RITUAL AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE IN RURAL JAPAN

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Ritual has been acknowledged as an important form of social practice, especially as it is employed by subordinated peoples to demonstrate their opposition toward a dominant ideology. So far, however, the recognized effects of such ritual activities have been limited to simple consciousness-raising. The following analysis assigns a more instrumental role to the performance of ritual itself. It adopts a historical perspective in examining how an innocuous drum ritual, which originally marked the beginning of a local Shintō shrine festival, emerged as a medium of political resistance during Japan's modernization. More specifically, it interprets the ritual as an institutionalized opportunity for negotiating power relationships and redressing perceived social injustices. These assertions are supported by the symbolic structure of the ritual, continual efforts by the authorities to suppress its development, and several instances in which the ritual performance escalated into genuine acts of politically motivated violence.

ONE OF THE MAJOR and recurring theoretical issues in anthropology weighs the capacity of individuals to shape the course of their own destinies against the deterministic influence of the social system. On one hand, society is represented as a coercive, inhibiting structure equipped with institutions and ideologies for perpetuating itself through time; on the other, individual actors are vested with the ability to introduce or negotiate change in promoting their own interests.

Ortner (1984, 1989) has attempted to reconcile the two opposing viewpoints through her delineation of "practice theory," which, while conceding that the social system exerts a powerful and pervasive influence, nevertheless acknowledges the importance of human agency in shaping the development of social institutions and historical events. This approach derives from recent efforts by Giddens (1979, 1984), Sahlins (1985), Comaroff (1985), and others to incorporate a historical dimension into the structural analysis of social systems by envisioning structure and agency as mutually interacting variables, each continually redefining the other. The anticipated result is a synthesis of anthropological and historical studies, guided by the recognition that "history is not simply something that happens to people, but something they make—within, of course, the very powerful constraints of the system within which they are operating" (Ortner 1984:159).

The theoretical groundwork having thus been established, the challenge now lies in describing the actual mechanisms of human agency—in other words, how people utilize the cultural resources available to them in seeking to maintain or improve upon the conditions of their existence. Such efforts could conceivably assume a variety of forms, ranging from direct political action (such as a peasant rebellion) to purely symbolic expressions of popular sentiment (as in

(*Journal of Anthropological Research,* vol. 51, 1995)

folksongs and stories which suggest retribution for perceived injustices or a reversal of the prevailing social order).

Ritual, generally considered a symbolic medium, would appear to fall into the latter category. Several theorists have, in fact, argued for the importance of ritual as a form of social practice, particularly as it is employed by subordinated peoples in demonstrating their opposition toward a dominant ideology (Comaroff 1985; Ortner 1989; Scott 1990:19; Kelly and Kaplan 1990:141). The recognized effects of such "rituals of resistance," however, have so far been restricted to political consciousness-raising:

> If a system of domination controls the representation of what is possible and what is natural, then a ritual of resistance breaks the hegemony over the subjective consciousness of the ritual participants. It makes them conscious of the oppression and allows them to envision new communities and possibilities. (Kelly and Kaplan 1990:135)

Any attempt to act upon this new awareness would presumably be manifested in other forms; ritual *per se* is denied a direct, instrumental significance.

The following analysis will assign a more instrumental role to the ritual performance itself. It will adopt a historical perspective in examining how residents of a small town in a remote mountain region in central Japan have employed their local shrine festival as an effective means of negotiating sociopolitical and economic change.[1] More specifically, it will focus on how a ritual component of the festival emerged as a vehicle of popular protest, which on several occasions transcended the bounds of the purely symbolic and escalated into genuine acts of politically motivated violence.[2]

THE "ROUSING DRUM" RITUAL

Furukawa is a small agricultural and commercial town of about 7,000 residents located in the mountainous Hida region of central Honshū, the main island in the Japanese archipelago (Figure 1).[3] The town lies in the center of a narrow basin, hemmed in on all sides by steep mountain slopes. The ruggedness of the surrounding topography, distance from major urban areas, and heavy winter snowfall have historically encouraged a sense of isolation accompanied by an underlying resentment toward outside authority. This is epitomized by an unruly and rebellious attitude known to the local people as "Furukawa *yancha*" (literally "mischief," or "unruliness"), which is widely acknowledged as one of the defining features of the local character (Kuwatani 1969:23–25; Sugata 1975:8; Kaba 1984:24–44; Morishita 1991:6).

Each spring, life in Furukawa revolves around planning and participating in its annual *matsuri*,[4] or Shintō shrine festival, whose origins date back to the late sixteenth century. The *matsuri* is widely regarded as the single most significant event of the year in the lives of the townspeople, far outweighing both the New Year festivities and midsummer *Bon* observances.[5]

Figure 1. Central Japan, Showing the Hida Region and the Town of Furukawa

Shrine festivals in communities throughout the Hida region follow the same basic liturgical pattern, traditionally associated with irrigated rice cultivation. The rituals, performed on behalf of the local people, ask the resident guardian deity to grant them a successful growing season and ensure their welfare and prosperity. The main event typically consists of the spirit of the deity being ceremoniously

transferred to a portable shrine, or *mikoshi*, and escorted on a procession through its constituency. In this respect Furukawa is not remarkably different from other communities. Its *mikoshi* procession is perhaps more elaborate and majestic than most, but the basic elements of the festival are largely the same.[6]

The feature which distinguishes Furukawa is the *okoshi daiko*, or "rousing drum," ritual. The name refers to a large, barrel-shaped drum fixed atop a turret built of short, overlapping timbers, which is in turn positioned at the center of a gridlike rectangular platform made of rounded wooden crossbeams. On the night of April 19, the eve of the main event, the entire structure is borne shoulder high through the narrow streets by a mass of seminaked men, most of whom have been liberally plying themselves with saké rice wine (Figure 2).

The massive drum platform bears several human passengers as well. Eight men, ranging from middle-aged to elderly, position themselves to the front and rear of the drum as if to guard it from attack. Each holds a paper lantern in one hand while balancing himself precariously on the beams of the platform as it twists and bounces along on the shoulders of the mob.

An even more conspicuous role is assumed by two considerably younger men who sit back-to-back atop the drum itself. One facing forward and the other to the rear, they stare intently into space, seemingly oblivious to the action going on below. Each holds a long wooden stick vertically above his head, poised to strike the drum in alternation with his counterpart behind. Their efforts are augmented by two additional drum beaters who stand below on the beams of the platform, one at either end of the drum, each timing his own strikes to coincide with those of the man atop the drum on the opposite end. Together they produce in slow, measured cadence a thunderous booming sound which resonates through the night air.

Beating the drum, however, is a special role reserved for a few carefully selected individuals. The majority of Furukawa's young men are organized into teams, each representing its own neighborhood association. As the big drum moves through town, these teams lie waiting to charge upon it from behind. Each team is armed with a *tsuke daiko*, or "attaching drum" (so named because its purpose is to "attach" itself to the main drum structure). The instrument consists of a stout wooden pole with a small drum—bearing the insignia of the neighborhood group it represents—bound tightly to the middle with rope. Team members hold the pole horizontally overhead as they charge *en masse* toward their goal, their own drum positioned upward to display the group's insignia. The object is to fight their way to the fore and hoist the *tsuke daiko* lengthwise up over the back of the main drum platform as it proceeds along its course. This is a formidable task considering that it requires outmaneuvering several other teams having similar intentions within the confines of a narrow street and driving through the defenses of a gang of burly drum guardians positioned at ground level behind the platform to hold the challengers at bay. The crush of bodies is intense, and random injuries are accepted as inevitable consequences.

