

A Festival with Anonymous Kami: The Kobe Matsuri

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For the purpose of studying aspects of the religious consciousness of contemporary Japanese people, many possibilities exist. Our decision was to select a festival or matsuri in urbanized society. The Kobe Matsuri, a typical urban festival sponsored by the municipality, began in 1971 and contains elements that do not exist in traditional festivals.

We focused on various images of the people involved in this festival. As a result, we came to the following types of images and their bearers: (1) The images conjured up by the municipality, (2) the images of those who respond positively to the municipality, (3) the images expressed in negative form by those critical of the festival, (4) the images of youth looking for great outbursts of energy, and (5) the images formed through ward-level events, independent of the intention of the municipality and for the most part rather traditional.

Through analysis of these various images, we conclude that even though it is the intention of the municipality to establish a new type of festival that will replace the traditional festival and form new symbols for civil integration, these symbols do not yet have the reality that divine spirits have in traditional festivals.

One often encounters opposing claims among those discussing the religious consciousness or religiosity of the Japanese people. On one side, we meet with opinions indicating that the Japanese are highly religious. The reasons offered include the deep-rootedness of the ancestral rites carried out in each household, the enthusiastic attitude of the people toward various kinds of religious festivals, and the rapid growth of

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new religious movements since the end of the Tokugawa era and the beginning of the Meiji era. On the other side, we encounter opinions that stress the weakness of Japanese religiosity. From this angle we hear that many religious rituals are more a matter of social custom than belief; that the proportion of those who affirm adherence to a specific religion is, according to many field surveys, very low; and that many religious events, especially religious festivals, are supported mainly in a spirit that aims at pleasure and amusement.

As to why these opposing claims have persuasiveness, there is not only the problem that scholarly use of terms like religious consciousness and religiosity is undoubtedly very vague, but also the fact that the religious life of the Japanese people is characterized by a high degree of diversity. Ancestral rites, new religious movements, religious festivals, and folk beliefs are all complex phenomena and require research and evaluation from a number of standpoints.

For the purpose of participating in the ongoing inquiry into the religious consciousness of modern Japanese people, we propose to consider the images of participants involved in a festival in urbanized society, hoping to clarify a modern expression of religious consciousness or religiosity without insisting on a strict definition of these terms.

Festivals in urbanized society, incidentally, belong to those events in contemporary Japan that are generally recognized as religiously weak. In traditional festivals in Japan it is very natural that a divine spirit is invited to the festival and that this ceremony forms the core of the festival at least in its theological meaning. In the case of newly created festivals in urbanized society, on the other hand, one may easily observe a tendency to exclude or consciously cover up ceremonies to a divine spirit.

Our decision to take up the problem of the festival in urbanized society despite this recognition rests on the following points: (1) there are an infinite number of religious

festivals of various sizes in Japan, and it is difficult to find people who have nothing to do with them (this is more a reason for taking up a religious festival than for taking up such a festival in an urbanized society); (2) the scale and number of festivals in urbanized societies are increasing year by year while traditional festivals in the countryside are tending to decline or disappear as a result of depopulation in agricultural, mountain, and fishing villages and population concentration in urban areas; (3) in urbanized areas we can find more and more examples that aim at, or have realized, "a new type of festival."

In view of this situation we intend to pursue contemporary expressions of Japanese religious consciousness not by studying traditional festivals in village situations but by concentrating on one of the festivals of the urbanized societies where more than seventy per cent of the Japanese people now live.

We are not prepared, however, to move directly into a discussion on modern expressions of the Japanese religious consciousness on the basis of urban festival materials that in many cases manifest only a weak religiosity, or to discuss such a matter as the various changes to be perceived through these materials. Moreover, the materials themselves seem to resist treatment on the level of religious consciousness alone. We decided, therefore, to focus our discussion on the matter of festival "images" and to avoid any attempt to treat the problem directly on the level of religious consciousness.

The term "festival images" has to do with images of a festival held by those participating in it. It refers to their views on the desirable features of a festival, the best or ideal implementation of the festival, and the general impression and atmosphere they associate with the word "festival." In this study festival images are to be abstracted from festival-connected slogans, the content of actual events, and the opinions or impressions of festival participants.

