in the Meiji period. Its emergence as a focal point in the festival process has come about as a result of shifting social and economic patterns, as well as tensions within the Furukawa community and its relationships with a wider range of authorities. All of these have needed a public mode of expression, and it is in this context that the formerly minor *okoshi daiko* rite has become important, because of its capacity to absorb and become the mode of expression for such expressions of cultural resistance and ritual conflict within the community.

Schnell further demonstrates how this process has continued in the present day. Modern economic changes (and especially the flow of young people out of the region and changing patterns of employment) have occasioned changes in the time scale of the ritual, while it has, like many other colorful “traditional” rural festivals throughout Japan, been commodified, promoted and hence “framed” by local authorities and tourist boards as a means of promoting tourism for the region and thereby stimulating economic development. This process of commodification has helped create yet another set of authorities to resent, and produced further potential contests and conflicting interests to fuel the pent-up angers of the Furukawa community. Among those who may bear the brunt of these are the throngs of tourists who have flooded into Furukawa each year to witness the spectacle and who, in the process, themselves become victims of the mayhem. One year, for example, lines of cars thoughtlessly parked by tourists along the narrow streets of the town hampered the easy passage of the *okoshi daiko* procession: at the end of the night many had had their windows and bonnets bashed in during the general festive performance.

Although the above is a general summary of the themes Schnell engages with, there is much more besides in this book, which is certainly the best and most comprehensive study not only of festivals but of religious practices within small-scale Japanese communities that I have read in English or Japanese. (Perhaps the closest volume in scope, albeit not primarily on *matsuri*, is Josef KYBURZ's [1987] anthropological and historical study of religious change and development in a Nagano mountain community, an area and setting that is not wholly dissimilar to the Furukawa region studied by Schnell, and which could have informed his book in many ways.) Indeed, I found very little to gripe about (a rare condition for me, I admit, as I enter bad-tempered later life) except perhaps for a small query about festival participation. Schnell comments that “only strict adherents of Christianity or those who are philosophically opposed to any form of religious activity” fail to participate in the *matsuri* (119), and I was left to wonder about the accuracy of this. What, I wondered, of the members of new religions such as Sōka Gakkai, who nor-

mally eschew religious practices other than those associated with their own faith—or are there none of these people in Furukawa? (If that were the case, it would be rather remarkable and worthy of further note!)

In concluding this review I realize I should combine a hearty endorsement of this book with an admission that I am not a disinterested party in the book and its subject matter. First, the region Schnell discusses is one of my favorites in Japan—and his descriptions of Hida, and its towns of Furukawa and Takayama, caused me plentiful pangs of nostalgia and regret (having not managed to visit these places since the mid-1980s), that awakened the wish to go there again. Second, as I read Schnell's work, I became aware of my own noble support for and patronage of the festival. As Schnell shows, the saké makers of the Hida region are amongst the most prominent patrons of Ketawakamiya shrine and the Furukawa festival. They, of course, depend for their wealth and prosperity on the patronage of grateful consumers of their product, and I am gratified to realize that my selfless activities in this respect (Hida saké rates pretty highly in my view) have therefore contributed to the continuing performance of the festival. I therefore feel obliged to claim some indirect credit for Scott Schnell's book, while also mentioning that it has in turn spurred my desire to contribute further to the festival and, of course, to the promotion of academic knowledge and understanding. I'll drink to that when I can next get hold of some Furukawa saké—and when I do I will certainly toast Schnell for his fine work in providing us with this excellent and comprehensive study of festivals and ritual performances in Japan, one that ought to be on every reading list related not just to Japanese religion, culture and social dynamics, but to ritual and festival performances in general.

#### REFERENCE

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