

Nold Egenter

SACRED SYMBOLS OF REED AND BAMBOO

Annually built cult torches as spatial signs and symbols.
A study of the building traditions of the *ujigami* Shintô rituals
as practiced around the town of Ômihachiman in Japan.



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Introduction

A notable characteristic of many festivals in the Japanese Folk-Shinto religion is the temporary erection of hut- and columnlike objects. Such structures, which are made of manageable materials such as reed, bamboo, branches and the like, are firmly placed in specified locations of the area set out for the shrine's ritual. They can also be carried around in a festive procession; this often happens in a wild frenzy during which they are roughly pushed and pulled, thrown up in the air and dropped again. When the festival is over, such objects, having served their purpose, are abandoned. This abandonment can be done in various ways depending on the festival in question. In many places they are left to decay in the shrine's sacred wood, often after they have been dismantled. Sometimes they are taken apart and the various pieces are kept; partly so that the materials can be used again for the same purpose, and also partly to be used as firewood. However, the most spectacular way of disposing of these constructions is to bum them down on the spot where they were erected. In areas where this is the custom the burning usually used to play such a big role in the festival that the people began to speak of the festivals» (*himatsuri*) and to regard the burnt objects of worship as «torches» (*taimatsu*). These fire festivals and torches went through a period of development resulting in a refinement of their characteristics, but nonetheless the common features shared with the previously-mentioned structures have been retained.

The fire festivals as such cannot be traced back to ancient Japanese sources and therefore were probably not an ancient Shinto institution. Paradoxically however, they do have great importance regarding the preservation of ancient Shinto customs. The fact that these objects of worship had to bum easily led to the preservation of two features. These are, firstly, the fact that they are composed of many component parts, and secondly that they are made of quickly decaying materials such as grass, branches, twigs and the like.

It is likely that these two features are characteristic not only of the earliest Japanese cult objects but also of those of other cultures. In re-

spect of some specific traditions several authors have advanced the hypothesis that the bundle of grass or twigs is among the oldest of cult objects (e.g. ancient Egyptian and Sumerian: ANDRAE, 1930 and 1933; Indo-Persian: CHARPENTIER, 1932; ancient Chinese: MORIYA, 1950; ancient Japanese: HARADA, 1961). This hypothesis is what led to the present work and was indeed the motive to pursue it. The initial impetus for this study was a visit to the village of Ueda. The festival of this village which lies on the eastern shores of Lake Biwa, will be dealt with in detail in the following pages. Personal contact with Ciaudenz DOMENIG stimulated the author's interest and led him to the idea that these torches are not merely decorative «fire brands» but actually structures in the real sense of the word. If one looks closely at the very carefully collected cult torches found in this region, little doubt will remain as regards this assumption. Classified merely as fire brands placed among functional torches erected for the purpose of illumination, the cult torches would appear to be but decorative variations of rather marginal significance. This hardly does justice. Although Japanese folklore does not disregard the fact that these torches often serve as temporary sacred symbols (*kami no yorishiro*) in rituals (YANAGITA, 1963; *Nihon minzoku jiten*, 1972; HAGIWARA, 1965; etc.), the structural aspect is however still mostly overlooked. The viewpoint which evaluates the bundling of grass and twigs primarily in terms of favorable combustion may overlook a longer tradition of symbolic building which may possibly predate the ritual consignment of such materials to the Barnes. This primary concern with the aspect of fire explains why a thorough investigation of the distinctly symbolic types presented in this study has previously been neglected. In fact, the classification of such symbolic cult torches within the wider class of primitive Shinto constructions is still the exception rather than the rule. In considering the cult torches of the Ōmihachiman area essentially as structures we are pursuing an unusual line of approach. The main object is to demonstrate the feasibility and fruitfulness of this approach. This should contribute to the understanding of a tradition of

religious building, which extends beyond the limited scope of fire festivals and which continues to exist in many areas where the Shinto religion is practiced. In these areas, huts and pillars made of rush, bamboo, branches and the like are built to serve as temporary dwellings of the gods.

This survey is based upon field work carried out in about hundred villages in the above-mentioned area of Lake Biwa. As the cult torches are only erected for the short period of a festival and are then burnt down either on the same day or on the next, it proved necessary to follow these events over a period of several years (1972 to 1976). Repeated questioning of the resident population led gradually to the realization that such festivals occur not only in the places popularly known or suggested by existing ethnographic studies (HAGIWARA, 1965; KITAGAWA, 1966; SUGANUMA, 1975; TSUKITAKE, 1966), but are in fact performed every spring in some hundred villages of the region (1).* A larger working

team would have been required to devote an equal amount of attention to each example. but since the cult torches built in different places show much similarity, a thorough study of a few cases and a description of some typical variations can give a representative picture.

