EFFECTS OF URBANIZATION ON MATSURI-BAYASHI IN TOKYO

by Linda Fujie

Ethnomusicological research on music in the urban setting has long recognized the complex nature of the urban environment and the difficulty of defining units of investigation within it. The multivarious networks of social relationships, along with the rapid change and heterogeneity which mark the process of urbanization, have the effect of muddling the relatively clear-cut unit of investigation which ethnomusicologists have dealt with in non-urban areas. One of our goals in conducting research in the urban field is to sort out this intricate web of relationships and heterogeneous elements in order to produce some methodologically sound generalizations about music in the urban environment.

This complexity of subject matter holds true for what is labeled "traditional music" as well as for so-called "popular music," which has received the majority of attention in urban ethnomusicological literature. Music that is considered an inherent part of the cultural heritage of an ethnic or national group by the group members themselves is directly or indirectly subject to the processes of urbanization when submerged in that environment.

However, research conducted by Japanese and non-Japanese scholars alike have assumed that such forces are irrelevant to Japanese traditional music in the urban area and they tend to analyze the music product independent of those forces. This paper will examine one genre of traditional Japanese music found in the midst of modern day Tokyo, the *matsuri-bayashi,* a form of ensemble music performed in Shinto festivals. In surveying the present state of this music, it will focus on the adjustments made in this music and how it is performed in response to forces of change related to urbanization. One aim in presenting this data is to exemplify the need to examine and account for a wide range of social and cultural phenomena when dealing with traditional music in the urban setting.

Matsuri-bayashi is performed at *matsuri,* the festival held in a Shinto shrine for the benefit of its surrounding community. The deity of a local shrine blesses its local parishioners during the two or three day period and the benevolence of this god is celebrated by solemn rites within the shrine as well as in lively parades in the streets, for which most of the local community gathers.

The majority of these *matsuri* were originally carried out solely for and by the community surrounding the shrine, which was demarcated by clearly defined borderlines. However, in recent times, some *matsuri* have become well-known tourist attractions, drawing thousands of

outsiders, and the businesses in their areas have become dependent on the income they earn during the annual festival. Largely due to this commercialization of *matsuri,* the one-to-one relationship between a local shrine's festival and its community has weakened throughout Japan. Also, particularly in the period following World War II, the large influx of newcomers to urban communities has caused significant changes in the content of many *matsuri* and how they are organized and staged.

Matsuri-bayashi groups consist of various formations, depending on the region of the country. In the Tokyo area, these groups consist of five performers—two on the *shimedaiko,* a shallow, double-headed drum, one on the *ōdaiko,* a larger, cylindrical drum, one player on the *yosuke,* a hand-held gong, and one player on the *shinobue,* a horizontal bamboo flute. A pupil of *matsuri-bayashi* generally studies all of the instruments as the instrumental parts dovetail so much that one must know all other parts in order to play his own part well.

Matsuri-bayashi performers say that their music's function lies in providing background atmosphere to the festival and is not meant to be performed in concert version. Upon close examination of the music product, it becomes clear that the repertoire and the performing style of that repertoire have developed in close conjunction with the *matsuri* and its content.

Examples from two different events in a typical festival illustrate this point. As part of a parade in the streets, a tall float is pulled through the streets of the community, within which a *matsuri-bayashi* ensemble performs. The heavy float is usually pulled slowly by dozens of people from the community, and the music performed not only has an appropriately slow tempo, but is timed to begin and end in exact coordination with the movements of the float. (This, in recent times, even extends to coordinating the music to the stopping and starting of the float for traffic lights.)

In another example, later in the day an energetic parade of portable shrines may take place. Neighborhood groups within the shrine community each carry their own portable shrine and, with a rhythmic chant, toss the shrines up and down in front of thousands of spectators. The music performed by the *matsuri-bayashi* in accompaniment to this, called *nageai,* has appropriately regular rhythmic beats, to accompany the chanting, and a fast, lively tempo. Through these examples, we can discern how the state of the *matsuri* and its content can greatly affect the musical content of the *matsuri-bayashi* and thus begin to understand the strong ties that bind the two together.

Written sources on the *matsuri-bayashi* groups of Tokyo are scarce but there is some agreement that today's groups evolve from the musicians that accompanied festival activities at the Gion Festival in Kyoto from the eighth century. To this day, *matsuri-bayashi* groups ride and perform in the tall floats that form the main parade of that matsuri.

It is said that in the Tokyo area, *matsuri-bayashi* groups and their repertoire were developed in the early eighteenth century, during the

Edo period. Certain sources hold that authorities in Edo, the present-day Tokyo, became concerned over the popularity of brothels along the major roads leading into Edo. *Matsuri-bayashi* ensembles were formed in order to divert the attention of young men from these houses.[1]

Up to this point in history there is general agreement, but we find many versions of the subsequent history concerning which groups were created in what order and how the genre spread throughout the Tokyo area. One *matsuri-bayashi* group, the *Kasai-bayashi,* is officially designated by the national government as an Intangible Cultural Property and they claim to be the "original" *matsuri-bayashi* group of Edo. They trace their origins to the early eighteenth century when a local shrine priest, who supposedly composed the majority of the present-day *matsuri-bayashi* repertoire, taught their predecessors this music.

