

TWO CULTURES, ONE HEART
A Comparative Analysis between a Japanese Matsuri and an
American Festival

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PREFACE

While studying in Japan this past summer, I had the privilege of attending the Ise Ebi Matsuri in Hamajima with my host family, the Takenouchi's. *Matsuri* literally translates to English as a festival. *Ise ebi* is the Japanese spiny lobster (*Panulirus japonicus*), a large crustacean averaging 25 cm in length.

We currently live in an increasingly interconnected global society. In order to function within this new world, we need to have a better understanding of various cultures outside our own. This study was an investigation into the phenomenon of matsuri, by comparing it with the more familiar American small-town festival. My hopes are that it will help to cultivate a greater appreciation for the Japanese people and their culture, which despite over half a century of trade and alliances are still a mystery to the American society at large.

It is important to note that in the Japanese language, names are listed with the family name followed by the given. Out of respect for the culture, I will list all Japanese names in that traditional format. It is also important to note that in Japanese, there is no plural form of words. Thereby *matsuri* can mean either one or several celebrations, depending upon the context.

Introduction

As I round the corner, the pleasant aroma of takoyaki wafts past my nose, my mouth watering in anticipation of its delectable taste. The simple melody of celebratory music can be faintly heard over the sound of children's laughter and pleas of the booth operators. Young women in festive regalia pass with a smile. "My friend, it's been too long, how have you been?" is a common phrase heard throughout the crowd. The town is aglow with mirth and excitement. Many are busy preparing for the evening festivities, but still take the time to say hello to passersby. All are eager to meet up with old friends, celebrate those friendships over good food and drink, and even try their hand at a few of the festival games, before nestling in for the extravagant evening celebrations, including a massive parade, mikoshi battle, and of course a spectacular fireworks display.

This was a taste of what I witnessed on June 7, 2008, as I attended the Ise Ebi Matsuri in Hamajima, Japan with my host family, the Takenouchi's. After a four-hour car trip, from our home in Asahi-machi (just west of Nagoya), we arrived in the small fishing village, where we immediately went to a local fish market to buy some of that day's catch for sashimi the next night. After packing it away on ice, we drove down the street to my host-family's surrogate mother's house, where we were immediately treated to an extravagant lunch (and a time of rekindling old friendships for Kaeko and Taisuke). After lunch, we all walked a few blocks down to the beach, which had become the location of the festival for the day.

Upon entering the festival grounds, I noticed that it was very similar to celebrations I had attended back in the United States, yet its unique qualities overwhelmed me with fascination and curiosity to understand more. There were booths where all kinds of festival delicacies, including *takoyaki* (fried octopus), *yakitori* (fried chicken), and *yakidango* (sweet fried dumpling), were sold. There were also game booths where you can try your luck to win a prize. While these things might be similarly included in a typical American festival, the Ise Ebi Matsuri had a unique quality to it which has captured my attention for nearly a year after my attendance to this one-day event.

Therefore, using an American festival that I have attended and participated in, Clarion, Pennsylvania's Autumn Leaf Festival, as a reference, I will take a deeper look at the Ise Ebi Matsuri and matsuri festivals in general, with the hopes of cultivating a sense of respect and appreciation for the way each culture uses festival to build community. To do so, I will explore the roots of these festivals and how culture, religion, location, historical events and politics play a role in their celebration. I will then draw parallels and distinctions from this knowledge to understand the importance of festival, and how it is celebrated in local and global community life.

Why are Festivals Important?

Festivals have a way of delighting the soul in a way that everyday life seems to neglect. It frees us to play like children, escaping from the mundane. For the Japanese, Festival Day has historically been a *hare no hi* (晴れの日), a “day of clearing up” or a pause from the monotony of the everyday work routine (Thornbury, 1995, p. 211). It also allows us a time to reflect upon the significance of a season, historical event, or holiday. Festivals provide a means to celebrate our culture and traditions, stimulating our senses, and awakening our creativity. Robert Cantwell (1991, p. 150) states that the festival “is among other things a kind of morale-builder.....[which] provides a kind of training ground for the representation of culture.”

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines *festival* as “a time of celebration marked by special observances; an often periodic celebration or program of events or entertainment having a specified focus.” Some synonyms include: fiesta, jamboree, celebration, fete, gala, carnival, exposition, fair, exhibition, revelry, jollification, and merrymaking. The word derives from the Latin *festivus* which means to feast, implying a period of jubilation.