The following study is based on such examples. It concentrates on a general presentation of the situation in a single village. In Ueda, the selected village, the festival clearly demonstrates the basic tradition for the region as a whole. It also offers basic variations of form and construction, thus providing an insight into the principles of variation and development of form which are possible with this building-method.

This study not only considers aspects of form and construction but also the symbolic significance of the different types of cult objects. Their temporary function within this settlement's well-structured socio-spatial organization is described in detail.

The numbers added in brackets refer to the plates with drawings and photographs. Arabic numbers refer to plates with drawings, Roman numbers refer to plates with photographs. The first number indicates the plate, the numbers after the diagonal stroke indicate the pictures. Single numbers within brackets refer to plates only.

1. The taimatsu festival of Ueda

The village of Ueda in Shiga prefecture (1) and (2) consists of four units of the *ko-aza* type (*ko-aza* meaning «subsection of a village», but translated here as «hamlet» because the *ko-aza* are relatively independent units): Nishide, Ishibashi, Higashide and Sakurai. The village shrine, Shinodajinja, is situated in Higashide. The *ujigami* shrines of the four hamlets are united in the shrine precinct (3). The Nishiwakamiya from Nishide, the Ishiwakamiya from Ishibashi and the Ôjimiya from Sakurai, as minor shrines (*kosha*) are placed in a row close to the Higashide shrine according to the hamlets' geographical location in the village. The Higashide shrine is considered to be the main shrine (*gô-sha*).

The present settlement Ueda near Mabuchi is said to have been founded under the name of Shinodago on the implementation of the *Jôrisei* after the Taika reform. The name of the locality Ueda can be traced back to documents of the 15th century. Since 1863 Ueda has been divided into Nishimura and Higashimura. The three minor shrines, which in former times stood outside the present main shrine precinct, were transferred there in 1910.

In former times, the Ueda annual festival is said to have been celebrated in the Umamioka shrine jointly with three neighboring villages of the then Mabuchi-shô (Mabuchi, Iwakura and Senzoku). For reasons unknown Ueda seems to have later separated from this community and since then has held its annual festival independently of the others. The three villages of Mabuchi, Iwakura and Senzoku have their festival at the same time as Ueda with similar kinds of *taimatsu*. They also have a similar relationship between local village festivals (*uchi-matsuri*) and a major festival (*gôsha-matsuri*) of the three villages at the Umamioka shrine.

Nowadays, essentially eight «torches», *taimatsu*, are erected at the annual festival of the four *ujigami* shrines in Ueda (4/1-5). The building process is called *taimatsu-yui* (literally, «torch-binding») and forms a ritual part of the traditionally determined preparations for the festival. All the torches are given as burnt-offering (*hōka*), the three *taimatsu* from the minor

shrines (4/1-3 and 11/1-4), being sacrificed the night before the main festival (*yomiya*) (8/1), the *taimatsu* (4/4,5; 1/1,2 and 11/5), which are related to the main shrine being sacrificed on the night of the main festival (*honsai*) (8/2).

The entire three day festival consists of other ceremonies in addition to the building and burning of the cult torches, but these will not be dealt with here. The origin of the ritual fireworks (*hanabij*), which burn in the form of pictures, is obviously more recent. Other ceremonies associated with the main shrine (*kami-oroshi*, *hairako no shinji*) have strong characteristics of state-Shinto and are therefore not discussed here. A very beautiful part of the festival are the precisely organized night processions of the hamlets' inhabitants to and from the village shrine (*miya-iri-togyo*). On this occasion, lanterns and portable torches are carried through the narrow village streets and along the paths between the fields. Big drums, carried on wooden stands and beaten as the procession advances, echo throughout the night in the whole region around the village. These processions create the atmosphere for the festival as a whole.

The whole festival, with its social and historical background, has been described in full detail in a beautiful document (KITAGAWA, 1966) written by the officiating priest of the main shrine. From this we quote some information in so far as it pertains to the religious organizations of the *taimatsu* festival.

The four shrines and the rituals attributed them, the most important event of which is the annual *taimatsu* festival, are supported by groups formed in each hamlet by certain male members of the older houses (*ujiko no ie*, «houses of descendants of family clans»). The more recent houses are excluded from *ujigami* worship. In 1965, out of a total of 171 houses in the village, 126 were *ujiko* houses.

Every hamlet has two different worship groups. One, which is called *zen'in*, consists of the male heads (*koshu*) of the *ujiko* houses. This group is presided over by a member (*ujiko-sôdai*, «head of the *ujiko*») who is elected every four years. The other cult group (*wakarenchû*, «union of young men») consists of the sons of the

ujiko houses, who join upon reaching the age of 15 (in one of the hamlets it is 17) and remain within the group until the age of 26. This group also has a delegate (*daihyōsha*) at its head. The structure of the cult organizations is particularly interesting because it is closely associated with the various forms of «trusses»* and the relationship of these trusses to the spatial organization of the village and the time structure of the festival (7). It will be referred to later.