In recent decades this rather unusual event has developed into a popular tourist attraction promoted by town planners as a means of bolstering the local

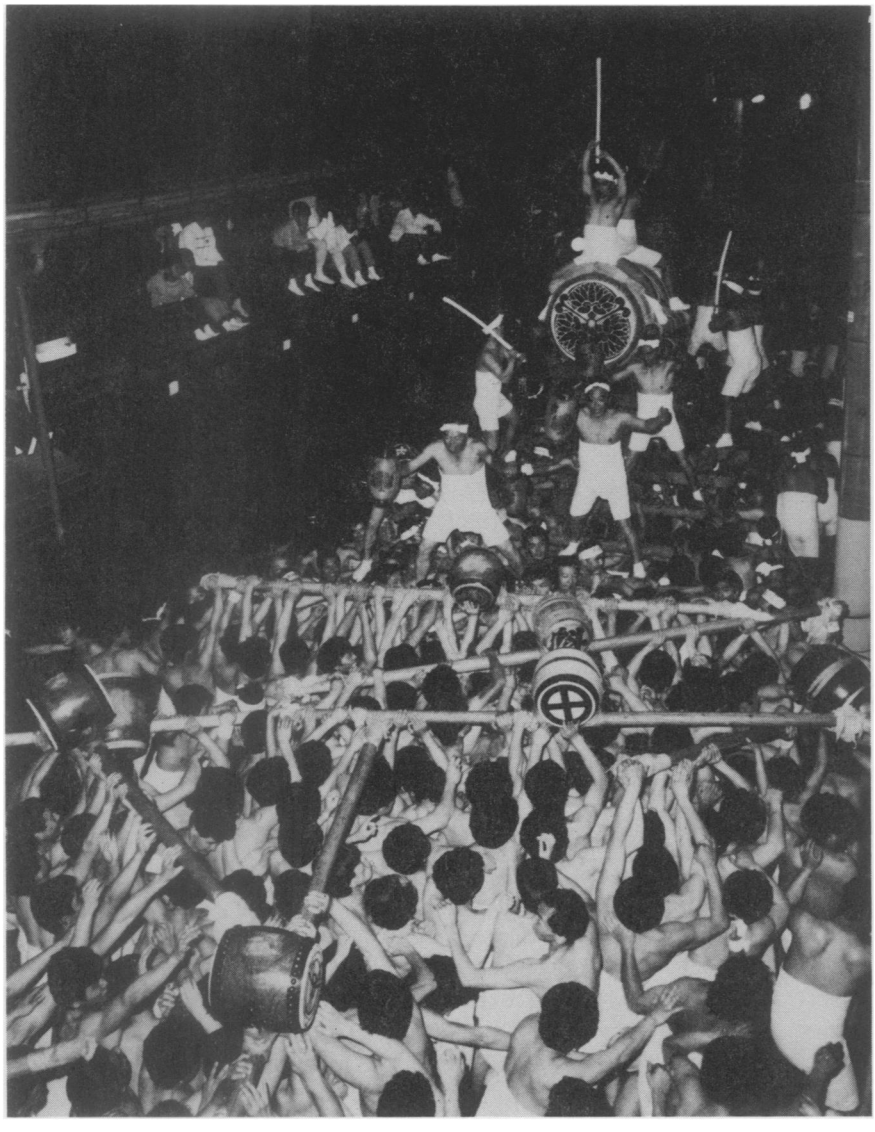

Figure 2. The Rousing Drum Ritual

economy. Prior to Japan's economic boom period after the Second World War, however, there were no tourists to speak of, and the *okoshi daiko* was staged primarily by and for the local residents themselves. Indeed, the ritual was by all accounts far more boisterous in the past than it is today. Around the turn of the century, the neighborhood *tsuke daiko* teams reportedly used to charge toward the great drum intent on toppling it to the ground. Fighting among the participants was commonplace, and sporadic acts of vandalism not infrequent (Ōno 1973:4, 1976:3; Kaba 1984:35–36; Furukawa-chō Kankō Kyōkai 1984:80–81).

Curiously, however, an examination of written records reveals no evidence of such behavior prior to the late 1800s when Japan's period of rapid modernization began. The shrine ceremonies and *mikoshi* procession are described in considerable detail and appear to have been conducted much as they are today. The *okoshi daiko*, on the other hand, receives only cursory mention as a single drum which passed through town at dawn to alert the townspeople that the main festivities were about to begin (Tomita 1968[1874]:399–400; Ōno 1973:4; Furukawa-chō 1984:11, 655–56). Nowhere is there any indication of the raucous, unruly behavior the ritual later came to embody.

Apparently, then, at some time during the late 1800s, this minor and seemingly innocuous feature called the *okoshi daiko* began to take on an entirely new significance. What caused its transformation? What conditions led to its development as a forum for expressing unruly and rebellious behavior? Local accounts offer no satisfactory explanation, attributing the ritual's emergence to a seemingly spontaneous manifestation of Furukawa *yancha* (Kaba 1984:36; Furukawa-chō Kankō Kyōkai 1984:79–80; Furukawa-chō Kyōiku Iinkai 1990:207).

I contend that the ritual must be considered within the context of larger historical processes in order to grasp its true significance. In the following analysis I will relate the ritual's emergence to dramatic sociopolitical and economic changes to which the townspeople were subjected during Japan's modernization. These include: absorption into a market economy and subsequent erosion of traditional subsistence support mechanisms, rigid tax policies introduced by the central government, increasing land concentration accompanied by higher rates of tenancy, the exploitative nature of landlord-tenant relations, and the imposition of authority by outside agents—most conspicuously the police.

THE PREMODERN SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC ORDER

Though its exact origins are unknown, the Furukawa *matsuri* most probably derives from folk rituals relating to the local mountain spirits, which were enticed down into the rice paddies for the duration of the growing season to ensure a successful harvest. Rituals were performed just prior to the spring planting to welcome the spirits and pray for an abundant crop, and again at harvest time in the autumn to acknowledge their assistance and send them back up into the mountains until the following year.[7]

Warlords gained control of the Hida region in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and Furukawa emerged as a castle town and auxiliary administrative center, expanding into a more populous and stratified community. Indigenous religious symbols were drawn into the political ideology of the warlord leadership. The mountain spirits were consolidated and reconceptualized in the form of a local guardian deity, enshrined on a foothill overlooking the town.

Once a year the deity would be ceremoniously summoned forth, installed in the *mikoshi*, and taken on a tour through its territory, the purpose being to dispel evil and revitalize the community with its supernatural presence. The annual visit came to be accompanied by feasting and revelry, expanding what

was essentially a religious performance into the type of communal celebration commonly referred to as *matsuri*.

In 1692 the centralized military government at Edo (now Tokyo), led by members of the Tokugawa lineage, assumed direct control of Hida province. The government established its regional administrative headquarters at Takayama, located several kilometers upstream from Furukawa in the heart of Hida territory. The castle at Furukawa was eventually razed, but the town continued to prosper as a secondary commercial center and important stage along a trade route leading north to the Japan Sea.

The Tokugawa economy was based on rice production. The government extracted wealth from the peasantry by means of an annual land tax levied in kind as a proportion of the harvest. The tax could range as high as 60 percent and placed a heavy financial burden on the actual cultivators, but as a proportion rather than a fixed amount, it at least guaranteed that something would be left over for their own subsistence.

The local peasantry did not comprise a single undifferentiated class. Some of the old established households had acquired proprietary rights over considerable landholdings. These elite households were able to prosper not only by their own productive efforts but also by drawing rent from their tenant cultivators, again as a portion of the harvest.

Furukawa also contained a fair number of merchants and artisans. Chief among these were the saké brewers, who were able to capitalize on plentiful supplies of both rice and high-quality water available to them in the surrounding basin. In time they began to rival the old agricultural landlords in terms of wealth and prominence. In fact, despite an official Tokugawa policy separating farmers and merchants into distinct socioeconomic categories, some households were actively engaged in both activities.

Though the town as a whole fell under the administrative authority of the Tokugawa regime, internal affairs were handled somewhat autonomously through the auspices of the local headman.[8] Furukawa was composed of ten distinct neighborhoods (*machigumi*), with each neighborhood being further divided into groups of contiguous households (*goningumi*—literally, "five-person groups," though they sometimes consisted of as many as fifteen households). Leadership at each level was monopolized by the most prominent member households, generally, the old established landholding or merchant lineages.

Again, many of the local religious traditions were retained by the new Tokugawa regime. This included the observance of *matsuri* directed toward resident guardian deities. The Furukawa *matsuri* was originally scheduled to be held every year on the sixth day of the eighth month by the old lunar-solar calendar and coincided with the annual rice harvest. There were few opportunities for diversion among the common peasantry, and the festival was an anxiously awaited event.

