“Hadaka Matsuri” (Naked Body Festival) at Kokufu Shrine—Transmission and Transformation of the Tradition of Festival

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The ancient Kokufu (seat of ancient provincial government) were the original “planned cities” in Japan, and the center for both politics and festivals.

Among the festivals once held in the kokufu throughout Japan some disappeared long ago while others are still held as major events of their respective localities, drawing attention of the whole nation. Many others are held as small-scale local festivals patronized only by ujiko (parishioners).

When we make a close observation of these festivals, we see a peculiar mixture of common factors and originality. The common factors are not necessarily the continuation of traditional festival forms from ancient times, handed down to us without change. At the same time some notions and ceremonial forms can be considered common factors. Here, I consider the festival of the Okunitama Shrine in Owari province, paying particular attention to the factors composing the festival. Then, I discuss the “Kurume sama” of the on-hoko Festival of the Shimotsuke Sosha Omiwa Shrine located near the ruins of the ancient Government of Shimotsuke province, and the “Hadaka Matsuri” (Naked-Body Festival) of the Eashu Sosha Awaumi Kunitama Shrine and that of Yanahime Shrine, both located in Iwata City. These festivals transmit legends of human sacrifice focusing on the central figure of the ceremony and the festival. Why is it that the motif of human sacrifice constitutes an important factor in the origins of the festival, and that, such motifs are found more often in the festivals of the kokufu sosa?

I then discuss the transmission of the tradition of the festival and its transformation, as well as changes in the interpretation of the festival focusing on the “Hadaka Matsuri” of Kouno Miya in Inazawa City, Aichi Prefecture.