In order to clarify the sequence of events during the festival, a diagram has been given, which shows the ceremonies that take place on the important first two days (8/1,2). The diagram shows the crucial places in the ritual, the activities at these places and how the worshippers or the important objects of worship move from one place to another. Seen together with the plan of the shrine (6) and the descriptions that follow, the reader should be able to gain an insight into the most important features of the festival.

Let us now consider the term *taimatsu*: «torch». The festival is clearly of a dual nature; firstly, the construction of the *taimatsu* and associated ritual activities and secondly, the sacrifice of the *taimatsu* by fire. The word *taimatsu* points solely to the fire aspect of the ritual; it certainly gives no indication that the objects are formally differentiated. Therefore, whenever the text deals with the building or the shapes, we shall employ the word «truss» by analogy to the Japanese *taimatsu-yui* meaning «torch binding». Whenever the sacrifice by fire is discussed, the word «torch» will be used. In this way the dual nature of these structures can be more readily appreciated.

Starting from a static-dynamic point of view, two basic types of trusses can be distinguished: those which are fixed to the ground and remain in one place and those which can be moved from place to place. This classification is also associated with social and spatial relationships and with differences in form and size.

In Ueda, four trusses of the first type are built (4/1-4 and II/i-5). In the Ōmihachiman region, they are mostly called *ōtaimatsu* (big torch), but

sometimes *sue-taimatsu* (set-up torch) or *kazari-taimatsu* (ornamented torch) and stand about three to four meters high. The four *zenin* cult organizations of the hamlets, representing the established *ujiko* house-holds, fix the *ōtaimatsu* in the ground, build them up and later burn them down in front of the shrines (7/1).

There are several kinds of mobile trusses. In this region, the largest and most significant of this group are mostly called *kasa-taimatsu* («umbrella torch»)(4/5 and III/1). This term refers to the way in which the upper reed part, which crowns the shaft of the column, spreads out like an umbrella. In other regions, this type is called *hiraki-taimatsu* (from *hiraku* «to open», «to spread out»). The *kasa-taimatsu*, four in number, are not built in the shrine precinct, but in the hamlets by the young men's associations, *wakarenchū* (7/2). When they have been completed, they are erected there and later taken to the shrine. This type is of a different shape and considerably higher than the fixed type. Since these trusses play an important role in the dynamic part of the ritual (*taimatsu-watari*) there is apparently an underlying concept of dynamism in which such mobile trusses stand in opposition to the static nature of the *ōtaimatsu*. The ritual of the former entails handling of a type which transcends the mere functional aspect of transporting an object from point A to point B.

The remaining types of mobile trusses are of secondary significance. They be mentioned only briefly here. Among these are the so-called *ka-koi-taimatsu* (4/7). They are about four meters high and are easy to carry. Their diameter is about 30-40 cm. Although they are simpler in design, they still bear clear signs (e.g. the use of *shimenawa*) of their ritual character. Before being carried around, they are leant against the corresponding hamlet shrine, which hints at their original tectonic character. In the procession of the people of the hamlet to and from the shrine, they are either carried along burning or are used to set the *ōtaimatsu* on fire. Children's torches, *kodomo-taimatsu* (4/6), are miniatures of the upper part of the large *kasa-taimatsu*. They are made at home by the family heads for their sons (boys of a certain age), and are then set up for a certain length of time in front of the house. In the evening of the main ceremony, they are taken to the shrine as a «sacrifice» and burnt at the same time as the large torches.

* Though this study is concerned with building per se, the term «truss» does not imply the meaning it generally assumes in this field. It is used here as the substantive of the verb «to truss»: to tie up, to bundle; hence, a bundle. From this point onward the term «truss» will be used as a generic term denoting all types of *taimatsu* considered in the study.

Number number	Anzahl amount	Siedlung settlement	Schrein shrine	Hersteller maker	Jap. Bezeichnung Japanese term.
2	1	Ishibashi	Ishiwakamiya	zen'in (Ishibashi)	<i>ôtaimatsu</i>
3	1	Nishide	Nishiwakamiya	zen'in (Nishide)	<i>ôtaimatsu</i>
4	1	Sakurai	Ôjimiya	zen'in (Sakurai)	<i>ôtaimatsu</i>
5	4	Ueda	Shinodajinja	zen'in (1)	<i>ôtaimatsu</i>
		Ishibashi, Nishide, Higashide + Sakurai	Shinodajinja	wakarenchû (2)	<i>kaša-taimatsu</i>
6	n (3)	Ishibashi, Nishide, Higashide + Sakurai	Shinodajinja	zen'in (4)	<i>kodomo-taimatsu</i>
7	3 (a) 3 (b)	Ishibashi, Nishide + Sakurai	<i>kosha</i>	zen'in (5)	(a): <i>kakoi-taimatsu</i> (b): <i>taiko-taimatsu</i>
8	1	Sakurai	Ôjimiya	zen'in (6)	<i>hitsuke-taimatsu</i>
9	1 (a) 1 (b)	Sakurai	Ôjimiya	zen'in (7)	<i>hikeshi</i> : (a): <i>sanda</i> (b): <i>hōki</i>