Participation in the festival was mobilized through a chain of command which reflected the hierarchical structure of society in general. The heads of the old established households were accustomed to issuing orders and directing im-

portant affairs, with the common people deferring to their authority. This understandably carried over to the planning and execution of the *matsuri*, with elite landowners filling the principal leadership positions.

A successful *matsuri* required substantial quantities of food and saké, and this same elite were the major contributors. Prominent households were thus able to demonstrate their commitment to the welfare of the community, casting themselves in the role of local benefactors. Among the most visible symbols of elite generosity were the ornate wooden festival wagons called *yatai*,[9] which traditionally led the way before the *mikoshi* during its procession through town. Each wagon was sponsored by a particular neighborhood, its construction and maintenance financed entirely by patrons residing therein. Originally intended as means of entertaining the deity, these vehicles became symbols of neighborhood pride and identity. They were fitted with elaborate carvings, tapestries, and other embellishments, adding to the splendor and dignity of the procession.

The *mikoshi* passed through every section of town, thereby bringing the deity's supernatural presence directly into the community and symbolically marking the shrine's territory. At prearranged points along the route, the entire entourage would come to a halt, whereupon the head priest conducted an impromptu religious service for the benefit of the immediate residents. It was customary at this juncture for residents to make an offering to the deity, usually in the form of rice.

Each year one of the component neighborhoods would be chosen by lottery to serve as the "director" (*shuji*) and was made responsible for leading the *matsuri* proceedings.[10] It should be noted here, however, that the term "director," generally designating the host neighborhood, was used more specifically to refer to the most prominent individual within that neighborhood. This person assumed ultimate authority for the conduct of the *matsuri*.

The director's duties included performing the *okoshi daiko*. At that time, however, there was no special drum designated exclusively for the purpose. Rather, each neighborhood possessed a small, somewhat modest drum of its own, and when its turn came to serve as director, this drum became the *okoshi daiko* (Ōno 1973:4). Such drums were generally suspended from a wooden beam shouldered by two men, while a third man walked alongside using sticks to beat the cadence.[11] As previously mentioned, however, the *matsuri*'s central feature consisted of the guardian deity's annual visit, accompanied by the ornate wooden festival wagons. The "rousing drum" ritual, as its name implies, functioned merely to rouse the townspeople at the break of dawn in preparation for the day's events (Tomita 1968[1874]:399; Ōno 1973:4; Furukawa-chō 1984:655).

In recognition of their prominence and generosity, the elite were privileged to assume special roles within the *matsuri* performance. It was they who attended the shrine ceremonies as representatives of the local community and accompanied the deity on its stately procession. Appearing in the procession thus became a sort of ritual who's who enactment, visually acknowledging the participants' status as important members of the community.

Clearly, then, the *matsuri* functioned in one sense as a means of legitimating the sociopolitical order through the use of religious symbolism. But it also became a medium for expressing opposition. This involves a conspicuous transformation in the intent and conduct of the *okoshi daiko*, which emerged from a rather peripheral position to assume center stage—eventually embodying the very essence of the *matsuri* itself.

SOCIOPOLITICAL CHANGE AND LOCAL OPPOSITION

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Japan was forced out of a long period of self-imposed isolation by a growing awareness of the threat posed by the industrializing West. Failure to deal effectively with this threat contributed to the decreasing popularity of the Tokugawa government. In January of 1868, the Tokugawa regime was overthrown by a coalition of rebellious domains. The incident came to be known as the "Meiji Restoration," as it was purportedly intended to restore the Meiji emperor to direct rule. In reality, however, power remained with the leaders who had engineered the revolution.

Capitalizing upon the unifying effect created by the perceived threat from abroad, the new leadership immediately set out to establish a centralized political bureaucracy with its headquarters at Tokyo. They also embarked on an ambitious program of industrial expansion, propelling Japan into the modern era. The old feudal domains were abolished, and a new system of administrative prefectures was created to replace them. The Hida region was now established as Takayama Prefecture, with its administrative headquarters in the city of Takayama. During the spring of 1868, the Meiji leadership sent twenty-seven-year-old Umemura Hayami to serve as the prefecture's first governor.

The young governor initiated a number of sociopolitical and economic reforms which were poorly received by the local peasantry. To help ensure a smooth transition to the new regime, an interim official had promised to reduce the land tax in Hida by one-half. In carrying out his reforms, however, Umemura felt obliged to renege on the promise, thereby alienating the peasant majority. He also discontinued two long-standing rice distribution policies aimed at ensuring inexpensive rice to people who were unable to produce sufficient quantities themselves. This angered the merchant townspeople as well as peasants living in the mountain highlands surrounding the basin area (Takase et al. 1971:356–63). In addition, Umemura took steps to establish his own prefectural militia; this created enemies among local fire brigade organizations who, in addition to their officially sanctioned role of extinguishing fires, had traditionally seen themselves as defenders of the region's security (Kuwatani 1971:101).

The following year while Umemura was away in Kyoto, the peasants rebelled, vandalizing and burning various administrative facilities as well as homes belonging to Umemura's supporters, most of whom were wealthy landlords. Upon hearing the news, Umemura rushed back to the Hida region but was intercepted by a mob of angry peasants, allegedly headed by members of the

Furukawa fire brigade (Ōno 1971:4). During the ensuing fracas, Umemura was shot by a musket-wielding peasant and later died in prison pending an official inquiry into his administrative policies (Kuwatani 1971:104).

Umemura was replaced by an older, more conservative governor, who was eventually able to restore tranquility to the area. However, policies enacted by the central government continued to have a dramatic impact at the local level. As part of the effort to consolidate their control, the Meiji leadership began to propagate an ideological device known as "State Shintō" in order to divert people's loyalties away from the local areas toward the all-encompassing authority of the central government. The emperor, as a living symbol of the state, was attributed with supernaturally sanctioned authority owing to his descent from the mythical sun goddess Amaterasu. The Confucian tenet of filial piety was metaphorically applied to the emperor as the ultimate father figure, and all Japanese people were obliged to assume the role of his loyal and obedient progeny. The state, therefore, was presented as a kind of huge extended family, with its people bound to the emperor through filial obligations.

Once again, local religious symbolism was coopted into an administrative ideology imposed from the outside. In 1871, Furukawa's resident guardian deity, traditionally known as Sugimoto Daimyōjin (literally, "god at the base of the cedars"), was officially replaced with Ōkuninushi no Kami ("deity who is the great lord of the land"), an ancestral member of the imperial line according to Shintō mythology. The government also prescribed a standard liturgical format for use by local communities during their annual shrine festivals. *Matsuri*, then, were to function as means of ritually acknowledging the authority of the state at the local level.

The educational system also became a major vehicle for propagating this nationalist ideology. Compulsory education was instituted in 1872, and schools all over the country were placed under the authority of the central government. During the next few years, three new schools were established in Furukawa, replacing the parochial Buddhist temple schools that had been in use prior to the Restoration (Sōritsu Hyakushūnen Kinenshi Iinkai 1974:210). Teachers and administrators were appointed from outside the local area, textbooks were subjected to official scrutiny and approval, and a standard curriculum was imposed—all as part of the government's effort to encourage national uniformity.

Contiguous settlements were amalgamated into new political units, "thus augmenting the fiscal base of local government and improving its administrative efficiency" (Fukutake 1980:146). During the years 1874–1876, the ten neighborhoods comprising Furukawa were combined with surrounding villages to form a new administrative unit known as Furukawa-*chō*, with a single individual acting as its mayor (Tokoro 1989:999). These new political units were linked through the prefectural administration to the central government, creating a hierarchical chain of command whereby the government could more effectively impose its authority on local affairs.

The cumulative effect of these changes was a steady decline in local autonomy. This was particularly significant in the case of the more remote mountain

regions like Hida, which had neither the population nor the economic clout to exert any major influence on national politics.

In 1876, the Hida region was amalgamated with former Minō Province to form Gifu Prefecture. The new prefectural capital was located in Gifu City, which lay well outside the old Hida boundaries in the lowland plains to the south. In the apportionment of public funding for development projects, the prefectural administration consistently favored the more populous lowlands over the mountain regions, to the further disgruntlement of the Hida constituency (Gifu-ken Kōtō Gakkō Kyōiku Kenkyūkai Shakaika Bukai 1988:9).