But another group in the Tokyo area, called the *Waka-bayashi,* claims that the *Kasai-bayashi* members have conveniently rearranged history to enhance their chances for designation as a Cultural Property. This *Waka-bayashi* group says that in fact, they are the original *matsuri-bayashi* group. This claim is also meant to substantiate their belief that the *Waka-bayashi* versions of *matsuri-bayashi* pieces are more "correct" than those of other groups. Putting aside the question of who is correct, it is easy to see that among the present-day *matsuri-bayashi* groups of Tokyo, historical accounts are regarded as an important factor in documenting the present authenticity of the individual groups.

Continuing a trend begun after World War II, the repertoire of *matsuri-bayashi* groups heard at most Tokyo *matsuri* today is a limited one. One piece, called by such names as *kiri-bayashi, tōri-bayashi,* or *hitotsu-bayashi,* is repeatedly performed throughout the *matsuri,* in addition to pieces meant for specific events during the *matsuri.* This repeated piece is made up of 5 parts which can be shortened or lengthened according to the desire of the bamboo flute player.

In addition to the standard repertoire is a large repertoire which is considered secret and is taught only to long-term and trusted students. These "secret pieces," called *hikyoku* in Japanese, are so carefully guarded that some performers who know them will refuse to record them either for individuals or for recording companies, or will only play them in public in a greatly altered form.

Another characteristic of *matsuri-bayashi* music is the large amount of variation and sometimes improvisation which is found in the music. This is particularly so when advanced performers gather to practice or perform in public. As with the secret pieces, in many schools of *matsuri-bayashi,* the basic patterns and rules for variation are taught only to trusted students, and pupils who do not form a close relationship with their teacher will continue to play a simple version of *matsuri-bayashi* pieces for years.

Within the Tokyo area, most *matsuri-bayashi* schools are named after the specific region of Tokyo in which they originated, although their location of performance may not be limited to that area anymore.

Examples of this are the *Kasai-bayashi* and *Kanda-bayashi,* which originated in the Kasai and Kanda regions respectively. These school names indicate not only the general geographical location of their school but also demarcate them as a *matsuri-bayashi* school with its own stylistic characteristics. Within each category of *matsuri-bayashi* school, there will be several actual five-member groups which perform in different areas.

Traditionally, *matsuri-bayashi* students and performers were strictly amateurs, mainly composed of merchants, artisans, or farmers who often lived in the area in which they performed. Their only pay was free meals and drinks during the *matsuri* period, and they regarded their performance as an offering to the gods, as well as a service to the community.

At present, amateurs do continue to perform in many local communities. However, their numbers greatly decreased immediately following World War II, due to death in war and dramatic changes in the social structure of Tokyo at that time, when communities changed rapidly and *matsuri* received little or no support from them. The past five or six years have seen a resurgence of interest in *matsuri* among the general population, but now there are not enough local amateur groups to perform at all the festivals being carried out in Tokyo.

To fill this gap, professional performers—some of whom were and still are professional musicians in other types of music—have learned *matsuri-bayashi* and perform at the *matsuri* of many shrines in the Tokyo area, as well as at festive occasions such as department store openings, wedding banquets and the like. Thus, at the present, amateurs and professionals coexist as *matsuri-bayashi* musicians in Tokyo and have formed tenuous relationships with each other.

One amateur *matsuri-bayshi* school operating in Tokyo is taught by a father and son in the old *shitamachi,* or downtown, area of Tokyo. By trade, they are both artisans who make jewelry produced through the engraving of precious metals by traditional techniques. Their family is proud of being able to trace their ancestors back almost 300 years in the Tokyo area.

The father, who is 80 years old, is the third generation in his family to learn and transmit the *matsuri-bayashi* tradition, and he has taught his son all of the instruments and the full repertoire. The son began learning the drum parts at the age of three and the flute at five, so that now, in his late twenties, he has become an accomplished performer and is sought by professional groups to supplement their players for specific engagements.

The father has been teaching for many years to people who come from all over the Tokyo area and even from as far as Yokohama. In recent years, the son has taken over most of the teaching responsibilities. They estimate that through the years, they have had about 500 pupils and at the present, around 30 active ones. Among their current pupils, the youngest is in her twenties and the oldest in his sixties, and their students are of both sexes. The teacher's son states that in the past their pupils were mostly people who owned their own independent businesses or stores, but this has changed in recent years to mainly

office workers. They have some pupils from their local shrine community but most are from other parts of Tokyo.

This *matsuri-bayashi* school performs publicly several times a year; primarily in their own neighborhood. Neither the teacher nor his pupils receive any monetary compensation for their performance, though they may receive a few free meals. When asked, most pupils say they began to study *matsuri-bayashi* because they have always loved the *matsuri* atmosphere and, through a friend or relation, found the opportunity to take lessons in *matsuri-bayashi* and thought they would try it. Almost none of the pupils I interviewed had any previous musical training, and this seems related to the traditionally amateur status of *matsuri-bayashi* groups—it is thought that anyone can learn the music if they simply invest the time and energy. In reality, it should be noted, the melodically and rhythmically complex music is quite difficult for amateur or professional to master.