In this connection mention may be made of the pioneer work on traditional Japanese festivals by Yanagita Kunio, often spoken of as the father of Japanese folklore studies. He divided the general category of festivals into *matsuri* or classical feasts and *sairei* or religious festivals accompanied by para-festival activities, and he regarded the change from *matsuri* to *sairei* as a matter of historical change. In the *matsuri* particular respect was shown for the religious purification, abstinence, and ablutions of the participants, and communion with the kami or divine spirits through various ceremonies occupied a central position. In the *sairei*, on the other hand, the focus of interest shifted to the para-festival activities (for example, contests, parades, and public entertainments) that had once been of peripheral importance, and at the same time a separation between participants and spectators became prominent. A charged atmosphere of excitement and gay festal mirth is said to be characteristic of *sairei*. Yanagita thought that *sairei* grew in popularity, especially in towns and cities, from about the fifteenth century.

Festivals in urbanized situations continue to manifest almost the same elements as those that comprised festivals of the *sairei* type. Not uncommonly, however, festivals are complemented by newly conceived ideals established by a local public body or by various kinds of urban self-governing communities. The Kobe Matsuri or festival treated of in this study is a newly established festival sponsored and supported by the city of Kobe. Consequently, any relationship between this festival and the rituals of any specific religion is excluded partly because of the postwar constitutional principle of separation between religion and politics. At the same time, however, it is the intention of the sponsoring public body to establish and fix images or symbols that will substitute for functions once fulfilled through religion and religious ceremonies.

In the section that follows we present an outline of the

Kobe Matsuri and in a subsequent section present images attributed to the festival by those associated with it. It is our hope that this study will make a small contribution to a wider understanding of the religious consciousness of contemporary Japanese people.

THE KOBE MATSURI

The city of Kobe. Overlooking Osaka Bay, Kobe is the major municipality of Hyōgo Prefecture. As of 1975 its population stood at 1,360,000. One of Japan's largest cities, it is famous for its port. From ancient times this area has had a long history as a harbor and transportation center. In the Tokugawa period, however, it was nothing but a poor village with a population of some 3,600 people. After Japan "opened its doors" to the West, Kobe Port was opened in 1868, and foreigners were allowed to live in the city. By the beginning of World War II, its population had grown to exceed 1,000,000, but by the end of the war it had shrunk to half that size. With the great economic development that occurred in Japan in the 1960s, the population of Kobe again came to surpass the 1,000,000 mark.

The percentage of workers in various sectors of the economy as of 1975 was as follows: 1.8% in agriculture, forestry, and fishing; 32.9% in mining and manufacturing; and 64.9% in commerce and service-related industries. With manufacturing industries representing 24.6% of its economic enterprises, wholesale and retail industries 28.8%, and service industries 17.4%, Kobe can be characterized primarily as an industrial and commercial city.

As for the volume of trade in Kobe, according to 1970 statistics it was second to Yokohama with a volume of ¥1,623,400,000,000 in exports (23.3% of all Japanese exports) and of ¥791,400,000,000 in imports (11.7% of all Japanese imports).

The prehistory of the Kobe Matsuri. In 1971, through combining Minato Matsuri or the Port Festival (which had been held thirty-eight times between 1933 and 1970) with the Kobe Carnival (which had been held four times beginning in 1967), the Kobe Matsuri was born. To date (1978) it has been held eight times.

The man who was mayor of Kobe at the time the Port Festival began got the idea for it from the Rose Festival held in Portland, Oregon. The Port Festival was reportedly planned with the expectation that it would be one way of ameliorating the suffering caused by the depression. Held in the fall every year, the Port Festival included such events as an international parade, a procession recalling olden times, streetcars decorated with flowers, Miss Kobe, etc. There was also a ceremony in which the mayor presented a sacred sword to the sea kami and prayed for the prosperity of the harbor. Unlike Japan's traditional festivals, whether of village or town, the Kobe Port Festival from the time of its birth attracted considerable attention as a unique and profane festival. It was a festival with an international flavor.

The Kobe Carnival first made its appearance as a celebration held on the evening prior to the "Centennial of the Opening of Kobe Port." Each year thereafter it was held in the month of May, separately from the Port Festival, its parade and public events having their center in Higashi Yūenchi Park.

In the latter part of the 1950s criticisms of the Port Festival appeared in the newspapers. The chief complaint was that the festival, being government organized, commercially oriented, and monotonous, lacked any real religious or traditional meaning. The city authorities, taking into account changes in the means of transportation as well as in the living situation and in young people's tastes, and further noting that the Port Festival and the Kobe Carnival were in fact quite similar, established a "Committee to Investigate the Kobe Port Festival." In accordance with its recommendations, the Kobe

Matsuri was born as a citizens' festival.

