Parades & Processions of Edo, Japan

Interpreting the Parades and Processions of Edo Japan: History, Culture, and Foreign Relations
9:00 am – 4:30 pm, February 11 (Monday), 2013
University of Hawaii at Manoa Center for Korean Studies Auditorium

Hiroshi Kurushima, National Museum of Japanese History

Parades are a cultural phenomenon known across societies in all times and places around the globe, so we must be careful not to give the impression that we believe that Japan in the early modern era was somehow the only “age of parades” in human history. Yet even acknowledging that, if we restrict our consideration for the moment to Japan, it is incontrovertible that society and culture were in large measure structured around parades: Not only did the “alternate attendance” (sankin kōtai) parades of hundreds of daimyos headed to and from the national nucleus of Edo Castle crisscross the archipelago on a regular schedule, but also diplomatic missions from Korea and the kingdom of Ryūkyū, as well as the annual visits of the chief (opperhoofd) of the Dutch trading post in Nagasaki (Oranda shokancho) traveled from Kyushu to Edo and back in grand parades numbering in the hundreds—even in the thousands. And, though smaller in scale, whenever bakufu officials headed out to postings in the provinces they proceeded with a retinue of subordinates, guards, and lesser officials who likewise marched in parade formation. Indeed, one might say that a meshed fabric of parades great and small knitted the archipelago together in the early modern age.

Even in the Sengoku era, of course, groups of armed men marched across the landscape, producing “parades” to suit particular occasions: Oda Nobunaga mounted his ‘cavalry parade’ (umazoroi) as a demonstration of the martial might of his samurai, while Toyotomi Hideyoshi put on a great parade to escort Emperor Ōgimachi to his newly completed Jurakudai castle in the heart of the capital. Likewise, since ancient times, when members of the court nobility traveled with their escorts, or when the parishioners (ujiko) of a particular Shinto shrine escorted the shrine deity during a festival, they produced a formal or informal “parade” that could be enjoyed by spectators of all social stations, high and low. Moreover, depictions of parades can sometimes be found in medieval paintings.

Yet when we compare the parades of medieval Japan to those of the early modern era, we notice two important distinctions: first, parades were a far less frequent or common phenomenon in medieval than in early modern times; and second, parades were produced almost exclusively within the confines of the imperial capital of Kyoto.
The proliferation of parades across the entire national landscape is, by contrast, a feature that distinguishes early modern Japanese society from all that preceded it. Moreover, while it is true that shogunal progresses to Kyoto (shogun juraku) and to the Nikkō Tōshōgū shrines, as well as those of daimyos between their domains and Edo (daimyo gyōretsu) continued to be produced in the outward form of a military on the march, they no longer called up the image of actual warfare. That is a reflection of the fact that the the “Pax Tokugawa,” the disappearance of warfare, both domestic and overseas, after the 1630s, transformed the nature of the samurai and, inevitably, the meaning of parades themselves.

I will examine the entire spectrum of parade performances that characterized early modern Japanese society and culture, from the highly political parades of the shogun, daimyos and other samurai, and the diplomatic parades of foreign embassies to Japan, to festival (matsuri) processions in Edo, provincial castle towns and local villages. At the same time, we also focus on the masquerades (performances) that were an integral part of many festival parades: costumed commoners performing the parades of daimyos or foreign diplomats were incorporated into many festival parades around the country. In addition, we will focus attention on the ways in which the fabric of early modern society and culture are revealed through the structure and composition of parades as a performative medium, as well as on the interaction between those who produce the display - the performers of a parade - and those for whom the display was produced - the spectators who lined the route.

Gregory Smits, Pennsylvania State University

“Making a Good Impression: Cultural Drama in the Ryukyu-China Relationship”

Ryūkyū provided the Tokugawa bakufu with access to Chinese goods and information and served as a vital link between Japan and the larger world in the early modern era. The basic formula whereby the small kingdom was able to maintain a substantial degree of autonomy was that relations with China required first that Ryūkyū appear free of Japanese control or cultural influences in Chinese eyes. Moreover, minimizing the degree of actual Japanese control over the kingdom required Ryūkyū to maintain good relations with China. In this way, Ryūkyū existed as a quasi-autonomous state along the overlapping borders of Japanese and Chinese spheres of influence.

In the classic pattern, foreign affairs in Ming and Qing China masqueraded as cultural relationships between the Chinese court and the rulers of other countries. In this model, foreign states expressed ritual subordination to Chinese culture to gain access to trade, education, and other benefits. Evidence of foreigners having internalized Chinese elite culture, therefore, facilitated trade and diplomacy. Over the course of the early modern era, Ryūkyūan elites based in Kumemura became especially adept at manipulating Chinese culture to enhance Ryūkyū’s image. Poetry, official histories, court ritual, and dramatic entertainment (Kumiodori) became the
major vehicles by which Ryūkyūan officials attempted to promote a good image of the kingdom in China and vis-à-vis Chinese envoys to Ryūkyū. This talk examines the role of culture as a mediator in relations between China and Ryukyu.

**Yokoyama Manabu (Notre Dame Seishin University)**

“Two Kinds of Ryukyuan Embassy Procession Scrolls from the Hawley Collection”

The Sakamaki Hawley Collection at UH is one of the best known Ryūkyū collections in the world. Most of the materials were written down and produced in the early modern era of Japanese history when the missions from the Ryūkyū Kingdom were received during the Edo period. They include picture scrolls, printed pictures of processions, and various studies of Ryūkyū in diverse formats.

