

RESEARCH ON PRESERVING AND PROMOTING THE HERITAGE OF JIDAI MATSURI (FESTIVAL OF AGES) IN KYOTO, JAPAN

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Abstract - The changes of communal festivals under the cultural and historical impacts including objective factors (space and time) and subjective ones (subject, ideology, human resources, financial resources) have been considered as a matter of fact. However, along with the changes of the modernized society, communal festivals should be conserved and their values should be promoted in terms of intangible cultural heritage. It is necessary to preserve their authenticity in religious beliefs, and at the same time, promote their roles in developing local and national economies. Therefore, this study aims to examine some methods used in preserving and promoting the heritage of Jidai Matsuri (Festival of Ages), one of the most famous historical festivals in Kyoto, Japan.

Key words - communal festival; preserving; promoting; intangible cultural heritage; authenticity; Jidai Matsuri.

1. Introduction

Japan is known worldwide as a typical Asian country that successfully ensures the diversity and richness of culture and the national identity. As a matter of fact, the variety of festivals has become an indispensable element that is crucial in making a great impact on the cultural and social life of this country. Since 1950, Japan has become one of the very first countries in the world promulgating “The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties”. Under this law, intangible cultural heritage is classified in the categories of Intangible Cultural Properties, Intangible Folk Cultural Properties and Preservation Techniques for Cultural Properties. Therefore, festivals are in the category of Intangible Folk Cultural Properties that typically represent the unique features of Japanese basic lifestyles and beliefs. [2] Moreover, Japan advocates preserving the authenticity of intangible cultural heritage. In 1994, the Nara Document was adopted by the WHC - the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO for preserving the authenticity of world cultural heritages [6].

Currently in Japan, it is obvious that the preservation and promotion of festivals as intangible cultural heritage is a growing concern and regarded as important factors in understanding the transition of Japanese lifestyles.

2. Jidai Matsuri – Festival of Ages

2.1. Introduction of Jidai Matsuri

With two other famous Kyoto festivals, Aoi Matsuri and Gion Matsuri, Jidai Matsuri is a popular historical reenactment. Being held annually on October 22nd, it is more like a scroll painting because of its long parade displaying 2000 participants in authentic historical costumes representing famous historical figures from the feudal periods of Japan. It is also famous as a lively historical textbook that takes people back to the atmosphere of Japanese antiquities.

Jidai Matsuri is related to the relocation of the Japanese capital from Kyoto (Heian) to Tokyo (Edo) in 1868. Having succeeded to the throne in 1868, Emperor Meiji issued a chain

of important reforms called Meiji Restoration. Shinbutsu bunri (神仏分離), a religious policy that separated Shinto (神道) from Buddhism and therefore separated Kami (native Shinto deities) from Buddha (Buddhist deities) and Shinto shrines from Buddhist temples, has put Shinto in the position of the national religion. Shortly afterwards, this policy triggered a violent anti-Buddhist movement called Haibustu Kishaku (廃仏毀釈) that caused the closure of thousands of Buddhist temples, forced a return to lay life, transformed Buddhist monks into Shinto priests, and destroyed books, statues and many other Buddhist artifacts. As a result, Heian aristocratic families have gradually moved to Edo (Tokyo). This caused Kyoto (Heian) to become less prosperous [3].

In March 1895, in an effort to restore the glorious atmosphere of the ancient capital, Heian Jingu (Heian Shrine) was built for the purpose of honoring the Emperor Kanmu (781 ~ 806), who had decided to move the capital from Nagaoka to Heian in 794. On October 25th of the same year, Jidai Matsuri was first held on the occasion of the anniversary of the Kyoto foundation with 800 participants displaying historical costumes and traditional customs in 9 parades.[3]. After receiving much applause from the first Jidai event, the Kyoto Prefecture Government came to a decision on holding the festival as an annual event of the city. Correspondingly, since 1896, the festival has been held on October 22nd which was the day Emperor Kanmu had moved the capital from Nagaoka to Heian. The purpose of this festival is to honour the last emperor of Heian, Emperor Komei (1831~1867), who unified the power of the imperial court and the affirmed Heian as the important center of Japan at the decline of Tokugawa Bakufu in Edo [3].

2.2. Main activities of Jidai Matsuri

The main activities are divided in two parts including the ceremony and the event. The ceremony, which is called Shinkosai (神幸), takes place from 7.30 am at Heian Jingu. At 9 a.m, the Mikoshi (a portable shrine), a representation honouring emperors Kanmu and Komei, will be carried to Kyoto Goshō (Imperial Palace). After that, one more ceremony called Anzaishosai (安在所祭) will be held at the same place. Finally, at noon, the Mikoshi will be carried back to Heian Jingu. Together with the procession are the parades with various characters from Meiji Restoration in 1868 till the beginning of the Heian Period in 781. The parades and the Mikoshi are the highlights of the festival [5].