General description of the Kobe Matsuri and how it has changed.

1. Time of the festival

Originally it was decided to hold the Kobe Matsuri for a two-day period covering the third Sunday in May and the preceding Saturday. At present it is a three-day festival that includes the preceding Friday as well. In contrast to the Port Festival, which was always held on 21 and 22 October, the Kobe Matsuri came to be held on a weekend – a change instituted in order to make it easy for the townspeople to participate.

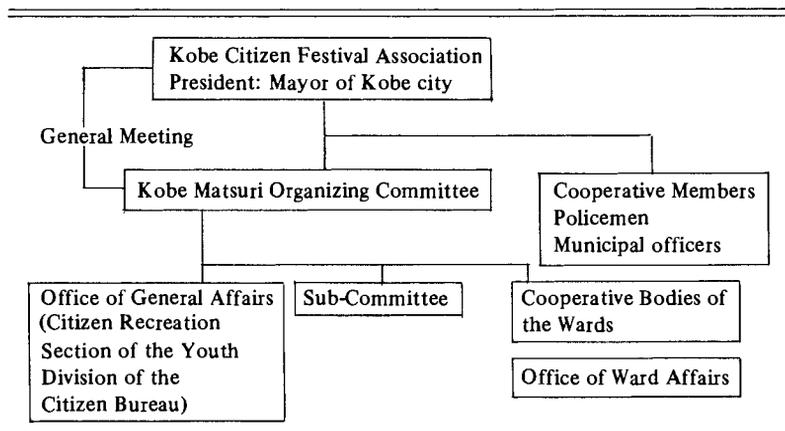
2. Sponsorship

The sponsor of the Kobe Matsuri is the Kobe Citizen Festival Association (see table 1). The Office of General Affairs of this association presently belongs to the Citizen Recreation Section of the Youth Division of the Citizen Bureau in the city office. The first three times the festival was held, the Office of General Affairs belonged to the Tourist Division of the Finance Bureau. At the time of the fourth festival it was moved to the Citizen Leisure Division of the Consultative Department in the Citizen Bureau. Since then it has been organizationally relinked three times within the Citizen Bureau, currently being connected with the office noted above.

The first three times the festival was held, expectations of tourist participation apparently ran high, despite the fact that the festival was allegedly for the townspeople. This can be inferred from the fact that the poster for the third festival bore the Japan National Railway slogan "Discover Japan" and was displayed in all JNR passenger stations in the Osaka-Kyoto area. From the sponsoring organization's point of view, in other words, the festival was held not merely for Kobe citizens but also, and by no means incidentally, for tourists.

TABLE 1

Organization of Kobe Citizen Festival Association



Source: Report of the Committee to Investigate the Kobe Matsuri (1976).

Note: Responsibilities of the Office of General Affairs: budgetary matters, public relations, obtaining donations and sponsors, administration of the General Meeting and Organizing Committee, liaison between the Sub-Committee and the Cooperative Bodies, liaison with Cooperative Members, selection and administration of the Kobe Queens and Princesses, planning and execution of central events, and other general affairs.

Responsibilities of the Office of Ward Affairs: planning and execution of each ward event, administration of the Cooperative Bodies, obtaining donations, co-operative events, and other related matters.

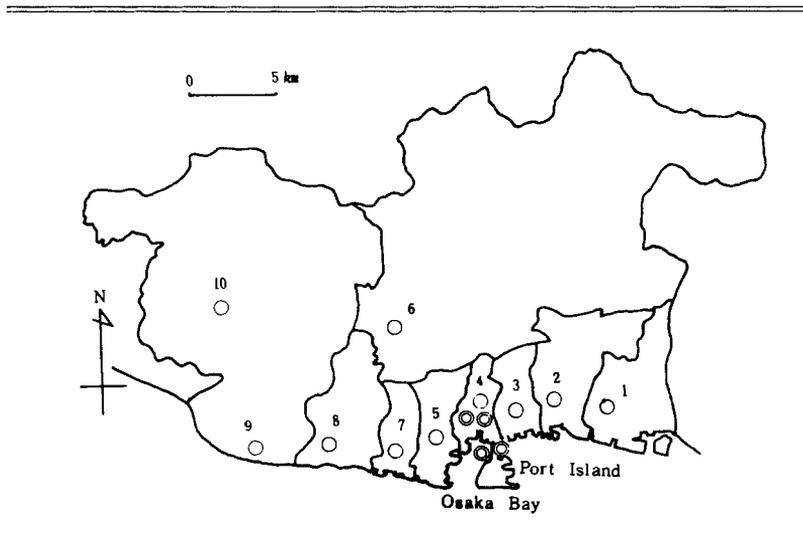
But together with the change in the government office in charge of the festival, the change, that is, from the Finance Bureau to the Citizen Bureau that began with the fourth festival, the JNR poster has been discontinued. It may be surmised that this is a symbolic indication of a change of emphasis on the part of the sponsoring organization, the emphasis now being not on tourists from other cities but on the citizens of Kobe.