At the same time, economic policies initiated by the central government were expanding the power and influence of the local elite. In 1874 the government instituted a land tax revision designed to ensure a reliable source of revenue to help finance its modernization efforts. The tax was fixed at an annual cash payment equal to three percent of the assessed value of the land, regardless of fluctuations in crop yield or market price. Individual landholders were made responsible for payment of the tax and in return were granted title to their lands. Rent on tenanted land, however, continued to be paid in kind and was solely determined by the landlords themselves. To ensure that its revenues would continue unimpeded, the government tried to promote the landlords' ability to collect rent, consistently favoring landlords in the settlement of tenant disputes. "Unprotected and to a great extent ignored by the government, tenants were more vulnerable to exploitation than ever before" (Waswo 1977:21). Small landowners were adversely affected as well. Forced to come up with the necessary tax payment in cash, many were obliged to borrow from merchant moneylenders, offering their meager landholdings as security.

During the 1880s, strict monetary policies imposed by finance minister Matsukata Masayoshi triggered a severe nationwide economic depression. This, combined with the tax revision, created even greater hardships in the rural countryside. As Hane (1982:103–4) explains, "the growing burden of taxation and the deflationary policy adopted by the government in the 1880s led to the steady impoverishment of most farmers, forcing them to give up their lands to pay their taxes and repay their debts. Their land, too, then passed into the hands of the wealthier landowners, moneylenders, and merchants."

The overall result was increasing tenancy and associated land concentration, with more and more land being acquired by a few privileged households. One of the largest landlord households in Furukawa, for example, came to employ as many as 150 tenant cultivators. Rent on tenanted land was fixed at 50–60 percent of the harvest and constituted roughly 90 percent of this landlord's income, a condition which can justifiably be described as "parasitic" (Nakamura et al. 1972:8–11).

The plight of the rural areas engendered widespread dissatisfaction. Irokawa (1985:155) estimates that "about sixty riots stemming from agricultural indebtedness took place in all parts of Japan in 1884." One of the most notable was the Chichibu incident, a peasant uprising against the exploitative activities of greedy moneylenders and government officials. An army of peasants from the Chichibu

district in what is now Saitama Prefecture took over the district office and battled ineffectually with government troops sent to crush the rebellion. This incident marked a turning point in the means employed by peasants to express their opposition. As Hane (1982:27) observes, "suppression of the Chichibu Uprising signaled the end of any attempt on the part of the poor people's parties to rely on force to protect their interests. Although minor protest movements did occur afterward, they were readily squelched by the government."

Attempts were made at grassroots political organization, including a nationwide people's rights movement (*jiyū minken undō*) favoring greater local economy. Such efforts were plagued by factionalism and infighting, however, and generally proved ineffective. Even so, the central government eventually responded to the demand for greater autonomy by instituting its own system of local representation, as set forth by the Japanese Imperial Constitution in 1889. Voting privileges were given only to landholding males over twenty-five years of age who paid at least fifteen yen in taxes (a substantial amount in those days) to the central government.[12] This restricted direct participation in the political process to members of the wealthy landholding elite, which in rural areas such as Furukawa amounted to only a small minority of the total population. A voter registry compiled in 1889 lists only 56 eligible voters in Furukawa out of a total population of around 6,000.[13]

Regional and national assemblies were dominated by this same landholding elite, who, with their exclusive voting privileges, routinely elected their own members into higher office (Waswo 1977:78). Fukutake (1980:155) characterizes the system the constitution enacted as "landlord government," and Hane (1982:13–14) notes that "for the vast majority of the peasants the new political order offered no direct, or even indirect, access to political power."

With the capital acquired from their tenant cultivators, prominent landlord households were well positioned to take advantage of the new investment opportunities available to them in the emerging capitalist market economy. The aforementioned Furukawa landlord, for example, began to diversify into other industries such as silk weaving and helped found the region's first bank (Nakamura et al. 1972:10). Merchant households, too, were able to capitalize on the new economic conditions, using their profits to purchase land or foreclosing on small owners to whom they had lent money. This led to the emergence of a kind of *nouveau riche* consisting of industrious merchants who essentially bought their way into the landlord category through clever business dealings.

Meanwhile, industrialization was taking its toll on traditional patterns of social organization, particularly landlord-tenant relations. Waswo (1977:137) concludes that

> By abandoning farming, investing or working in industrial and commercial enterprises, and departing for the towns and cities of Japan, landlords were, in one sense, responding positively to the new opportunities and new national goals of the post-Restoration era. But at the same time, by dissociating themselves from rural life, they were giving up the remaining bases of

their elite status in the countryside. Whether absentee landlords in a geographical or a functional sense, they were no longer able to behave as their tenants expected or to perform their time-honored role in village life.

This scenario is remarkably similar to the conditions Scott (1976, 1977) describes for colonial Southeast Asia. Scott (1976) has argued that Southeast Asian peasants traditionally recognized a "moral economy" geared not toward maximizing profit but rather the assurance of subsistence security in the event of crop failure, flood, or other calamity. This situation is important in understanding the relationship between wealthy landlords and their less prosperous tenant cultivators. The tenants were willing to accept subservient positions and to yield a considerable portion of each year's harvest as rent, but in return they expected rent reductions and material assistance from the landlord in times of distress. Distinctions in wealth and social status were thus acceptable to the extent that landlords fulfilled their role as local benefactors, using their surplus wealth to assist the less fortunate.

Conditions changed drastically, however, with the advent of Western colonial intervention. In order to ensure a reliable flow of revenue to finance their expanding bureaucracies, colonial governments instituted fixed head and land taxes, payable only in hard currency, with no allowance for fluctuations in yield. The peasants were now obliged to convert to growing cash crops or to seek employment in the wage labor market. They were thus absorbed into an economic system that lay well beyond their limited sphere of influence.

Of perhaps even greater significance was the impact on landlord-tenant relations. The wealthy patron landlords were increasingly drawn by new social and economic opportunities available to them in the towns and cities. This development led them to neglect their traditional obligations to the local community, though they continued to exact the same amount of rent as before. From the point of view of the tenants, the relationship had become inherently more exploitative, thus providing them with the moral justification to rebel.

Indeed, Scott (1976:189) links the incidence of peasant rebellion in Southeast Asia to the larger historical forces which destroyed the traditional social order and the subsistence economy which supported it, namely "the development of capitalism, the commercialization of agrarian relations, and the growth of a centralizing state." This is essentially the same pattern that occurred in modernizing Japan, except that the changes were imposed not by a Western colonial power but by Japan's own newly created centralized government. It is within this historical context that I intend to explain the emergence of the "rousing drum" ritual in Furukawa.

RITUAL RESISTANCE

Scott (1990) has characterized political discourse in terms of a "public transcript," consisting of that which is openly acknowledged in the presence of the dominant elite, and a so-called "hidden transcript," referring to the more

subversive sentiments which subordinates generally keep to themselves and which therefore seldom find their way into the historical record. He then argues for the existence of a third realm of political discourse, strategically positioned between the other two:

> This is a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors. Rumor, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs, rituals, codes, and euphemisms—a good part of the folk culture of subordinate groups—fit this description. (Scott 1990:19)

This situation leads to an inherent difficulty in any historical analysis of political discourse among subordinated peoples:

> The difficulty is, however, not merely the standard one of records of elite activities kept by elites in ways that reflect their class and status. It is the more profound difficulty presented by earnest efforts of subordinate groups to conceal their activities and opinions, which might expose them to harm. (Scott 1990:87)

Thus it is unclear from the historical record alone to what extent the people of Furukawa continued their opposition to the changes being imposed upon them during the years following the Umemura Rebellion. Open resistance would have almost certainly resulted in swift retribution, considering the growing legal and military authority which the central government could now bring to bear (Bowen 1980:92). There is, however, compelling evidence in the form of civil and shrine regulations that the authorities began trying to suppress the development of the *okoshi daiko* from precisely this same time. These regulations constitute a kind of "shadow document" suggesting that peasant hostilities were assuming the form of a ritual demonstration.