Nowadays, there are 18 parades of 2000 participants representing the following 9 historical periods:

Meiji (明治時代) (1868-1912)

Edo ((江戸時代) (1615-1868)

Azuchi Momoyama (安土桃山時代) (1573-1598)

Yoshino (吉野時代)(1336-1392)
 Muromachi (室町時代) (1338-1573)
 Kamakura (鎌倉時代) (1185-1333)
 Fujiwara (藤原時代) (897-1185)
 Heian (平安時代) (1185-794)
 Enryaku (延暦時, 782-805)
 (including Nara period (奈良時代)(600-794)

It usually takes two or three hours to watch the procession of 2000 participants passing by from the Imperial Palace to the Heian Shrine. The performance, under the reverse chronological order of the parade, has become a distinguishable character of Jidai Matsuri.

3. Values of Jidai Matsuri in Japanese lifestyles

3.1. Values in education and community cohesion

Built in 1895, the Heian Shrine was immediately placed under the management of Heian Kosha (平安講社), a community association of Kyoto residents. Heian Kosha is also in charge of organizing the whole parade. This association was firstly founded on 4 administrative divisions of Kyoto city including Kamigyō, Shimogyō, Otagiyū and Kadonogun. After that, these divisions were divided into 6 units called Sha (社). At present, the number of Sha has increased to 10. Each Sha was divided into smaller units called Kumi (組). Each Kumi manages at least 1, 2 or 3 groups among the number of parades, which has been increasing every year. Also, the number of participants who take part in the parades is no less than 2000 so far. Most of them are students selected carefully by Kumi and Sha of Heian Kosha [5].

Thus, in terms of the management of the local authorities and the participation of local residents, Jidai Matsuri is really a model of community cooperation and cohesion. Yamada Zenzaburo, Head of Heian Kosha stated, "If we think that the aim of Jidai Matsuri is to show that Kyoto is such a peaceful and prosperous community, from this moment, each of us should be aware of the true meaning of the festival as well as keep contributing to its development in the future". [Kyoto Newspaper, dated 2006, September 25th].

Jidai Matsuri is a national event held to keep Kyoto in glory and interest but also to commemorate the spirit of two emperors. However, it is true that local residents are the ones who have played the most important role in the success of the festival. They have been given numerous chances to make the festival glue for creating community cohesion. It is also a precious opportunity for each individual to learn the way to be a part of their community.

3.2. Values in national identities

As mentioned above, Aoi Matsuri held annually on May 15th and Gion Matsuri held annually from 17th to July 24th, are two other famous community festivals in Kyoto. These festivals have been held for over 1000 years. In comparison with these ones, Jidai Matsuri is a new one, with 110 organized events as in 2014. However, the attraction of the festival has not decreased. On the contrary, being one of Kyoto's renowned three great festivals, it is highly recommended by festival experts, participants and tourists, because it has created a great

enjoyable atmosphere for people of all ages to watch the historical reenactment parades with people dressed in authentic costumes and the sound of Gagaku (雅樂), a traditional type of music. The spiritual atmosphere of the festival may bring young people back to their ancestors' glorious periods. In my opinion, at this point, the beauty of national identities will be passed from generation to generation. The preservation and promotion of the national identity are not only found in festival activities but also in the consciousness of that community.

3.3. Values in religious beliefs

Jidai Matsuri shows its spiritual and cultural values in the aspect of commemorating the national religion, Shinto, with the honor of two emperors Kanmu and Komei. Furthermore, in terms of religion, this festival is considered as a Shinkosai (神幸祭), a type of ceremony for welcoming God in Japan. This type of ceremony is a spiritual need that arose in the Asian agricultural history. For the second time of the event in 1896, Heian Kosha has clearly defined that the parades with the Mikoshi, which were carried out respectively from Kyoto Goshō to Heian Jingu would become remarkable factors of the festival [5]. By watching and taking part in the festival, the residents of Kyoto community not only have chances to express their respect to the Gods and their ancestors, but also to show their eagerness to preserve their beliefs in the form of promoting the values of intangible cultural heritage.

3.4. Values in economic development

While the ceremonial part of the festival is mostly for religious rituals, the event allows participants to relax themselves by joining in many interesting activities. It is reasonable to say that the values of a community festival should also be recognized as a unique cultural tourism product in modern societies. In terms of this recognition, together with Aoi Matsuri and Gion Matsuri, Jidai Matsuri has become a prospective product representing the culture of Kyoto effectively. In order to attract the attention of domestic and foreign tourists, in accordance with the developing tendency of Kyoto city, Heian Kosha has run various campaigns on press, media and social networks to provide the most accurate information related to Jidai Matsuri in terms of the time, the place, the ticket price and other services. At the same time, there is a great number of websites introducing local souvenir shops of specific gifts such as Furoshiki, a traditional wrapping cloth, and small dolls of historical figures who appeared in the festival [9].