Worldwide, the interest in festivals is unprecedently high, with all peoples wanting to celebrate and share their own traditions, culture, differences and similarities with others (Derrett, 2004, p. xix). In addition, festivals have become not only a way to promote traditions and culture, but also a means of advertising one's city, town, village, and

countryside, to attract economic gains through tourism. They are capable of prolonging an existing tourist season, lengthening the peak season, or even creating a completely new season for the community (Derrett, 2004, p. 33). Still, according to Derrett (2004, pp. 32-33), this tourist aspect in no way diminishes the authenticity and distinctiveness that festivals generate, “especially with events based on inherent indigenous values; convenient hospitality and affordability; theming and symbols for [both] participants and spectators.”

Festivals, regardless of their cultural inheritance, are saturated in ritual, a word which derives from the ancient Latin, *ritus*. Although originally associated with religion, *ritus*, or ritual, is a term which has extended into the secular realm from the start to mean a custom or observance (Schmitz, 1981, p. 163). According to Schmitz (1981, pp. 163-164, 167-168), rituals are essential, significant forms of social interaction across all societies, which enable rapid recognition among group members, facilitating their relationships, and supplying “shared meanings for communication,” which thereby emphasize an individual's membership in the collective. That being said, a ritual cannot be viable in community life unless it is characteristically and fundamentally both repetitive and temporal; paradoxically having an instantaneous unique experience for an individual, but creating such an impact that it is passed down through the generations in the form of tradition (Schmitz, 1981, p. 173). This very definition applies to community festivals. They are conscious repetitions of cultural activities, traditions, and events, planned to give spectators and participants unique experiences which will, in turn, enhance the quality of life and communication within the community.

Festivals also have a way of strengthening communal bonds. According to Derrett (2004, p. 45), “celebration can bind a community and it can also be the instrument that keeps community a fresh and constantly renewing experience.” In Festival and Events Management, Derrett (2004, pp. 48-49) breaks down festivals as containing an important place in three aspects of human existence:

1. “They celebrate a sense of place through organizing inclusive activities in specific safe environments.”
2. “They provide a vehicle for communities to host and share such activities as representations of communally agreed values, interests and aspirations.”
3. “They are the outward manifestation of the identity of the community and provide a distinctive identifier of place and people.”

Festivals draw upon the history, religion, politics, traditions, and other aspects of the local culture, to create something that is at once, a paradoxically familiar and novel experience for everyone involved, whether it is an American festival in Clarion, Pennsylvania or a Japanese matsuri on the Ise peninsula. Therefore, in order to draw any distinctions and parallels between them, we must analyze their roots and influences, specifically looking at religion or indigenous belief, historical context of their creation, and the socio-political dimensions of their respective societies.

American Religious Belief

When Europeans first came to the land that would become the United States of America, many sought the freedom to practice their religion in the best way they saw fit. While the fact remains that the majority religion in the United States has been Christianity in some form, the freedom to practice whatever religion, if any, is still a core belief held by Americans. In fact, the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the oldest body of laws in practice today, states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Although this law creates a secular society, in which the American government has no influence on the faith systems of its citizens, it would be egregious to say that the American people, themselves, are non-religious. Among the religions represented in the United States are Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Unitarian/Universalism, Hinduism, Wicca, Paganism, Scientology, and Native American religions, although those just scratch the surface of the myriad of religious beliefs practiced within the country. According to the U.S. Census data from 2001, not counting the various sects among religions, there are over twenty distinct religions represented in the United States, practiced by over 80% of the adult population, not including those who didn't specify a religion. With a percentage like this, it is safe to assume that religion would have an impact on the creation and celebration of

community festivals. Since within the community there exists such a vast array of belief systems, not to mention the variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, an American festival must reflect the same melting-pot aspect of its locale, appealing to patrons of various creeds. For instance, to be viable for the community, in terms of communal edification and local tourism, a festival must appeal to both Muslim and Christian, Jew and Wiccan, Atheist and Hindu. That is not to say that every festival contains elements of each religion represented in the United States, or that every community is as diverse as the next, but that a participant or spectator of a typical American festival is able to view the event through their own religious lens and still come away with a personally meaningful experience.