Plate 5

Table of the types of trusses of the *taimatsu*-festival at Ueda (see plate 4)

Remarks:

- 1 zen'in of one of the four hamlets, in yearly rotation
- 2 wakarenchû of the four hamlets. Each hamlet makes one *kaša-taimatsu*
- 3 amount indefinite; it changes yearly according to the number of boys of a certain age
- 4 zen'in make one individually for sons of a certain age
- 5 zen'in of the three hamlets having *kosha*. Function of these *taimatsu*: (a): for setting the *ôtaimatsu* on fire; (b): they are carried along in the processions to and from the shrine
- 6 it is used for transferring the sacred tire of the shrine on *kakoi-taimatsu* (this style of transferring tire is found in Sakurai only)
- 7 after completion it is leaned to the front-side of the Ôjimiya

Further, a kind of truss, *hitsuke-taimatsu* («**igniting torch**») is still in use at Sakurai's minor shrine, the Ōjimiya, though no longer used at the other small shrines (4/8). It consists of reed stalks about 50 cm in length and has twelve fastenings. It is kept in the shrine until the night ceremony. There are also two bamboo poles, *hikeshi* (extinguisher) (4/9) with straw symbols (*hōki*, «**broom**», and *sanda*, from *sandawara*, «**round straw lid**») at their top. -These are leant against the front of the corresponding hamlet's shrine until the **sacrificial** burning and **paradoxically, in the** evening, are used to <<extinguish>> (by beating) the *Sakurai ōtaimatsu* that has just been ignited. In addition, an **indefinite** number of essentially featureless torches are made, which have no ritual significance, but are simply used to light up the area around the shrine during the drum beating and other events.

The course of events in the festival, i.e. the placing of the *taimatsu* and the timing of their burning, which are **of central** importance in the ritual—further discussion will be limited to **these** (4/1–5) – reflects the relationship of the hamlets to each other. The three *ōtaimatsu* belonging to the hamlets, the shrines of which (as has **previously** been mentioned) were integrated into the village shrine precinct in 1910 (4/1–3), are erected the day before the main festival and are then the focal point of the **three** hamlets' festivals, *uchimatsuri*, which all take place simultaneously and in the same form in front of the *ujigami* shrines. In the evening, they are then offered up for burning (7/1 and 8/1). The three worship organizations, *zenin*, of the hamlets concerned carry out the building and all associated activities. On the following day, the *ōtaimatsu* (4/4) which is allocated to the main shrine is put up on the former «**horse ground**» (*bamba*) in front of the main entrance to the shrine precinct. Thus, an axially frontal relationship is established (6) with the main shrine and its precinct. This *ōtaimatsu* is built every year by one of the four hamlets' *zen'in* organizations in rotation (7/2). The four **movable** trusses, *kasa-taimatsu*, which are carried from the hamlets by the young men's associations, *wakarenchū*, are placed inside the shrine area in front of the main shrine and all are **sacrificially** burnt together shortly before the burning of the *ōtaimatsu* (7/2 and 8/2). In the diagrams showing how the localities relate to one another (7) and the time-structure of the festival (8) an attempt has been made to

show the strict pattern on which the festival is based.

The tire festival in Ueda is a particularly good example to **illustrate** the **interplay** of spatial, temporal and social conceptions of organization. This **is a** relatively complex festival. but all the same it clearly shows that its structure is derived from a basic ritual type, i.e. one in which a particular hamlet sets up a truss (*uchimatsuri*) in front of the shrine of its deity (*ujigumi*). It is noticeable that these relationships of order are closely connected at the religious level and that their meeting point is the building and destruction of these cult symbols.

In the whole of the **region** where the survey was done, similar patterns of coordination were characteristic. Older social groups, representing houses, families and property (the Japanese concept of «**ie**»), are responsible for the fixed single trusses near the shrine while younger non-representative groups bring movable trusses from the periphery and secondary places of worship to the principal shrine. Whether the festival be a small local affair or one of great proportions, the same underlying pattern is in evidence. Though their substance can vary quite **considerably**, the basic structure, to a large extent, remains the same. The festivals are based on rules which have been passed on locally or regionally and these rules are observed in every detail. They **only** undergo change when external influences necessitate it. Although the age of these patterns of coordination is not always ascertainable in each individual case, the fact that characteristics of the trusses and the way they are **handled** are closely related to the traditional **so-cio-spatial** structure of the **village** and that this applies to the whole region, speaks to some extent for the antiquity of these patterns **in general**.