3. Summary of events

The Kobe Matsuri can be broadly divided into “central events” and “ward events” (see map). Both consist of sponsored and cooperative activities (see tables 2 and 3 for details).

MAP

Kobe Wards and Event Types



- Legend: ◎ Central event ○ Ward event
- Event Locations:
- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Higashinada Ward | 6. Kita Ward |
| 2. Nada Ward | 7. Nagata Ward |
| 3. Fukiai Ward | 8. Suma Ward |
| 4. Ikuta Ward | 9. Tarumi Ward (in general) |
| 5. Hyōgo Ward | 10. Tarumi Ward (Seishin district) |

Among central events is the matter of choosing queens and princesses for the festival. Seven young Japanese women are chosen as queens, and the princesses are chosen from

TABLE 2

Central Events

Event	Location	Dates
1. Central Parade	CG	1st – 8th
2. Port Parade	Kobe Port	1st – 8th
3. Kobe Matsuri Parade	Main Street	1st – 8th
4. Young Men's Plaza	HYP	1st – 5th
5. Festival Plaza	HYP	1st – 6th
6. Art Plaza	HYP	1st – 6th
7. Folk Dance Plaza	HYP	4th – 8th
8. Oasis Plaza	HYP	6th
9. Funny Garden	Okurayama Baseball Ground	7th
10. Young Men's Meeting	CG	6th
11. Okurayama Festival	CG	7th
12. Citizen Music Festival	CG	8th
13. Yachting	Shioya Port – Suma Port	8th
14. Decorated Bus Parade	The whole area of the city	5th – 8th
15. Decorated Car Parade	The whole area of the city	7th – 8th
16. Mural Painting Exhibition	Municipal office building	1st – 8th
17. Kobe Matsuri Fair	Open space near the CG	7th – 8th
18. Motomachi Young Fair	Motomachi shopping street	7th – 8th
19. Exhibition of the signatures of "A Famous Hundred People of Kobe"	Kobe Gallery	7th – 8th
20. Exhibition of Kobe Matsuri	Kobe Gallery	6th – 7th
21. Let's board a big boat	Kobe Port – Suma Port	8th

Source: Kobe Matsuri Program.

Abbreviations: CG City Gymnasium
HYP Higashi Yūenchi Park

TABLE 3

Ward Events

Ward	Event	Location	Dates
Higashinada	Anything and Everything Festival Eve	Co-op Field	6th
	Anything and Everything Festival	Co-op Field	3rd – 8th
Nada	Rokkō Family Festival Eve	Ōji Stadium clearing	5th – 8th
	Rokkō Family Festival	Ōji Stadium clearing	2nd – 8th
Fukiai	Fukiai Carnival Eve	Street	6th – 8th
	Fukiai Carnival	Street	4th – 6th
Ikuta	Suwayama Carnival	Suwayama Park	4th
	Fresh Ikuta Carnival	MS or IS	5th – 8th
	Supplication Rites	MS or IS	5th – 8th
Hyōgo	Happiness Plaza	MP	1st – 8th
	Supplication Rites	MP and MS	7th – 8th
Kita	Kitakita Festival	Suzuran Park	4th – 8th
Nagata	Nagata Festival	WP or NS	3rd – 8th
	Supplication Rites	NS	7th – 8th
Suma	Suma Music Festival	Suma Park	1st – 8th
Tarumi	Tarumi Festival	Tarumi Hall	6th – 8th
	Seishin Sunlight and Greenery Festival	Seishin Culture Center	4th – 8th

Source: Kobe Matsuri Program.

Abbreviations: IS Ikuta Shrine
 MP Minatogawa Park
 MS Minatogawa Shrine
 NS Nagata Shrine
 WP Wakamatsu Park

among the foreigners living in Kobe. The duty of the queens and princesses is to participate with the mayor in various ward events as well as in the Port Parade and the Kobe Matsuri Parade.