Shinto, and Its Historical Impact on Japan

Shinto (神道), the native religion of the Japanese, derived its name from the two Chinese characters *shin* (神), meaning the gods or kami, and *tao* (道), or the way, holistically translating as *the way of the gods*. This term, much younger than the religion itself (which dates back to prehistoric Japan), was coined after the introduction of Buddhism by Sino-Korean immigrants in the mid sixth century AD, as a way to distinguish the native “cult” of Japan and “the beliefs and practices of the newly transplanted religion of the Buddha” (Kitagawa, 1988, p. 229). Some Japanese would hesitate to even call Shinto a religion, as it is so deeply integrated into their daily lives. Tens of millions of Japanese today follow Shinto, with rituals for many moments throughout life, including: birth, death, coming of age, marriage, conception and pregnancy, naming, college entrance exams, receiving new cars, times of crisis, and festival (matsuri) (Sullivan, 2002, p. 7). It is “intertwined with the arts and politics, with Buddhism and Confucianism, [and] presents historians of religions with myriad historical and theoretical challenges” (Kitagawa, 1988, p. 227). Because of this intertwining and its impact on Japanese life, it is imperative to examine and try to understand Shinto.

Shinto, which has evolved throughout the centuries, centers on the kami, or deities, who, according to Japanese belief, are spirits that dwell throughout nature and act within it. In this respect, Shinto is highly animistic. Under the influence of ancient Chinese culture, before the Japanese saw themselves as a singular group under the Imperial Family, when

they lived in a predominately tribal/clan-like structure, Shinto took on the form as a “cult of tribal ancestors” (Kitagawa, 1988, p. 229). Each clan had their own kami, known as an *ujigami* (literally, household deity) (Sullivan, 2002, p. 13). These kami were guardians of the clan or kin group, and in some cases were a deified ancestor, hero, or were a deity of an important natural aspect of the community, such as a life-giving waterfall.

Although Shinto has no scriptural text, its mythical history was written down in the Kojiki (古事記), Japan’s oldest written text, commissioned by Emperor Temmu in the seventh century AD. According to the text, Japan was unified under the first emperor of Japan, Emperor Jimmu. The text asserts the direct lineage of Japan’s imperial family from the sun goddess, Amaterasu-omikami (天照大御神) (Sullivan, 2002, p. 14). This lineage set up the Emperor as a god on earth, an idea that permeated Japan through World War II, and has even been linked to their nationalistic pride and militarism throughout the twentieth century (Sullivan, 2002, p. 16).

The Kojiki, Japan’s “Record of Ancient Matters,” describes the creation of the universe much in the fashion of Greek and Roman mythology, with very human-like gods, romance, scandal, betrayal, and sex. In “Myths, Shinto, and Matsuri in the Shaping of Japanese Cultural Identity,” John K. Nelson (p. 152) points out that they are tales that would be not only difficult to explain to a child in a bedtime story, but downright grotesque and horrific. According to the mythos, everything began when the gods, Kunitokotachi (国之常立神) and Amenominakanushi (天之御中主神), called two deities into existence,

entrusting them with the creation of land. These progenitors of life are the first kami, Izanagi-no-mikoto (伊弉諾) and his wife, Izanami-no-mikoto (伊弉冉尊).

Izanami gave birth to the eight islands of Japan, and the rivers, mountains, trees, and vegetation (each being also a kami). After this, the couple came together and produced Amaterasu, whose beauty shone throughout the world. Upon seeing her, Izanagi and Izanami said that none of their other creations compared to Amaterasu, and that she would not last long upon the earth, so they sent her from Earth to Heaven, where she was entrusted with Heavenly affairs and named the sun-goddess. Her brother, Tsukiyomi (月読の命) (the moon), was then born and assigned to be Amaterasu's companion. After them, Susanoo (須佐之男命), the god of storms was born, although his rebelliousness quickly forced him out of Heaven, to Earth.

According to legend, Amaterasu gave three sacred objects to her grandson Ninigi, the great-grandfather of Emperor Jimmu: the sacred mirror, Yata no kigami (八咫鏡) and the necklace, Yasakani no Magatama (八尺瓊曲玉), along with the grass mowing sword, Kusanagi (草薙劍) (which was given to Amaterasu by Susanoo as an apology). Today, two of these three sacred treasures, which are only seen by the emperor and priests during enthronement ceremonies, are said to reside in the most important shrines in Japan. The sacred jewels, the only one to not be enshrined in a Shinto shrine, are located in the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, while the grass-mowing sword resides in Atsuta Jingu in Nagoya, and the sacred mirror is in the Grand Shrine, Ise Jingu, in Ise, which is also the shrine that is connected to Hamajima, the home of the Ise Ebi Matsuri.