From the point of view of building, which is basic for this study, the trusses discovered in Ueda are **classified** and described as follows: The four **fixed** trusses, *ōtaimatsu* (4/1–4), are distinguished as being either **columnar** (4/1,2) or **hut-like** (4/3,4). Of the two columnar ones, the Nishide truss (4/2) is regarded as being a modification of that of *Ishibashi* (4/1). The *Ishibashi* type, which is in effect described as a type resembling a column **will** henceforth be referred to simply as «**column type**». The two hut-like trusses (*Sakurai* and main shrine) are almost identical. They differ only slightly in size and in some details. Consequently, they will be treated as one.

Whenever the text refers to hut-like trusses, the **Sakurai** type (4/3) will be meant unless otherwise **specified**.

The four *kasa-taimatsu* (4/5) are either called «**high** columnar **trusses**» or in brief, «**high** columns». They are all basically the same in structure.

A table of the various types of *taimatsu* from the whole **surrounding area** has been provided in order to illustrate the Ueda trusses amongst all the variations in shape found around Ômihachiman (9). This table of the various types is based upon a **classification** corresponding to the aspects shown in (10). For this **classification**, the basic assumption was made that the trusses dealt with **here** have evolved from a form which can be regarded as a prototype: a reed bundle made of stalks still rooted naturally in the ground (11). Among the *taimatsu* built in Ueda, the **fixed** trusses (*ôtaimatsu*) in particular can be seen as being closely related to two basic variations of such a prototype: a **column-** (11/2) and a **hut-**like (11/1) form.

2. Construction

2.1 General

If in the **following** pages we now consider in great detail something which to all appearances is very simple, such as the building of a column or a hut-like structure made out of **reed**, bamboo and rice-straw, this is done in the belief that very old constructional forms have been **preserved** here in the relined and developed forms of **today**. It is nowadays a rare thing that people use such primitive materials and ancient techniques in order to build cult objects of such an impressive form. Moreover, it is thought necessary to begin by considering the nature of their construction as exactly as possible with a view to encouraging further investigations of such phenomena in the future.

The conviction that these building techniques have probably been **passed** down from **pre-his-**toric times allows us to look at them with eyes

The difference between *ôtaimatsu* and the **hypothetical** prototypes **lies** mainly in the fact that the former consist only partially of reed and that the material they are **made of** is cut and brought from somewhere else. Accordingly, they are not stabilized by being made of stalks still rooted in the ground and they **therefore need** a supporting framework planted in the ground. The tuft resulting from the freely fluttering reed leaves above the top fastening of the prototypes is omitted from the *ôtaimatsu* since the stalks are stripped of their leaves. In the case of the **hut-**like *ôtaimatsu*, this **tuft** is represented by means of leafy branches of bamboo. In comparison with the original forms, the *ôtaimatsu* are distinctly more geometric. The hut-like truss is similar to its corresponding prototype but in order to approach the characteristic shape of the latter, the stalks are broken. In **the** original form, however, the stalks being spirally wound about the vertical axis (11/5), naturally lent themselves to this characteristic **hour-glass** shape without being broken.

that are ready to **understand** their structural language and also keeps us alert to every detail, even to those that seem insignificant. Assuming that these forms have been similarly constructed, year after year from ancient times, we may thus hope that they may teach us something of the thought and behaviour patterns of times long gone by.

Taimatsu are re-built every year. They are ideal for investigation since, unlike most buildings, whose construction must be deduced from the **finished** structure, their building can be followed anew each year.

Of the three types of *taimatsu*, the most similar in construction are the column-type and **hut-**like trusses. All the same, they differ to such a degree that it is necessary to give a separate description of each showing the phases in the building process in chronological order.

2.2 Description of the column-type trusses (*ôtaimatsu*), built by the hamlets Ishibashi and Nishide (411.2)

The description is based essentially on the truss made in Ishibashi. When the mode of construction differs from that of Nishide, this will be mentioned.

The description of the column-type truss can be divided into three sections: the core, the tilling and the outer covering (12).

The building of the core begins with four sharpened bamboo poles being placed vertically into four holes dug at the corners of a square. The ground around the poles is then firmly trampled down and the poles are further driven into the ground. Three crosses made of sections of bamboo are bound diagonally at different heights and a ring made of twisted bamboo splinters is put over the slightly protruding ends of the crosses, thus surrounding the frame (12/1). As in traditional house building, a rigid framework is thus erected first, and then in a second stage additional parts are fitted onto this. The fixation, which is achieved by making a hole and then driving the load-bearing parts of the structure into the ground, resembles pre-historic hut-building methods. In Japanese religious building, it particularly resembles the building tradition of the imperial shrines at Ise where the pillars are sunk deep into the ground (*hotatebashira*).