As alluded to earlier, participation in a *matsuri* typically involves the liberal consumption of alcohol—particularly saké, which, among other things, is attributed with a purifying quality. It is customary in Japan that an individual not be held responsible for abusive words or actions while under the influence of alcohol. Saké drinking, therefore, confers a kind of temporary immunity for engaging in unusual behavior (Nakane 1970:125; Moeran 1984:84–85; Bailey 1991:99; Allison 1994:45–46). This immunity, combined with the momentum created by a mass assemblage of people and the anonymity afforded by the cover of darkness, makes the Japanese *matsuri* particularly conducive to the expression of rebellious tendencies.[14]

I previously mentioned that the director's drum was originally intended to make its rounds alone. At some point, however, the other neighborhoods began to take up their own drums and trail along behind—an obvious precursor to the *tsuke daiko*. In fact, the term *tsuke daiko* appears for the first time in an official document in 1878—only a few years after the Umemura Rebellion

(Ōno 1973:4). That same year the police ordered that the name of the *okoshi daiko* (rousing drum) be changed to *mezamashi daiko* (eye-opening, or wakening, drum), presumably in an effort to restore the event to its original function (Ōno 1974:7). It is significant here that the word *okoshi* can be interpreted in various ways, including "rousing" people to rebel; *mezamashi*, on the other hand, has no such connotations.[15]

In 1884 the *tsuke daiko* were explicitly prohibited in a revision to the festival regulations. Exactly what they were doing to warrant such treatment is not described. In any case, the townspeople found a clever way around the prohibition by referring to their drums as *suke daiko* (assisting drum) rather than *tsuke daiko* (attaching drum) and proceeding more or less as before, thereby obeying the letter—if not the intent—of the provision. The official ban on other drums was eventually lifted in 1901, though the regulations continued to emphasize that the director was to have exclusive control of the event (Ōno 1973:4).

In 1886 a serious cholera epidemic swept through Furukawa, causing the festival proceedings to be postponed. The following year the *matsuri* was moved from early autumn to early spring. The main event was now scheduled for April 20, just after the rice seeds had been sown in nursery beds but prior to the arduous task of transplanting the seedlings into the flooded paddies.[16] The *okoshi daiko* continued to be performed in the early predawn hours as a prelude to the main event. Now, however, it held greater potential for unruly behavior, as it afforded the townspeople an opportunity to release their pent-up energies after a long period of winter isolation and confinement.

It was from about this time that the director began using a special drum designated specifically for use in performing the *okoshi daiko*. The new drum was larger and oblong-shaped to produce a deeper, more resonant sound. It was placed upon a wooden framework and shouldered through the narrow streets, with extra bearers added to support the additional weight. Upon the framework stood four men—two to beat the drum and two others positioned fore and aft holding lanterns—but no one rode atop the drum itself at this time (Ōno 1973:4).

When the neighborhood *tsuke daiko* teams began competing with one another for position behind the director, they soon found it advantageous to carry smaller drums, with the actual sound produced becoming less important (Ōno 1973:4). Eventually the drums were bound tightly to long poles to make them more wieldy and afford greater leverage. It is apparent here that the neighborhood drums were undergoing a functional transformation from simple percussion instruments to visible symbols of territorial identity suitable for engaging other neighborhoods in physical confrontation.

The main drum continued to change as well, gradually taking on its present appearance. The wooden framework grew considerably larger and heavier, and the number of riders increased. Morphological changes in both the *okoshi daiko* and the *tsuke daiko* must thus be seen as related processes, as both are linked with the transition to the new symbolic meaning the whole event was beginning to assume.

The neighborhood chosen as director each year was responsible for providing all the manpower necessary to shoulder the huge drum structure on its circuit through town. This was becoming increasingly difficult due to the structure's expanding bulk. Some of the neighborhoods consisted of only twenty or thirty households and could by no means muster a sufficient number of able-bodied men. Extra bearers had to be recruited from outside, and resident landlord households began enlisting the aid of their tenant farmers from neighboring villages, compensating them with food and drink and sometimes money as well. Thus participation was not strictly limited to residents of Furukawa alone. Note, however, that the outsiders served only to carry the drum structure—they were not involved in performing any of the other functions.

The structure itself was now preceded by a mass of lantern-bearing townspeople, creating an otherworldly atmosphere in the darkened streets. Like the stately *mikoshi* entourage performed during the day, the rousing drum had developed into a grand procession; but the reception it encountered was considerably different. During this same period, sometime around the turn of the century, the neighborhood *tsuke daiko* teams began attacking the drum structure as it passed through their respective territories. Ōno (1976:3), based on interviews with his own informants, reports that the teams used to charge toward the big drum shouting "smash the director!" (*shuji o tsubusu*), hook their poles in through the crossbeams of the framework, and use them as levers to topple it over. Occasionally the entire structure was dragged to the river bank and forced over the edge.

The challenge to authority represented in this ritualized attack strongly suggests that the *okoshi daiko* was developing into an instrument of popular protest. This development is particularly significant in that it coincides with dramatic changes in local socioeconomic conditions—namely, the deterioration of landlord-tenant relations, higher rates of tenancy, and the rise of a number of wealthy merchant households, all of which created a more stratified society. The *okoshi daiko* can be seen as a strategic show of force emerging from the ranks of the common people. This show of force was made even more effective by the fact that it was performed directly in front of the homes of the resident elite—the same individuals who served as local representatives to the prefectural, and occasionally national, legislative assemblies.

But social stratification and the uncertainties engendered by a capitalist market economy were not the only local concerns. The imperialist attitudes and expansionism which eventually led Japan into the Second World War were already beginning to assert themselves at this time. Tremendous economic and industrial growth was accompanied by impressive military victories, first against the Chinese in 1895 and then the Russians in 1905.

Japan entered the war with Russia in 1904. In keeping with the seriousness of the national emergency, The Furukawa *matsuri* was temporarily suspended. Later that same year a devastating fire reduced most of Furukawa to ashes. The hardships caused by the disaster were no doubt magnified when the central government raised the land tax to help finance the war effort (Waswo 1977:117).

By 1906 the war had ended, but the *okoshi daiko* had not yet been reinstated by the town leaders. On the night when it would ordinarily have been performed, however, an unusual incident occurred. Since no director had been chosen that year, an officially designated "rousing drum" did not emerge. Nevertheless, the young men belonging to the various neighborhoods decided to bring out their *tsuke daiko* in spite of the absence of a lead drum and with spirits high made their way through town in a lively procession. As they were passing in front of the police station, the scene suddenly turned violent. The young men broke into the station building and laid waste to its contents, overturning furniture and scattering written documents about the room. A crowd outside then began to pelt the station building with rocks. The local newspaper reported forty-nine windowpanes broken (Kuwatani 1969:27; Furukawa-chō Kankō Kyōkai 1984:82–83).

This incident is particularly noteworthy in that suppression of the people's symbolic medium of opposition appears to have incited an actual attack on the authorities. The police were appointed by the prefectural government and thus represented the imposition of authority from outside the local area. The whole affair can therefore be interpreted as a local reaction against the growing power of the central government, understandable in light of the sacrifices the people had been obliged to make in supporting the national war effort. According to some accounts, soldiers returning from the war were told of the abuses the townspeople had been subjected to in their absence at the hands of the police, and it was these returning soldiers who led the assault, though the actual perpetrators were never identified (Kuwatani 1969:27). The *okoshi daiko* was officially reinstated the following year, possibly in recognition that a ritual expression of opposition was preferable to open hostilities.