This *matsuri-bayashi* school has a complex set of relationships with other *matsuri-bayashi* schools in the Tokyo area. The father has played for another school, *Kanda-bayashi*, for several years when they were in need of a flute player. For this reason, there exist several recordings on which he is listed as a part of the *Kanda-bayashi* when in fact he is not. Also, the rise of professional groups who require technically proficient players has led to the frequent hiring of the son by professionals to perform on television, at shrines to which he has no connection and at other occasions. This trading of players between *matsuri-bayashi* schools is quite common, frequently crossing boundaries of stylistic category of *matsuri-bayashi* school and amateur versus professional status.

The relationship between this *matsuri-bayashi* group and their local shrine community is a complex one as well. They do live in the community in which they mainly perform but they also perform in other areas and contexts. They are amateurs who donate their services to their community and their shrine, and yet at other times they do receive money for their performances. They have strong ties to their community, joining in shrine and community groups which organize the *matsuri* every year, but have constant disputes with them. They complain that newcomers in the neighborhood try to make too many changes in how the *matsuri* is carried out and do not treat their *matsuri-bayashi* school with respect, thinking of them as "just amateurs."

To examine this *matsuri-bayashi* school—and through it, what has happened and is happening to *matsuri-bayashi* music and musicians in the Tokyo area—we must explore all these different relationships and their ties to the ever-changing urban context of which they are a part. For example, in order to understand the changes that have occurred within this *matsuri-bayashi* school, we must take into account the forces of urbanization which have directly or indirectly abetted the rise of professional groups and the loosening of ties within the shrine community.

The rise of professional groups and engagements has caused members of the amateur school discussed here to examine their motivations

for performing and has actually given rise to dual repertoires—one you play for a professional group and one you play at home with your amateur group. Professional engagements are perceived as requiring more "showy" technique, occasionally at the expense of other, more traditional, elements in the music. These may be preserved faithfully in the amateur version, in which the carefully guarded "secret pieces" can also be more freely performed.

The influx of newcomers to a shrine neighborhood results in a population whose real hometown lies elsewhere and which is often not interested in the *matsuri* of their new place of residence. When such people affect structural changes in the *matsuri*—often simplifying it in order to make it less expensive to carry out—this indirectly causes changes in the *matsuri-bayashi* repertoire and performance. Further, these new residents do not feel any particular loyalty to the local *matsuri-bayashi* groups. Therefore, should personal relationships with amateur groups prove too difficult for them to handle, they would consider the alternative of simply replacing the musicians with a commercial recording.

This is not to say that changes of an urban nature exert only a negative influence on *matsuri-bayashi* musicians and their music. The school described here is thriving well, having learned to maintain a network of social relationships which continue to support their survival as a group. The son who teaches is still young and familiar with as much of the repertoire as his father, and many young musicians are coming through the ranks of their group.

In Tokyo as a whole, the city government is encouraging *matsuri* and its performing arts in many neighborhoods in an effort to strengthen community ties. At the same time, some communities are organizing their own amateur *matsuri-bayashi* groups for the same purpose and many children are joining these groups.

Too often Japanese traditional music in the urban setting is treated in scholarly works as an isolated entity in itself, an odd leftover of past times which is worthy of being recorded and analyzed simply because it is old or because it is "beautiful" in some characteristically Japanese sense. These works assume that traditional concepts and categories will always hold true for these musics, in spite of the fact that they exist and even thrive and change in the modern world.

But, as one can see from the example of the *matsuri-bayashi* in Tokyo, traditional music is not an isolated historical relic but lives and adapts to the constant pressure of social forces which affect the rest of Japanese culture and society. Thus, I believe the study of traditional musics in Japan should be conducted in *view* of this process of survival and adaptation, and not in spite of it. In the case presented in this paper, the changes in population and social relationships which are related to the progress of urbanization in Japan are investigated along with the musical product in reaching a deeper understanding of *matsuri-bayashi* groups in Tokyo.

NOTE

1. Kyōson-sei, "Baka-bayashi no Kigen," in Fuzoku Gaho vol. 168, no. 10-11, Gahō July 10, 1898.

ABSTRACT

東京の祭囃子に対する都市化の効果

この研究の目的は、東京の祭囃子を民族音楽学的に捉えることにある。たしかに、民族音楽学では、都市の音楽があまり扱かわれなかったため、東京の祭囃子のように、社会関係の複雑な網目の中に組みこまれ、しかも、都市化の影響を受け続けている芸能を対象として扱かうためには、ふさわしい方法がまだ確立しているとはいえない。しかし、伝承者の組織，組織の間の関係、曲目の種類，教授・学習過程、演奏の実際、そして、この音楽が行なわれる神社や氏子との関係などを考察してみると、祭囃子が、都市化の犠牲になっているのではなく、現代でもたしかに生きのこり、都市化の過程に適応していることが明らかになってきた。こうして、この音楽を、社会から分離して研究するのではなく、現代に生きるものとして研究を続ければ都市化そのものについてだけでなく、この音楽も深く理解することになる。