The missions from Ryūkyū came over to Japan 18 times during the Edo period. The images and impressions of Ryūkyū held by the early modern Japanese were formed through these missions. As for the picture scrolls of processions identified so far and confirmed heretofore, 5 different missions were recorded (Kanbun 寛文, Hōei 宝永, Meiwa 明和, Kansei 寛政, Tenpō 天保). The form of their procession was almost the same each time.

Guided and guarded by a group of Satsuma clansmen, the Ryūkyūan missions were led by the delegation chief forming the shape of a sandwich, going forward and backward. The official positions, titles, and names were attached, and their attire, equipment, and Ryūkyūan musical instruments were also depicted.

The picture scrolls of processions were produced by professional painters officially employed by the Tokugawa Shogunate or by daimyo in order to record these events. They did not make picture scrolls for every mission. However, it seems that they considered it necessary and important to leave scrolls as a kind of historical record.

Fortunately, The University of Hawaii Library possesses two extremely good quality picture scrolls. The significance of these line picture scrolls in the UH Library Collections is as follows:

1. The "Prince Kim Scroll" of Kanbun 11 (1671) is the oldest picture scroll of a Ryūkyūan procession. It is very unique and different in several aspects from those other picture scrolls of later years.

2. While there were some other picture scrolls of processions depicting the Ryūkyū mission of Hōei 7 (1710), the “Prince Tomigusuku Scroll,” showing the attached depictions of Ryūkyū musical instruments, is the most elaborate and detailed picture scroll.
Comparing the two scrolls, we can observe some differences in the format and constitution of each procession, their official positions, and the ways in which personal names and equipment were rendered. These differences may indicate how the Tokugawa Shogunate regarded the Ryūkyū Kingdom within the context of other foreign countries.

Travis Seifman, University of California Santa Barbara
"Ryukyuan Embassy Processions: a 1710 Edo nobori scroll from the Sakamaki-Hawley Collection"

A pair of Ryūkyū Edo nobori emaki in the University of Hawaii’s Sakamaki-Hawley Collection, depicting the procession of the 1710 Ryūkyūan mission to Edo, is a valuable record of the visual and material culture, and organization, of such missions. Many of the standard elements of the style and organization of the Ryūkyūan missions, maintained throughout the remainder of the Edo period, followed precedents set in 1710, making these scrolls particularly valuable.

In this presentation, I will discuss the differing styles of Chinese, Ryūkyūan, and Japanese court costume worn by figures in these scrolls, and the possible significance of banners, spears, palanquins, and other objects carried by those figures. Touching upon the Ryūkyūan court hierarchy of ranks and titles, I will discuss as well the various roles played by figures in the procession, from the shokanshi (secretary) and shisan (captains of the guard), to the gieisei (head of the street entertainment) and gakusei (head of chamber musicians).

John Szostak, University of Hawaii at Manoa
"Picturing the Ryukyus: Ideas Behind the Exhibition"

In Fall 2012, the National Museum of Japanese History will borrow a handscroll from the University of Hawaii Sakamaki-Hawley collection to be featured in an exhibition entitled “Early Modern Japan through Parades: Samurai, Aliens, Festivals.” The scroll in question illustrates a Ryūkyūan embassy procession in the Japanese capital of Edo, dated to 1671. To coincide with the return of the scroll to UH, Japan Studies Librarian Tokiko Bazzell came up with the idea of planning an exhibition around this and other art objects in the UH Library collection that touch upon parades, processions, and foreign diplomatic contact in Edo-period Japan. The resulting exhibition, "Picturing the Ryukyus: Images of Okinawa in Japanese Artworks from the UH Sakamaki Hawley Collection," will open between the 7th and 15th of February, 2013.

In addition to the 1671 painting and a second Ryūkyūan embassy scroll from 1710, the UH Library owns an impressive variety of Edo period paintings, prints, and illustrated books, many of which are included in the exhibition. These images shine a light on contemporary understandings of Ryūkyūan and other foreign cultures in Japan of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. In this talk, I will discuss the curatorial issues involved in planning this exhibition,
which will be open in the University of Hawaii Commons Gallery at the time of the symposium, and which will provide a glimpse of how Edo-period Japanese contact with foreign cultures in both official and unofficial contexts was mediated through the painted and printed image.

Mark McNally, University of Hawaii at Manoa
“Edo on the Move: Parades and Processions in Early Modern Japan”

Parades during Japan’s early modern or Tokugawa era (1603-1867) were a vital and colorful part of the cultural experiences of its people. Such parades represented important opportunities for members of Japan’s elite classes to display both their power and authority to those who had the chance to view them. One of the most widely known of these parades was the regular procession of regional lords (daimyo) to and from the city of Edo, in what Western scholars call the “alternate attendance system” (sankin kōtai). Although these processions were important for a variety of reasons, there were other parades that were perhaps equally vital to Tokugawa society. For these reasons, we are proposing that a symposium be held at the University of Hawaii at Manoa which will focus specifically on the subject of parades during the Tokugawa era.

For this symposium, Professors John Szostak (Department of Art and Art History) and Mark McNally (History) of UHM will be joined by Professor Gregory Smits (Penn State University), Professors Hiroshi Kurushima (National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba, Japan) and Manabu Yokoyama (Notre Dame Seishin University, Japan), and Travis Seifman, a doctoral student in the Department of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Each specialist will focus on different aspects of the history and culture of the period. The symposium’s organizers expect that these scholars will start an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural conversation regarding the role and impact of parades during the early modern period.

Sponsored by: UHM Outreach College, Center for Okinawan Studies, Center for Japanese Studies, Department of Art & Art History, Department of History, National Museum of Japanese History (Japan), The Graduate University for Advanced Studies (Japan), UHM Library, Consulate General of Japan at Honolulu