The Kobe Matsuri Parade, held on Sunday, is the main event among those treated as central. The first time the festival was held, this parade consisted of four different parts: "the opening," "the festival of olden times," "the young people's festival," and "the world festival." The second time it was held, a "children's festival" was added, and the fourth time an activity called "Let's go Viva Samba." The parade as a whole then required seven hours. Motor-car gangs, however, frequently caused disturbances during the festival, so when it was held for the sixth time, the parade was compressed into a shorter period of time. Because of an incident during the sixth festival when a newspaperman died in consequence of interference by motor-car gangs, the practice of choosing themes for the parade was stopped. Beginning with the seventh festival, it was decided to organize under the rubrics of "individual parade" and "group parade," the group parade carrying on as in previous years, the individual parade representing fashions of dress in Kobe from times past and present.

It is interesting to note that many people living in Kobe mistakenly think that the Kobe Matsuri Parade is the only central event. In fact, however, the Kobe Matsuri Parade is preceded by the Port Parade. Until the fifth festival, the Port Parade was held on Sunday just before the Kobe Matsuri Parade, but since the sixth festival, the Port Parade has been held on Saturday morning. As a result, it has become less well-known. During the Port Parade, the first step is a Shinto rite for the prosperity of the harbor and for safety at sea, this rite being performed by a Shinto priest. Next, the President of the Kobe Citizen Festival Association, the mayor, performs a ceremony in which religiously symbolic cut-papers (*gohei*), bouquets of flowers, and a sacred sword are

thrown into the sea. Finally, there is a parade at sea, the President and the queens participating by riding in a launch. The citizens of Kobe can also enjoy the parade from aboard a boat chartered by the city; the number of passengers, however, is limited to five hundred.

The summary of ward events begins with the observation that the city of Kobe is divided into nine wards, each of which is the scene of one or more events. Cooperative events, however, were held in only two wards the first time, in three wards the second time, in five wards the third time, and in all wards by the time of the sixth festival. From ward to ward there are, without much variation, parades, plaza, events, booth corners, sports meets, etc. Particularly to be mentioned is the fact that at three representative shrines in Kobe – Ikuta Shrine, Minatogawa Shrine, and Nagata Shrine, located in Ikuta, Hyōgo, and Nagata wards respectively – supplication rites for traffic safety and for the prosperity of the people of the ward are held as sponsored events. Moreover, a parade known as the “Fresh Ikuta Carnival” is held on a street between Ikuta Shrine and Minatogawa Shrine.

A noteworthy change that has gradually taken place is that the center of gravity has moved from central events to ward events. This can be seen both from the sponsoring organizations’ emphasis on participation in ward events and from the way the budget is allocated. The incident that occurred at the sixth festival also gave impetus to this trend.

4. Participants

New religions, universities, and various other groups representing Kobe’s business and political circles are the main participants in the central events. The participation of foreigners is also conspicuous. As for ward activities, the main participants come from stores, shrines, elementary and secondary schools, and different associations of women, children, and retired people, each of which is representative of various sectors of the community.

FESTIVAL IMAGES

Images from the side of the sponsor. Images put forward by the sponsoring agency are found in a variety of catch phrases, slogans, and appealing expressions. Since the first Kobe Matsuri, the catch phrase of “the flower, sea, and sun festival” has been used. The festival is said to be “bright as a flower, relaxed as the sea, passionate as the sun” (*Kobe*, a Kobe city publicity pamphlet of 15 May 1974). Here nature symbols are employed to emphasize potentiality and vitality.

The main expressions used to appeal to the citizens are couched thus:

Kobe Matsuri is nearly here. Kobe town will be redecorated in *matsuri* colors and intoxicated with pleasure. Our 1,350,000 citizens will form a single dance circle. Children, young people, elders: with the refreshing May winds upon us, let's strip off our coats and join in! Townspeople of Kobe, the main roles are yours. Let's join hands and make the *matsuri* circle spread throughout the town” (*Kobe*, 15 May 1974).

Here again pleasure and gaiety are emphasized, and an appeal is made for the active participation of the entire citizenry. This perspective was earlier stated in the report of the 1970 “Committee to Investigate the Kobe Port Festival.” It was recommended in their report that the Kobe Matsuri be a creative festival of the citizens, its administration being handled by a semi-public civic organization and its various committees.