After the framework has been tilled in the middle with dried rape plants, (*natane*) (4/2) and covered all round the outside with a layer of the same material, the tilling is bound up with strings and then finally trimmed to a regular cylindrical shape (4/3). With this, an important step in the construction has been taken; the basic material brought to the building site has been joined together to make the general shape – a solid, clearly defined, free-standing column in space.

Unlike the Ishibashi truss, that of Nishide is filled and trimmed to leave slightly curved contours (17/4).

A green bamboo pole (*shintake*, «core» or «heart bamboo») with a white paper tassel (*gohei*) at the top is stuck into this finished crude form, as if into a mass of clay. The *taimatsu* now has a symbolic core that can only be seen at the top where this core visibly carries the *gohei*, the traditional Shinto sign of sacredness.

In other parts of the region, this sacred sign is

stood in the middle of the yet unfilled framework, and then bound to the cross-bars. This structure with the fluttering *gohei* sign then reminds one of the completed framework of a house that awaits the raising ceremony so common in Japan as well as in European countries.

The covering (4/4) consists of tall, carefully stripped reed stalks (*yoshi*); a type that grows to about four meters high and can be found over a wide area around the shores of Lake Biwa (IV/1). The stalks with their heads still intact, are laid out on the ground side by side and fixed in two places with twine after the fashion of a reed mat. This is now a completed building component and as such the prepared covering is then carried to the upright cylinder (of which it is twice the height) and secured thereto by ropes. It is bound to the central column by twelve double-stranded fastening bands spaced at regular intervals (4/5). These are knotted in a vertical line which then marks the front of the column. Parallel to this row of knots, three double strands are threaded down at 90° intervals, being lashed where they cross the horizontal bands (17/3).

A bamboo pole (*tedake*), literally «hand bamboo, outer bamboo), about 10 cm thick and of the same length as the centercolumn, is fastened to the vertical row of knots with the remaining ends of rope (XIII/2). The rope ends that are still left after this second knotting are untwisted and evenly cut to about 10 cm.

This covering has produced a characteristic which often plays an important role in construction generally: the contrasting composition of facade and framework. The outer structure is carefully made out, of precious material, structured and made to catch the eye. In contrast, the inside, which is covered by the outer layer mainly has the function of ensuring the stability of the object (bamboo framework) or of filling in the cavity (rape plants).

For the Nishide truss, the heads of the reed stalks are removed, and the untwisted rope ends of the twelve bonds, hanging down like locks of hair, are left uncut:

During the building process, a strong rope with strands twisted counter-clockwise is made for the Ishibashi truss (V/5) whereas an ornamented three-stranded plait of rice-straw is made for the one of Nishide (XV/1–6). In both cases, this rope-making is done by a separate group of men. The rope and plait used are interpreted as symbolic bonds, (*shimenawa*), and at

the crucial point of the building process, they are laid around the resp. truss at the point where the solid body of the column ends and the unfilled reed covering projects upwards. They are knotted on the front side: the Ishibashi one is knotted with a so-called «male knot» (*otoko-musubi*), and the Nishide one with a so-called «female knot» (*onna-musubi*) (20/1,2). The main rope of the Ishibashi truss is decorated with wisps of straw, each made up of about live stems. These arc woven into the rope strands at intervals of 10 centimeters with the ends left hanging down (V/5).

The structures now stand in front of their shrines like crowned statues.

The Ishibashi truss has a thin piece of bamboo about 20 centimeters long, complete with its side branches, vertically inserted into the opening at the top of the outer bamboo (*tedake*) so as to form a kind of flexible crown (XIV/4). When viewed from the front, this has the effect of rendering the sharply defined body of the column less pronounced, causing thus an interplay with the basic geometric form (12/7 and VI/1).

The Nishide truss has an identical section of bamboo fitted into the main knot, but in such a way that its branches point downward (XIV/3). For this truss, the reed covering is bent in the middle (i.e. at the top of the basic column) so that the reed stalks hang elastically downward at an angle of about 45° (17/4). For the Nishide column, interpreted as having female characteristics, the elastic part of the reed, the branches of the bamboo section inserted into the knot at the upper end of the *tedake*, and also the rope ends projecting from the knots are soft and hanging. When the main rope is knotted, the elastic stalks are displaced to the side thus producing a sector free of reed (17/5). The place where the stalks are bent downward is decorated with cedar twigs which are stuck into the rape plant filling (II/3).

An identical garland of dark evergreen is placed at the foot of both columns. As in the case of the *shimenawa*, important junctures between contrasting media are accentuated.

After the columns have been completed, the building area is cleared of all debris. A sacred square is marked out around both trusses by means of a thin *shimenawa* (12/7); thus denoting them as being untouchable. The structures are henceforth set apart from the area around the shrine which one is allowed to enter (II/1-3).

