



Matsuri Odori

Building Community
Through History

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History of Matsuri Odori

- Many events involving dance in festivals exist in Japan, but none so large and well known as Bon Odori.
- Bon Odori is the traditional dancing done at the annual summer festival of Obon.
- Obon was originally brought to Japan in the late sixth or early seventh century with the introduction of Buddhism.
- Within Buddhist lore Obon was created when one of Buddha's disciples, Mauggallana, tried to soothe and free his mother from the torment of hell. By providing food and offerings to the priests in the seventh month they were able to free his mother. His resulting dance of joy is said to be the first Bon-Odori.
- Currently it is the held belief that during Obon the souls of the dead return to earth to enjoy time and celebrations with the living .

Interview #1

“Yoshi”

- 18, Male, Originally from Tokushima, home of one of the largest Odori Matsuri, Awa Odori.
 - Participated in the festivals from a young age, joining the parade in Junior High.
 - He joined because, as it was such an important and large part of his community culture, it felt like the natural thing to do.
 - Because he was so heavily involved, he came to know many people in his community, especially older people, he might have never met otherwise.
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Interview #2

“Yamato”

- Elderly, male resident of Okayama, home of the Momotaro festival which hosts the Uraja Parade.
 - Didn't join in the festival, especially the dancing section, until he was an adult.
 - Joined because he wanted to feel more involved and get out more. Plus he wanted to do something outside his comfort zone.
 - From the festival he received many good experiences, and made new friends even at his age. He did not interact too much with people a lot younger than him, at least on a close basis, but he felt like he talked more and felt healthier.
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Interpretation

Throughout much of history Japan has used various festivals to come together and help build and grow a sense of community. This is especially true of Odori Matsuri.

- Odori matsuri can connect various members of the community from different generations and groups. Communities with such a strong festival participation brings its people together to make lasting relationships and create a natural sense of belonging. It can also improve the wellbeing and happiness of the participants by giving them a place to feel included and get out.
- Festivals have shaped communities as much as communities shape festivals.
 - Japanese culture puts a heavy value on working together and paying respects to the group and those who came ahead of you.
 - Because of the functionality of of festivals, where one has to work together and learn the traditions that have been passed down for generations, it creates said culture of being part of the group and caring for the past and those who went ahead.