In the report of the “Committee to Investigate Kobe Matsuri” organized in 1976 when the motor-car gang incident happened, this committee clarified further its idea as to the newness the Kobe Festival should embody:

The Kobe Matsuri is a new type of festival, created for the citizens to participate in and enjoy. It therefore differs from the traditional festivals of other towns. The Kobe Matsuri is, so to speak, a festival with an eye to the Kobe of tomorrow, a festival created to give perspectives for the future.

The Kobe Matsuri lacks some elements traditional in the

festivals of other towns and villages. It is not, however, that these elements were merely withdrawn; instead, new values were attached to the festival in a positive way. In consequence, such matters as creativity and future orientation became strongly emphasized. Carrying forward this point of view, the seventh Kobe Matsuri added to the catch phrases of "flower, sea, and sun festival" the slogan: "the joy of creativity, the pleasure of participation, Kobe Matsuri for you."

This series of facts shows clearly the festival image held by its sponsor: a new type of festival that blends into the daily life of the citizens, providing a basis for a sense of solidarity, and giving a "unanimity of pleasure common to all citizens" (Committee Report of 1976).

The chief characteristic found here is the absence of religious ceremonies, the lack of religious elements present in traditional festivals. This is not to say that religious ceremonies are totally lacking. The ceremony in which the mayor throws a sword into the sea has already been mentioned. But not only is there no mention of this ceremony in the various slogans and catch phrases, there is also considerable emphasis on the point that this is a "festival without religious ceremonies." The phrases "a new type of festival," "a festival different from traditional festivals," "a festival without divinities" are intended to express images that will become fixed. Religious ceremonies are mixed into the various events, not only in the Port Parade but also in the wards. But it can be considered that this point is intentionally overlooked.

But if hiding the kami or driving him from the center to the periphery is a main feature in images developed by the sponsor, the problem arises as to what kinds of images Kobe Matsuri has been existing with. Regarding this problem, we can discern the following features in the sponsor's image.

First to be noted is the goal of building up a sense of community consciousness. Thus, for example, ward events are identified as "a locus for fellowship among neighbors"

and central events as “a locus for friendly exchange between people unacquainted with one another” (Committee Report of 1976). Both aim at enhancement of harmony and companionship among Kobe citizens. Behind this emphasis there exists, of course, recognition of the reality that community consciousness and solidarity among Kobe citizens have not taken shape or at most done so but poorly. In this there is nothing distinctive about the city of Kobe; it is common to urbanized populations. What is unique about Kobe is that its leaders are seeking to overcome the problem, even if only temporarily, by means of this festival. Here we can see that enhancement of solidarity, heretofore a latent function in traditional festivals, is deliberately brought to the fore in the festival image of the sponsor. That is to say, in the traditional festival this result emerges as a by-product, whereas in the Kobe Matsuri it is consciously intended.

Secondly, we can discern the symbol of Kobe which may replace the kami in the traditional festival. In its Port Festival, Kobe stressed the image of an international seaport, but in the Kobe Matsuri it stressed instead the image of Kobe itself as a “special” city that, especially at festival times, takes on something of the coloration of a sacred space. This emphasis comes out in such phrases as “*Townpeople of Kobe*, the main roles are yours” and “*citizens’ festival*.” Though the percentage of port-related workers in Kobe exceeds 20%, the image of Kobe as a port town is losing its popularity among the citizens as urbanization spreads into the Kobe suburbs. Nonetheless, historically the fact is that Kobe has achieved prosperity as a seaport, and the image of “the port city of Kobe” is still its most effective symbol. The fact that the Committee Report of 1976 extols “the symbol of the port” corroborates this view. This goes to show that even though the port is no longer an indispensable symbol to today’s citizens, it is just as effective as ever when it comes to grasping the city of Kobe at the level of imagery. This is

due to the fact that no integrating image that can take the place of "the port city of Kobe" has yet taken shape, and also to the fact that a Kobe without its seaport is inconceivable.

Thirdly, throughout the transition from the Port Festival to the Kobe Matsuri, a central and continuing image is that of "internationalism." Starting from the cue it took from the Rose Festival, the Port Festival with its international parade, its flower bedecked floats, and its Miss Kobe would be hard to imagine without this internationalism. The same can be said of the Kobe Carnival, which took its lead from the carnival of Rio de Janeiro. Again, in the Kobe Matsuri the election of princesses, the invitation of a samba team, and participation of foreigners in the parade are most characteristic. This is particular to the Kobe Matsuri and decidedly distinguishes it from traditional Japanese festivals. Internationalism is not emphasized on the surface because of the policy that this is to be a "citizens' festival," but it is doubtless indispensable to the image of the Kobe Matsuri.