The *tsuke daiko* teams attacked with such enthusiasm that their poles sometimes struck the big drum itself, and the townspeople grew concerned that it might be damaged in the melee. In 1917 the drum was placed upon a turret made of short wooden crossbeams. The higher elevation kept the drum up out of range of the *tsuke daiko* but also made both the drum and its attendants more highly visible, no doubt encouraging the teams to charge forth with even greater enthusiasm. A regulation passed in 1919 urged that advancing *tsuke daiko* teams be kept back away from the main drum for a distance of approximately five meters (Ōno 1973:4).[17]

The leaders of the director neighborhood, generally the heads of prominent landlord households, were now themselves obliged to stand upon the wooden framework as the "main guard" (*hon'ei*), while the neighborhood teams advanced upon it from behind. Their presence on the elevated platform thus became a highly conspicuous expression of their social prominence. The two young men chosen to serve as drum beaters were eventually positioned back-to-back atop the drum itself, just as they are in the present day. Later they were joined by two additional drum beaters standing on the framework at either end of the drum to amplify the sound. These roles, too, were customarily assumed by the sons of the most prominent households.[18]

The big drum together with its supporting platform had become too large—and was perhaps considered too valuable—to be subjected to the kind of treatment it had been receiving. Now the effort to "smash the director" was aimed at simply halting the structure's progress by causing it to collapse. This was achieved by placing the *tsuke daiko* up onto the rear of the platform and pulling or pressing down, thereby causing the bearers below to buckle under the additional weight. Team members also used their poles to shake or jostle the structure, along with its elite passengers.[19]

The director, however, was not merely the passive recipient of such behavior. In addition to the mass of drum bearers, his neighborhood attempted to muster a formidable gang of rear guardsmen positioned at ground level directly behind the platform to repel the incessant charges of the *tsuke daiko*. Also, the entire structure could suddenly reverse direction, pressing backward to menace its would-be attackers. Such defensive tactics served to raise the overall level of animosity, and fighting between the rear guard and *tsuke daiko* team members became increasingly common.

There was, of course, another dimension to this ritualized struggle—that which pitted neighborhood against neighborhood as they vied for position in advancing upon the director's drum. In time, the major objective for the *tsuke daiko* teams came to be outmaneuvering the other neighborhoods to occupy the esteemed position directly behind the drum structure, then proudly displaying their drum insignia for all to see. This was supposed to afford them good luck as well as boasting rights when the action was later recounted.

The *okoshi daiko* was now scheduled to begin shortly after midnight and continue on until just before the break of dawn, eventually completing a circuit through the entire town. For the men laboring underneath, the huge drum structure seemed to grow increasingly heavy as the night wore on. Some of the men enlisted from other villages would sneak away, creating an even greater burden on those they left behind. As a result, the entire platform would sink progressively lower through the course of the event—the bearers at times reduced to cradling its beams in the crooks of their arms.

Again, the mass consumption of alcohol and atmosphere of temporary license, especially when combined with the cover of darkness, offered an opportunity for engaging in unusual behavior. Anyone having a score to settle would wait for the night of the *okoshi daiko* to seek revenge. Acts of vandalism would likely go undetected in the general confusion, and aggressive behavior could later be blamed on the effects of the alcohol.

In some cases the drum structure itself became the very instrument of retribution. It is important to note that while the elite were obliged to ride upon the structure, its movement was controlled by the mass of bearers underneath. Their intoxicated condition, combined with the sheer weight of their burden, added an ominous uncertainty to its progress. Though far too heavy for any individual alone to affect its direction, a concerted effort, welling up from the depths of shared indignation, could easily send the massive structure crashing into the home of a stingy landlord, meddlesome police officer, or

acrimonious neighbor. Likewise the *tsuke daiko* teams, charging recklessly toward their goal, sometimes ran wide of the mark and ended up ramming their poles through an adjacent wall or storefront. Under the circumstances it would have been very difficult to determine whether such an act had been premeditated. Of equal significance is the fact that the ritual passed before *every resident household*, so that none were immune to its capricious vengeance. The ritual thus served as a form of social sanction, affording the people a means of reacting against perceived injustices.

The most famous example of such behavior involved yet another attack on the police headquarters, this one occurring in 1929. The police in prewar Japan were strict and intimidating—the most immediate agents of a militarist and somewhat authoritarian central government. Older residents recall that only on one night of the year—the night of the *okoshi daiko*—were the police not to be feared; on that night alone, the townspeople had the courage to defy their authority.[20]

Animosity toward the police had been growing due to a number of incidents involving the strict enforcement of seemingly trivial rules, and it was rumored that there would be big trouble during the *okoshi daiko* (Furukawa-chō Kyōiku Iinkai 1987:474). That year, while rounding the corner in front of the police station, the huge wooden drum platform suddenly swung wide, crashing in through the front of the station building. For a time it proceeded on down the street, but then came hurtling back to crash into the station repeatedly. The *tsuke daiko* joined in the assault, using their poles as battering rams. Participants and onlookers then proceeded to pelt the station building with rocks, just as they had in 1906. Over two hundred suspects were rounded up and detained for questioning during the next few days, but the mayor of Furukawa, himself a prominent landlord and simultaneously holding a seat in the prefectural assembly, eventually persuaded the prefectural authorities to have them released (Kuwatani 1969:28).[21]

The 1930s were characterized by Japanese military expansion into the Asian continent, and rural Japan was by no means oblivious to the rising tide of war. Fukutake (1980:158) observes that the villages "became the last link in the chain of organization for the all-out war effort and lost all vestiges of autonomy under the pressures of national administration."

In 1944, the government imposed a nationwide blackout due to the threat of allied air raids. That year the *okoshi daiko* was performed during the daylight hours, but the results were disappointing. By this time, so many of the local men had been called away to military service that there were hardly enough able-bodied men remaining to shoulder the drum structure. In 1945 the ritual was abandoned altogether, though the shrine ceremonies and prayers of supplication continued as usual.

The prevailing attitude immediately following the war was one of defeat and disillusionment—hardly conducive to a festive atmosphere. The rousing drum remained dormant for several years but was eventually resurrected in 1949 under the impetus of the young men's association (*seinendan*). Now, however, some changes were necessary.

The land reform instituted by the occupation forces after the war had effectively dissolved the prewar landlord class. In 1947 voting privileges were extended to all citizens—male and female alike—of at least twenty years of age. Former landlord households no longer held the authority to enlist the additional labor necessary to shoulder the huge drum structure, and most of the old neighborhoods were too small to draw sufficient manpower from among their residents alone. As a result, the town was redivided into four new sectors exclusively for the purpose of bearing the drum. Each sector was sufficiently large to perform the task alone, and responsibility for doing so was to rotate among the four sectors, as determined each year by drawing lots. The *tsuke daiko* teams continued as before to represent their original neighborhoods.

Ritualized acts of vandalism persisted well into the 1960s. During the postwar period, merchants began to enjoy the benefits of economic prosperity well before the other households, and this often led to feelings of resentment. Those who appeared more concerned with the accumulation of wealth than fulfilling their social obligations might be singled out for admonition, administered through a fortuitous lurch of either the huge drum structure or an advancing *tsuke daiko*. While such incidents appeared accidental, local residents recall that certain households were hit repeatedly year after year. Several merchants resorted to erecting boarded screens around their storefronts to protect them from assault.[22]

On the whole, however, favorable economic conditions and the proliferation of democratic ideals made ritualized expressions of popular protest increasingly unnecessary. At this juncture, the *okoshi daiko* had to assume yet another function or face the prospect of abandonment due to lack of utility. The saving feature was its marketability as a tourist attraction, coinciding with an increase in leisure time, mobility, and disposable income for the Japanese population as a whole. In 1952, Furukawa's Association of Commerce and Industry requested that the starting time for the ritual be moved ahead to 10:00 P.M. on April 19 to facilitate attendance by tourists from outside the community.[23] The national railway system later began to actively promote such events to boost its ridership, adding extra trains during the *matsuri* to accommodate the growing demand. The number of spectators has been steadily increasing every year, and Furukawa's rousing drum, once unknown outside the local area, is now familiar to the urban masses as far away as Toyama and Nagoya.

One obvious problem with developing the *matsuri* as an economic resource is that as an annual event it is capable of drawing tourists for only two or three days out of the year. The solution has been the recent construction of a huge new tourist facility in the center of town, complete with a special theater for viewing a three-dimensional film projection of the *okoshi daiko*. Now visitors to Furukawa can get a taste of the *matsuri* all year round.

But perhaps the most indicative change in terms of the rousing drum's former significance occurred in 1967, when a carriage mechanism, consisting of a single axle and two wheels complete with pneumatic tires, was installed beneath the huge supporting platform. This is not readily apparent to onlookers, as the

wheels remain hidden within the mass of bearers. The undercarriage now bears most of the weight, making the structure much easier to maneuver through the streets. The entire platform and its passengers remain at a constant height right through to the end of the performance with no fear of collapse. Even more significantly, the wheels keep the structure on a steady course and afford greater control when turning corners, so there is no longer any danger (nor, one might add, implied threat of vengeance) to buildings lining the way.