4. Preservation and promotion of Jidai Matsuri's values

At present, the traditional ceremony and community festival are accepted as concepts of intangible cultural heritage by the UNESCO's Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection approved in Paris in 2003 [8].

In terms of the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, according to Ashworth, there are two points of views: preservation based on authenticity and preservation based on inheritance from the past. However, these types of preservation hold their own strengths and weaknesses. Ashworth has finally given a third solution,

which is called preservation based on development. In this type of preservation, he suggested that cultural heritage should be mainly conserved by focusing on how to promote its values in modern societies. Therefore, the management of cultural heritage should be conducted in accordance with the requirements of a certain society attached with its context of politics, economy and culture [1].

Based on Ashworth's third solution, Jidai Matsuri has been reasonably preserved based on the following principles.

4.1. Applying the principle of Yushoku Kojitsu (有職故実) in history reenactment

Yushoku Kojitsu is a popular Japanese principle related to history reenactment. Yushoku means understanding and having a deep knowledge of the historical events. Kojitsu refers to the standards and persuasive evidences concerning historical events in which Kuge Kojitsu (公家故実) for aristocracy and Fuke Kojitsu (武家故実) for samurai are the most important ones. When applying Yushoku Kojitsu to Jidai Matsuri's parades, Yushoku experts who have knowledge about imperial ceremonies and rituals should cooperate with Kojitsu specialists to reproduce the costumes and customs as they used to be like in history. Being a large-scale festival, Jidai Matsuri requires not only expertise on history, but also a serious work ethic and a huge expenditure on reproduction. Professor Inokumua, commissioner of an investigation into Heian Kosha, said, "This festival is likely a history textbook of Japanese customs. For this reason, it really essential to keep authenticity on the reproductions of historical factors that appeared in each period and even for the materials and techniques used in sewing the costumes. Even the casting of Shogun's swords must be done with careful researching" [Kyoto Newspaper, dated 4th, October, 2006]. In addition, Kuroda, a craftsman taking responsibility of Fujiwara and Heian periods's costumes revealed, "There is no festival as Jidai Matsuri for the quantity of costumes and armors. Moreover, all of them must be reproduced authentically, from materials to sewing patterns" [Kyoto Newspaper, dated 2006, October 4th].

By applying Yushoku Kojitsu, the organizers of Jidai Matsuri have proved that this festival has been successfully and authentically conserved. During the past 119 years (1895~2014) of successful organizations, Jidai Matsuri has been considered a lively historical reenactment and has led viewers to blissful moments of historical recollection.

4.2. Changing views on women's social status

Due to the purpose of keeping the purity in Shinto, women were basically not allowed to engage in religious ceremonies. For that reason, Jidai Matsuri was once held without the performance of female figures in the parades. However, after World War II (1945), in accordance with the social recognition of women's status, the role of female figures began to be appreciated in Jidai Matsuri. Princess Kazu Ninomiya (Emperor Komei's sister), Yodigimi (Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi's concubine), famous writer Murasaki Shikibu and talented female singer Onono Komachi are remarkable characters that represent the glorious feudal periods of aristocracy and samurai. Besides,

there are also some characters from the common people such as Oharame, the women selling vegetables in town as well as the ladies selling fresh flowers in Shirakawa [5].

By enhancing the position of female figures in the parades, the preservation based on developments has been effectively implemented. Both the original values and the entire values are selectively employed. Besides, the selection of the appropriate values for promoting the heritage of the festival has made Jidai Matsuri become a representative value in which its existence reflects the history of national development.

5. Conclusions

The development of the festival is an integrated process of historical periods. Through the analysis of the solutions applied to the reenactment of Jidai Matsuri, it is necessary to say that the point is neither preservation based on authenticity nor preservation based on inheritance from the past but the identification, the benefits of preservation for the government, the community or tourists. It becomes more and more obvious to us that a proper preservation method should be a harmonious combination between tradition and modern.

Accordingly, the preservation of a festival must satisfy two main factors. The first aims to meet the demands of the religious beliefs of the community. The second is to be in accordance with the national and local economic tendencies. In order to achieve those goals, it is important to clarify the role of local residents as the main organizer of the festival as well as the necessity of encouraging them to participate in the festival by choice. Last but not least, although these local residents are welcomed to the festival, they have to be asked to acquire proper awareness of the meaning and the history of the festival according to the instructions of local government. This might help them to appreciate and promote the cultural values in proper ways.

Simultaneously, the government, local authorities and social managers have also played indispensable roles in confirming, preserving and promoting the festival to make it a cultural tourism product not only nationwide but also worldwide.

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