Images from the side of the citizens. Before discussing the matter of images of the Kobe Matsuri held by Kobe citizens, two points should be noted. First, there are people who do not participate in the festival, and they should be taken into account. The Committee Report of 1976 gives the results of a survey concerning citizen attitudes toward the *matsuri*. According to this report, from a total of 670 respondents, 46.4% positively affirmed the festival, 31.9% gave rather critical evaluations, and 14.9% showed little interest. Those who gave no reply amounted to 3.0%. The question whether the latter two groups have no interest in festivals per se or whether they simply have little interest in the Kobe Matsuri is a matter of importance in searching out festival images among Kobe citizens. In this paper, however, it is omitted mainly because of lack of data.

Second, in order to get at the festival images held by Kobe

citizens, we have chosen not to generalize directly from their own expressions of attitude, but to see what images are reflected in certain components of the phenomenon.

In accordance with this method it is possible to discern three sets of festival images and their bearers. The first group of image bearers is comprised of those who participate actively in a way that matches the images put forward by the sponsor. The second group is made up of those critical of the festival, and the third of those who manifest deviant behavior – particularly as found among the youth.

The festival images of the first group emphasize what is new in this “new festival” and praise it for the pleasure, gaiety, relaxation, and sense of release it provides. Further explanation is unnecessary, since these images overlap considerably those of the sponsor.

The second group, far from seeing the festival as one of central significance, criticizes it as a “government-made festival” or an “imitation of foreign festivals.” Some say that “without the kami it is nothing at all like a real festival.” Their festival image involves the emergence of a sense of discrepancy regarding the *matsuri* in the term “new *matsuri*” and a sense of nostalgia for the traditional festival’s atmosphere or for the festival as the site of great eruptions of energy. For those, in other words, who pursue a traditional festival image, who seek festive exaltation, who call for the ecstatic, orgiastic aspects of the festival, the sponsor-advanced image of a festival without kami or a festival to enhance community consciousness has little appeal. The idea of a festival without kami runs counter to the traditional festival image, and the enhancement of community consciousness as a constant is diametrically opposed to spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment orgy – even though it must be admitted of the Kobe Matsuri that a somewhat equivocal appearance of the kami does occur and that orgy, though scarce when compared to traditional festivals, is not altogether absent.

The third group is made up of those whose participation in the festival takes the form of deviant behavior. As mentioned, in the sixth Kobe Matsuri a cameraman from a local newspaper died when caught up in the turmoil caused by a gang of toughs. This incident gave the Kobe Matsuri instant notoriety throughout Japan, yet its occurrence was not altogether coincidental or unforeseeable. From the first through the fifth Kobe Matsuri, rock 'n roll dancing and samba dancing were held at the festival-sponsored youth plaza in Higashi Yūenchi Park. This same park, the central assembly area of the festival, was set as the terminus of the parade. Participants and spectators from the parade and the ward events alike here met for a huge event of samba singing and dancing, a grand climax to the Kobe Matsuri. The young people participated in this closing event with expectations that it would prove thrilling and exciting. The gang of toughs, in other words, symbolically represented that stratum which pinned its hopes on the festival only in respect of a situation of mass elation and could relate to festival images only in this light. The opposition between the youth who were looking for great outbursts of energy and experiences of mass elation and the sponsors who attached importance to an orderly *matsuri* was brought to an end, following the accident, when the sponsors simply shut out the young people.

For the youth, the question of religious ceremonies was from the outset a matter of no concern, but it should also be noted that even the intention of developing a sense of community was largely an empty slogan. For the sponsor, this sense of community, both as a day to day affair and a continuing experience, was an aim of no little importance, but for the young people it had little significance. Their image of festival space assumed the form of an area of liberation. Within this area of liberation interpersonal relationships were fleeting, but temporary, unrepeatable communication did take shape. We dare to say that a *communitas* type of com-

munity could emerge. This type of community, however, since it was a decidedly extraordinary type that came into being within the context of the image of an area of liberation, ran directly counter to the community image held by the sponsor.