CONCLUSION

The long-standing debate alluded to at the beginning of this article has been reproduced in the theoretical treatment of ritual itself. Ritual has been described as both a form of social integration or control, instilling the dominant ideology into the minds of its participants (Turner 1969; Douglas 1973; Rappaport 1979: 142, 197), *and* as an instrument for effecting sociopolitical change through the introduction of new ideas (Turner 1974; Lukes 1975; Moore and Myerhoff 1977:5; Lincoln 1987). How can a single phenomenon serve in two seemingly contradictory capacities? Bell (1992:8) offers a solution to this dilemma by suggesting an alternative conceptual framework which focuses not on "ritual" as a discrete analytical category, but on "ritualization" as "a culturally strategic way of acting."

Bell argues that participation in ritual is not simply the passive acceptance of a dominant ideology; it is a matter of self-interested appropriation which affords its participants some flexibility in negotiating the terms of their involvement. Likewise, a shared symbolic pattern does not necessarily indicate a shared understanding of its meaning; participants in the same ritual may interpret its symbols differently. "People reproduce relationships of power and domination, but not in a direct, automatic, or mechanistic way; rather, they reproduce them through their particular construal of those relations, a construal that affords the actor the sense of a sphere of action, however minimal" (Bell 1992:84). Ritualized activity, therefore, is not simply the repetitive expression of a preconceived ideology; it is an ongoing process of "consent, resistance, and negotiated appropriation" (Bell 1992:207).

This process of "negotiated appropriation" is clearly evident in the development of the *okoshi daiko*, which symbolically recreated both the hierarchical social order and the people's inclination to rise up against it. The elite occupied an elevated and highly visible position atop the main drum platform, borne literally upon the shoulders of the masses. The common townspeople, represented by teams of young men armed with *tsuke daiko*, attacked the structure and threatened to bring the whole thing crashing down. In so doing, they were demonstrating that, if necessary, the townspeople could unite in overthrowing oppression, just as they had during the Umemura Rebellion.[24] The ritual thus carried with it an implicit warning—that elite status is a precarious position which persists only through the consent of the common people. This whole scenario reflected widespread dissatisfaction among the Japanese peasantry

with a trend prevalent throughout the modernization—namely, greater concentration of landholdings and the increasing failure of prominent households to fulfill their traditional role as local benefactors.

The expression of rebellious sentiments, however, extends well beyond this rather simplistic visual display. Of far greater significance is the atmosphere of temporary license and anonymity which the *matsuri* afforded, allowing the *okoshi daiko* to escalate on occasion into genuine acts of destructive violence. Such instances demonstrate the lack of a clear distinction between the ritual and practical realms of human activity. Ritual functioned here not merely as a form of symbolic expression; it also afforded an instrumental means of accomplishing a desired end—retribution for perceived injustices. In using it as such, the townspeople were capitalizing upon one of the few opportunities immediately available to them for airing their grievances.

Why would resident landlord households continue to offer their patronage despite the subversive messages the *okoshi daiko* had come to embody? It is possible that they recognized the need for a cathartic release of pent-up energies and frustrations through ritualized rebellion, which, as Gluckman (1954), Norbeck (1963), and Turner (1969:166–203) have suggested, may help to stave off the development of more serious opposition.[25] A more plausible explanation, however, is that while the elite were obliged to submit themselves to being jostled through the streets, their very presence atop the drum platform served nonetheless to reaffirm their elevated social positions. By going along with the momentary ordeal, they were able to present themselves as "good sports," still cognizant of the interests of the community at large. The *okoshi daiko* thus represented different things to different people, its meaning varying with the role of the individual participant.

This polysemic aspect assumes even greater significance when the *matsuri* is considered as a whole. The shrine ceremonies and *mikoshi* procession were associated with the local elite, acknowledging their power and prestige and linking them into the religio-political ideology being propagated by the central government. The *okoshi daiko*, on the other hand, emerged as a folk response to the officially sanctioned liturgy—a ritual expression of opposition issuing from the ranks of the common people. The *matsuri* therefore represents the clash of two opposing ideologies within the context of a single public forum.

It is important to note, however, that, while the *okoshi daiko* expressed a message of generalized opposition toward the local elite, specific interpersonal relations between landlord and tenant cultivator went largely unchallenged. The director neighborhood confined itself to providing the requisite number of people to carry, ride upon, and guard the main drum platform; it did not field a *tsuke daiko* team to advance upon the structure from behind.[26] Consequently, the members of any particular neighborhood were never brought into direct confrontation with their own resident elite, but only with those of other neighborhoods who, in riding upon the drum structure on a rotating basis, could merely be seen as symbolic representatives of a general category. Note how closely this aspect of the ritual performance parallels the actual condition of landlord-tenant relations in

Japan at the time, as Hane (1982:107) describes them:

> When, as the landlords turned to other means of making money, absentee landlordism began to increase, personal ties weakened and tenancy disputes became more acrimonious. Even then, however, tenants who were still linked to their landlords through personal ties normally remained loyal, siding with them against tenants who, encouraged by "radical" outsiders, challenged the landlord's authority.

This passage is particularly appropriate to the ritual performance which emerged in Furukawa and the role played by the drum bearers—many of whom had been pressed into service by their landlord patrons—as well as the rear guard, who were positioned behind the drum structure to ward off the other neighborhoods. Both continued dutifully to serve their own elite households—those with whom they maintained direct economic and interpersonal ties.

Relations with the police, on the other hand, were of an entirely different order. The police had been dispatched by the prefectural government and were thus considered outsiders. With no direct socioeconomic ties nor any prior tradition of paternalistic benevolence, there was nothing to justify their abuse of authority in the minds of the townspeople. This situation explains why they were attacked with such vehemence.

Reforms instituted during the allied occupation largely dissolved the rigid authoritarian hierarchy that had existed before the war. There followed a period of rapid economic expansion, which brought widespread prosperity and further dissolution of social distinctions. Socioeconomic conditions in rural Japan have steadily improved over the years, leaving little incentive for mass expressions of popular discontent. Thus, while the rousing drum ritual remains to this day a rather wild and boisterous affair—an opportunity especially for the young men to test their mettle and momentarily unlease their aggressive tendencies—it is now being marketed as a tourist attraction, a far more appropriate role within the context of present sociopolitical and economic conditions.

NOTES

1. The research upon which this paper is based was generously funded by a research scholarship provided by the Japanese Ministry of Education (*Monbush)* and a Graduate Student Alumni Research Award provided by the Ohio State University. I would like to thank Stephen Vlastos, Paul Durrenburger, Michael Chibnik, Margery Wolf, and William Kelly for their valuable suggestions. I would also like to thank Mr. Ōno Masao for freely sharing his expertise and helping me decipher historical documents. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Ninety-First Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco, December 2, 1992.

2. Gluckman (1954) originally coined the term "rituals of rebellion" in referring to ceremonial occasions in which customary deference toward authority was temporarily abandoned, allowing participants to openly express their hostilities toward the dominant elite. Gluckman argued that such rituals functioned to maintain the existing social

order through the cathartic release of divisive tensions. Norbeck (1963) later elaborated upon the concept, but concurred with the basic conclusion that ritualized conflict ultimately served to perpetuate the social system. More recently, Dirks (1988) has noted that such rituals often occur as annual events, associating their incidence with (1) the imposition of strict conformity to rigid social norms and (2) seasonal food shortages or other stress-producing conditions. According to Dirks, the conflict initially takes the form of a mock battle but becomes increasingly ritualized over time, eventually drifting away from its original purpose to assume other functions.

3. The administrative unit known as Furukawa Township (Furukawa-*chō*) encompasses not only the town itself and a number of peripheral villages, but a large tract of the surrounding forested mountain land as well. The entire area of 98.11 square kilometers contains a total population of 16,187 (Sōmuchō Tōkeikyoku 1990). This analysis, however, will restrict itself to the central town area, delineated by the territorial boundaries of the local tutelary shrine.