2.3 Description of the hut-like truss (*ôtai-matsu*) built by the hamlet Sakurai (4/3, 13/1-10 and VII-XII)

As previously mentioned, the following description applies to both trusses, the one of Sakurai and the other in front of the main shrine (4/4 and 18), since they are basically the same. The latter is somewhat larger and its main rope is wrapped around twice in accordance with its greater importance (13 and 18).

The hut-like truss is built similarly to the column-type truss. A framework is set up first of all (13/1,2 and VII/1-4). This is somewhat smaller and has only two levels of cross-bars. When the framework has been completed, a number of broom-like objects are inserted into it (VII/5). For each of these, a kind of bamboo (*sasatake*) about 2.5 meters long is used. Its twigs are all broken off except for a small crown left at the end. These twigs are then tied around the top of the bamboo to form a large brush-like tuft. The bamboo brooms are put into the framework in such a way that an even shape results which resembles the top of a tree (13/3 and VII/6). Even in the building of types which are narrow at the bottom, thereby allowing easy access to the central framework, the bush-like crown is always inserted first and only then is the real lower part built around it.

A long uniform splinter of bamboo is laid on the ground equidistant from and around the core. The length of this splinter determines the circumference of the extending lower part. According to Kitagawa (1966), the circumference of the Sakurai truss is 6 meters (diameter, 1.9 m); in the case of the one from the Shinoda shrine, if it is built by the people of Nishide, the circumference is 12.6 m (using the system of old linear measurement, 7 *ken* where one *ken* equals 1.8 m) and the diameter 4 meters; the circumference is only 9 meters (5 *ken*, diameter about 2.8 m) if the truss is built by the people from the other villages. Therefore, the diameters, when rounded up and compared are as follows: 2 meters (Sakurai, Ôjimiya); 3 meters (Sakurai, Higashide, Ishibashi, Shinoda shrine); and 4 meters (Nishide, Shinoda shrine).

The height of the center filling of the Sakurai truss in front of the Ôjimiya is slightly over 2 meters. Before a railway line was built on an embankment which at present obstructs the view, the height of the truss standing in front of the

Shinoda shrine was determined by an ancient method. This was done by taking a bearing on the peak of Iwakura mountain lying to the south of the shrine. For the Nishide truss, a stone near the hall of worship (*haiden*) was taken as the benchmark. As a result, the truss was made somewhat higher than if the other, hamlets had built it, since they took sights on the same mountain but from a bridge in front of the entrance to the shrine area. These procedures of measurement show that the various parts of each truss are in proportion to one another and that the dimensions of the trusses as a whole evidently correspond to their **significance**. In general, this type of old-fashioned size-determining is especially interesting when compared to the determination of size in the case of the **column-type** truss, where it is directly dependent upon the size of the reed stalks.

Continuing with the construction: Twelve bamboo poles are arranged like rays around the core similar to **rafters** in traditional roof construction (13/4 and VII/1). At the upper end, they are securely tied onto the **lower** ring of the framework. The outer ends of the poles are laid under the ring which encircles the truss and pegs are driven into the ground at these junctures, which are then tightly bound together (VIII/2).

A filling consisting of loosely tangled straw (VIII/3) is then distributed about the base tilling in the space circumscribed by the rafter-like bamboo poles. It should be noted, that the core filling is not really a pure **filling** as with the column-type truss; rather it consists of a bush-like upper section, forming an essential part of the outer shape. Long strip-like bundles of rice straw, woven together, are then laid out radially around the framework on top of this filling (13/5 and VIII/4,5). This forms a deep and soft padded layer, slightly exceeding the cone-shape described by the twelve bamboo **poles**.

Generally, there are two different ways of building the lower structure of this kind of truss. In one the covering is laid on a basic underlay of **straw** padding. In the other the reeds are **fixed** onto the structure of poles which rest on central and peripheral hoops and are held together in the middle by rings running over them. In this way, a cavity is formed on the inside and some loose straw is simply scattered into this. The **Sakurai** truss is a combination of these two in that it has deep padding as well as a framework. It is conceivable that these three modes of **con-**

struction indicate a development from a completely filled object to a structure with a cavity covered by a structured roof.

When the additional **filling** has been completed, the structure as it stands is transformed into a cone shape by means of a mat made of reed stalks about four meters long (13/6 and IX/1,2). It now looks like a hut tapering to a peak at the top. In the next few stages of construction, however, the structure **undergoes** astonishing changes in rapid succession. When the men standing around the structure **simultaneously** press the stalks from **all directions** toward the common circle formed by the upper ends of the secondary padding and the cylindrical framework (IV/3-5 and X/1), the core, which had previously been completely covered, re-appears and simultaneously the characteristic hour-glass form of the hut-like truss becomes apparent (13/7). (The covering thus becomes ambiguous – as in the case of the column-type truss as well – in that the gaps between the stalks reveal the substance in the middle – a void in the case of the column-type truss.)