Festival images in the ward events. The last set of festival images is that seen in current ward events. From the outset it may be indicated that central events and ward events are regarded as different from one another. Against the background of the central events, we can specify four characteristics of the ward events:

1. Three wards publicly hold Shinto ceremonies.
2. In each ward the participating organizations, instanced by the children's club, the old people's association, the women's society, the district association, and the compulsory education association, have their base in the ward community.
3. The number of people participating in the ward events far exceeds that in the central events. Thus in the Committee Report of 1976 it was indicated that whereas 9.2% of the citizens of Kobe participated in or were spectators of the main parade, the percentage of people participating in or observing ward events amounted to 36.4%.
4. The ward events themselves become increasingly popular year by year.

With regard to the first characteristic, as over against the apparently deliberate obscuring of the kami role by the central sponsor, it seems that rites of supplication performed at Shinto shrines receive considerable emphasis in the ward events. Thus the shrines, by observing not only their own stated festivals but also the Kobe Matsuri, get, as it were, a free ride. At the same time there is an evident tendency to incorporate elements generally associated with traditional festivals, such as a new type of Japanese drum, folksong and dancing, the customary *danjiri* (as the festival float is called

in the Kansai district), the children's portable shrine, and the like. Such features are gradually increasing.

With regard to the second point, wards and sponsor are at one in speaking of building up a spirit of community, but below the surface, disparities appear. The community the sponsor pictures is one that depends on the awareness of the *Kobe citizenry* and one that seeks to make a community of the entire city of Kobe – an aim that will be most difficult to realize. In contrast to this approach, the type of community sought after in the ward events is one more capable of realization, more closely linked to existing community associations. The volleyball games for mothers, sports events for parents and children, the ward residents' folksong and dancing performances and other cooperative activities carried out in each ward aptly illustrate this point. It suggests that community consciousness is actually already at work in the wards. As over against this concreteness, the community image of the sponsoring agency as expressed in the central events may be evaluated as superficial and lacking in substance. The festival image that becomes manifest in the ward events may perhaps be understood as a way in which the traditional festival has experienced a modern rebirth.

CONCLUSION

The trend toward urbanization that disruptively affects the Japanese cultural tradition has brought about subtle changes in the religious consciousness of those who live in today's cities. Urbanized societies, made up of lonely crowds of anonymous individuals who meet only to part, lack any unifying symbol and have only a weak sense of community. But at festival times, even in these urbanized societies a spirit of mass exhilaration and a state of *communitas* do emerge.

The *matsuri* of the international seaport city of Kobe is an attempt to establish a "new type of festival" combining images held by a wide variety of people. Especially since

1971, with the change of name from Port Festival to Kobe Matsuri, great emphasis has been laid on the point that what used to be a tourist-oriented festival has gone through a metamorphosis and become a citizens' festival, and the enhancement of a sense of community has been held up as a definite aim. Throughout various trials and errors, this attempt continues to the present day.

The focus of interest in this study is one aspect of the contemporary religious consciousness as it appears in the Kobe Matsuri. Beginning from the traditional festivals including town festivals in which kami played a central role, we have sought to discern what it was that could function in place of the kami as a unifying symbol. The agency in charge of the Kobe Matsuri, while retaining these rites, has shunted them off to the periphery and tried to win acceptance for the image of a festival without kami. As symbolic images intended as substitutes for the kami, it has put forward such slogans as "the flower, sea, and sun festival," "citizens' festival," "internationalism," "seaport," "community," etc. These images, however, since they do not begin to match the symbolic power of the kami, are constantly exposed to criticisms. These criticisms can be understood as based for the most part on nostalgia for the traditional festival, though from the point of view of conduct, they also link up with the festival's orgiastic and deviant behavior. The sponsoring agency, as soon as it had judged that orgiastic and deviant behavior had literally become orgy and aberration, brought it under control by calling in the riot police. This unfortunate incident occasioned, therefore, the sweeping away of all orgiastic and unconventional avenues to exhilaration and resulted in the reinforcement of community in the ward events.

Many images are tangled together in the present-day Kobe Matsuri. On the one hand, there exists a desire for a new type of festival. On the other, the kami image, which has a clear

and central role in the traditional Japanese festival, is here conspicuous by its absence – and by the tendency to use it in accommodated forms.

This complexity results from the complexity of the Kobe Matsuri itself. Both with regard to what is held up as festivally central and with regard to those who treat it so, priority is given to insubstantial images. The sponsoring agency holds it as a basic principle that the Kobe Matsuri should not take after traditional festivals, but because of the insubstantiality of the images to which it gives precedence, it is unable to develop an image around which this new festival might be unified.

The kami of the Kobe Matsuri remain nameless.