4. The word *"matsuri"* is roughly equivalent to the English "festival," though the Japanese term once held a more deeply religious connotation. Havens (1988:148) suggests that "the theological sense given to *matsuri* is probably closest to the English terms 'to worship' or 'to show reverence,'" and Shintō priests commonly refer to the religious rituals they perform on behalf of their parishioners as *matsuri*. Recently the word has been used in referring to various secular celebrations, exhibitions, and even promotional sales events. It is most commonly associated, however, with Shintō shrine festivals—the seasonal community celebrations dedicated to the local guardian deity and originally related to the agricultural calendar.

5. *Bon* (also referred to as *Obon* using the honorific prefix) is a Buddhist observance honoring the spirits of the deceased ancestors. In the Hida region it is celebrated during August 13–15.

6. In other parts of Japan, the *mikoshi* is taken on a raucous joyride through the streets and alleyways comprising its territory. But in the Hida region, the palanquin-like vehicle is borne along in a stately procession, accompanied by a host of local dignitaries dressed in the formal costume of the rural elite in premodern Japan.

7. This type of folk belief, found throughout the Japanese archipelago, reflects an important material relationship. The forested mountains provided many of the basic resources necessary for human subsistence. Water for irrigating the rice paddies, various species of edible plants and game animals, housing materials, fodder, fuel, and fertilizer all came from the forested mountains and could therefore be seen as gifts from the spirits dwelling therein. The surrounding mountains were thus vital to life in the communities below, which no doubt explains why they became so highly venerated. In fact, the people of Hida continue to refer to the mountains as the "great mother" (*oinaru haha*).

8. See Befu (1965) for an excellent analysis of internal village administration and its articulation with the state in Tokugawa Japan.

9. The use of such vehicles is fairly common in Japanese festivals, particularly in the more populous areas. Known in other areas as *dashi*, *danjiri*, *yama*, *yamaboko*, etc., their original purpose was to attract the attention of the deities, which were believed to be drawn to high objects (Yamamoto 1986:216).

10. The word *"shuji"* is written with two characters: *shu* meaning "chief" or "master," and *ji* meaning "matter," or "affair." The combination *shu-ji* is usually translated as "director," "manager," or "superintendent," though the sense conveyed here is something like "master of ceremonies."

11. The use of a drum of this type was a traditional method of announcing the

beginning of an important event and was by no means unique to Furukawa. It can still be seen, in fact, prior to the opening of every sumo tournament and is referred to as a *fure daiko*, "shaking drum"—the original purpose being to shake up or rouse the townspeople (*machi o fureru*) to turn out in support of the event. Such drums are also employed in folk rituals as a means of driving away evil.

12. Later amendments to the constitution extended voting privileges to a successively wider range of people, lowering the minimum tax payment required to ten yen in 1900, then five yen in 1919, and finally dropping the requirement altogether in 1925. (Voting continued to be restricted to males at least twenty-five years of age until the end of the Second World War.) These reforms did not significantly alter the sociopolitical order in the rural areas, however, as local landlords were still able to capitalize upon informal social controls—namely, their higher status and recognized ties of pseudofilial obligation—in directing their subordinates how to vote (Fukutake 1980:184).

13. This registry is an unpublished document entitled "*Shūgiin giin senkyō jinmeibo*" (Voting Register for the Election of Members to the [National] House of Representatives). It was compiled in 1889 and is limited to Yoshiki-*gun*, the northernmost county in Gifu Prefecture, wherein the town of Furukawa lies. The total population figure is a rough approximation based on a population of 4,876 in 1880 and 5,066 in 1883, as reported by Taga (1982:83).

14. Sonoda (1975, 1988) has described the Japanese *matsuri* in terms of a basic experiential dichotomy:

> On the one hand are highly dignified rites of seclusion and purification, tedious rites in which one's emotions and responses are trained and focused through bodily actions and behavior of the most restrained and solemn kind. But on the other hand, there is also generally an expectation of a thorough liberation of mind and body, a destruction of the existing order. Festival days involve a kind of public license for the casting away of everyday restraints and for the kind of behavior which in normal common sense would be disdainfully dismissed as vulgar. (Sonoda 1988:36)

He notes that the licentiousness and temporary abandonment of restraint are far more likely to emerge at night than during the daytime (Sonoda 1988:58–59).

15. The term *mezamashi daiko* remained the official designation for several decades, though the local people continued informally to refer to their ritual as the *okoshi daiko*. The original name was officially reinstated in 1941.

16. The reason for the time change is unclear. Local opinion suggests that the townspeople merely found a spring celebration more to their liking. I am not entirely satisfied with this explanation and am more inclined toward another possibility. As previously mentioned, spring *matsuri* were held just before rice transplanting to request the deity's favor in protecting the community and ensuring a successful growing season, while autumn *matsuri* were intended as expressions of gratitude for a bountiful harvest. A sense of gratitude would hardly have been prevalent among the people of Furukawa at that time, however, considering the serious cholera epidemic that had afflicted them the previous year. The switch to spring could possibly have been an effort to regain the deity's benevolence and protection.

17. The actual distance prescribed in the document is fifteen *shaku*, a *shaku* measuring about 30 centimeters.

18. Not surprisingly, the most coveted position of all was atop the drum itself, riding high above the others at the very center of the spectacle. In those days the

okoshi daiko began shortly after midnight and continued on until dawn. Due to the amount of physical exertion required, the drum beaters were changed periodically throughout the night, so several individuals had to be chosen each year. Opinions vary as to the specific attributes an aspiring drum beater was required to possess. Each neighborhood employed its own criteria, so the selection process varied to some extent from one neighborhood to the next. The most commonly mentioned attributes were that the young man be: (1) the eldest son (*chōnan*) in his household, also implying that he was destined to succeed as its head, (2) as yet unmarried, (3) from a household of prominent standing in the community, and (4) recognized as having good character. Of course the candidate had to be physically strong enough to perform the required task. An impressive physical appearance was also mentioned as a desirable quality. Some informants insist that the young man's household was expected to contribute one barrel of saké to help enliven the festivities—the cost being prohibitive to all but the most affluent.

19. Many of my older informants acknowledged that this was common practice until well into the postwar period.

20. Both Kaba (1984:36) and Kuwatani (1969:26–30) describe harassment of the police as one of the liberties taken by the local people during the *okoshi daiko*. Even today the police maintain a respectful distance, allowing the local fire brigade to patrol the event.

21. The questioning was reportedly very severe, and some of the suspects were beaten. One of my informants recalled being warned during the interrogation that the power of the police was second only to that of the imperial family. All those arrested remained loyal to one another and refused to offer any incriminating information about other participants. Though the mayor was able to secure the eventual release of most of the detainees, in the end three of the men were sent away to prison. It is significant that local residents describe these men as *giseisha* (sacrificials), the very term used in reference to those given up for punishment during the premodern peasant rebellions. Use of this term suggests an attitude of moral conviction and solidarity in defying the authorities.

22. Most merchants at this time lived above their shops—shop and residence occupied the same building, in other words.

23. In 1994 the event was moved ahead yet again to 9:00 P.M.

24. It would perhaps be stretching the limits of credibility to suggest that the *okoshi daiko* developed as a reenactment of the Umemura Rebellion. Yet local residents maintain that the same spirit which incited the rebellion has been kept alive through the performance of the yearly ritual. Many, in fact, attribute the origin of the term Furukawa *yancha* to the Umemura Rebellion itself or to the actions of Furukawa people during the Ōhara Rebellions which embroiled the Hida region during the years 1771–1787 (Kuwatani 1969:24; Sugata 1975:8).

25. This is the so-called safety-valve theory, originally invoked by functionalists in attempting to account for rituals of rebellion or status reversal. Scott (1990:178) has challenged this interpretation, suggesting that such activity could "just as easily serve as a dress rehearsal or a provocation for actual defiance."

26. This practice was a holdover from earlier times before a special drum had been designated for use during the *okoshi daiko*. As previously mentioned, in those days each neighborhood used a drum of its own, taking turns at performing the lead role while the other neighborhoods followed along behind. This custom carried over even after the creation of a special drum, with the director's neighborhood confining itself to manning the drum structure.

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