Twelve double ropes are then secured to a ring of twisted bamboo splinters which is placed around the neck of this hour-glass-shaped truss (X/2,3). These ropes are aligned radially with the twelve bamboo pegs previously driven into the ground. Thirteen men now squat shoulder to shoulder around the truss (X/4). Twelve of them each grasp one of the radiating double-ropes, while one man squats at the front. Two other men subsequently walk around the upright structure with a coiled rope and, coil by coil, pay out the double rope to the thirteen men, **twelve** of whom in turn loop the radial cords around them (X/5,6). The thirteenth man separates the concentric circles by cutting the rope at each revolution and knotting it. The fastening knots of the concentric circles (actually, twelve-angled in shape) come to lie in a row **on the** front of the truss which faces the shrine. The radial ropes are **finally** secured to 'the wooden pegs around the edge like guy ropes to tent pegs (IX/1). Great care is taken to make sure that the loops of rope are distributed evenly where the radials and circles intersect so that an even net results (XI/2 and 13/8).

The men working in a ring around the ritual **edifice** are a symbol of the community and their circumambulation of the future cult object in joint functional activity leaves a very **deep im-**

pression (XIV/1-3). It is reminiscent of the phenomenon of the «ring of men», an important Germanic rite and also of the mystically obscured rite of circumambulation which plays a **significant** role in other religions.

A bamboo pole, *tedake*, is now laid on the row of knots. The rope ends which have been left long are tied around the pole and are knotted once again on its upper side in another row of twelve evenly-spaced knots (XI/5 and XIII/3,6).

The conclusion of the building proceedings culminates in the laying of the symbolic rope around the neck of the hut-like truss (13/9). It is only now, having been physically unified into a tangible entity, that it can be understood as a symbolic structure (XI/4). The significance of this phase is also reflected in another way: namely, in the intense discussion which develops about the correct way of tying the clumsy thick rope ends into a knot (XIII/1 and 20/3).

In the case of the Sakurai *ôtaimatsu*, the main rope is wound round once, whereas for the Shinoda shrine *ôtaimatsu*, it is wound round twice because of its superior importance (II/5).

Unlike the column-type trusses, the white paper (*gohei*) is only put into place when the building process has ended (13/10). It is likely, that this rather strange procedure points to an ancient concept: that the structure only acquires its sacred character when the building-process has come to an end, i.e. when formal harmony has been attained. As the upper part of the truss is not rigid the ladder needed to insert the *gohei* can not be leant against the truss. Instead, while one man is squatting on top of the ladder, two others who are standing behind give it support by holding **onto** two ropes, and thus, in a kind of balancing act, the ladder is slowly lowered towards the top of the truss. The act of symbolic **sanctification**, so solemn on the one hand, on the other, acquires an almost comical **component**.

After evergreen cedar twigs have been fixed onto the outer circle of the lower part and after the temporary strings holding the upper part of the reed stalks have been removed, the area is cleaned and the cult object is surrounded by a thin *shimenawa* as with the column-types (13/10 and XI/6).

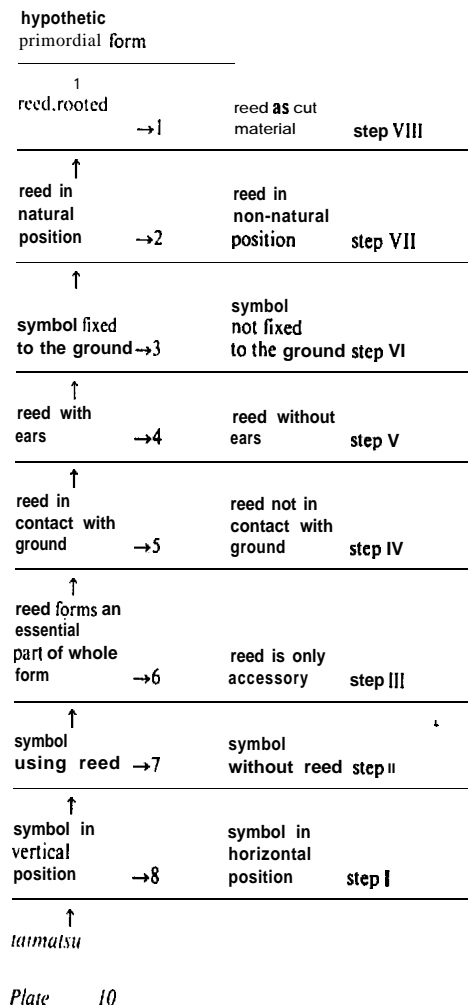


Diagram showing the criteria according to which the *tai-matsu* are classified (see plate 9).