When Buddhism arrived in Japan through China and Korea in the mid-sixth century, it met with no opposition, becoming incorporated into Shinto belief (Sullivan, 2002, p. 15). With the introduction of Sino-Korean civilization and Confucian and Buddhist values, a political paradigm shift occurred in Japan, which, by the late seventh and early eighth centuries with the rise of the *Ritsuryo-sei* (imperial rescript) system, became more solidified (Kitagawa, 1988, pp. 235-236). This was a political and legal system based upon Confucian philosophy imported from China. Under the Ritsuryo, Shinto was drastically modified to include Buddhism, “accepting the principles of the mutual dependence of Obo (the sovereign's law, based on a fusion of indigenous Japanese and Confucian ideas) and Buppo (the Buddha's Law); the institutional syncretism between Shinto and Buddhism (Shin-Butsu Shugo); and the belief that Japanese deities were manifestations of buddhas and bodhisattvas” (Kitagawa, 1988, p. 237). This amalgam, Shin-Butsu Shugo, also molded Japanese Buddhism into what is practiced today. Kami iconography were placed in Buddhist temples as guardians for the Buddha, and at Buddhist temples, believers offered prayers for the kami to propel them along their path (Sullivan, 2002, p. 15).

The Ritsuryo lasted until the rise of Japan's first two great unifiers, Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who by burning down Buddhist temples and slaughtering large numbers of Buddhist priests, “eliminated one of the cardinal Ritsuryo principles, that of mutual dependence between the *Obo* and *Buppo*” (Kitagawa, 1988, p. 238). In the Edo period, from 1603 to 1868, the Tokugawa shogunate, established by Tokugawa Ieyasu,

sought to legitimize its rule with the infusion of Neo-Confucianism, utilizing a great number of Confucian advisors, most of whom brought in their anti-Buddhist attitudes (Kitagawa, 1988, p. 238).

As the seventeenth century dawned, Confucianism, from China, began making a much greater impact on the practice of Shintoism. Yamazaki Ansai, Japanese philosopher and scholar, synthesized Confucian ethics of filial piety and devotion to the emperor with Shinto virtues of prayerfulness, mental purity and self-control (Sullivan, 2002, p. 16). In the latter part of the century, Motoori Norinaga, aspiring to reestablish ancient Shinto, composed the Fukko Shinto (Sullivan, 2002, p. 16). He based this revival Shinto on the seventeenth century research of the Kokugaku, School of National Learning, arguing for a separation of Shinto from any other religious input that transformed it throughout history (Sullivan, 2002, p. 16).

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, as Japan was reconstructing its government, abolishing the rule of the Shogun and the livelihood of the samurai, the nation's leaders sought unification under the emperor, redefining Japan in terms of nationalism, modernization, and imperial loyalty. The Meiji government (which lasted until 1912), used religion to aid them, banning certain Shinto folk practices, such as healing and divination, and declaring Motoori's Fukko Shinto as Japan's official religion (Sullivan, 2002, p. 16). They sent out an Imperial Rescript on Education, emphasizing the divinity of the emperor and proclaiming Shinto (which included the emperor's lineage at its core) to be the official foundation for the nation (Sullivan, 2002, 16). Returning to the ideals of early Shinto under

Japan's first emperor, Jimmu, the restoration government completely segregated Shinto and Buddhist practices, emphasizing "the element of emperor worship in Shinto," and establishing State Shinto (Kitagawa, 1988, 240).

State Shinto, although it nominally divorced itself from religion, made use of the public education system, local and national governments and the military to promulgate the ancestor worship, patriotic conduct, and the emperor cult of ancient Shinto (Kitagawa, 1988, 241). This tie between the government and the daily religious life of the people remained strong throughout the Meiji period, and even through the Japanese militant imperialism of the twentieth century and the Second World War (Sullivan, 2002, 16). On January 1, 1946 after Japan surrendered to the allied forces, Emperor Hirohito, in a formal rescript, renounced his claims as the divine leader of Japan and descendant of the sun goddess, Amaterasu. While today, the Japanese do not believe him to be divine, they still look to the emperor as a religious and ceremonial leader, in connection with the myth of his ancestry.

The Melting Pot and Festival

The United States, often referred to as a *Melting Pot*, is a heterogeneous society, which is home to individuals of nearly every ethnicity found throughout the world, including people with heritage in not one but several different ethnicities. As these people come together in community, learning to live, work and play with one another, often pieces of their own personal culture seem to get lost in the shuffle. Festival then, besides being a vehicle for facilitating group membership, can become a way for the individual to share his or her unique culture and traditions with their neighbors, allowing each other to witness and participate in aspects of life which are important to them. In addition, festivals also become a time in which one can learn about their own culture through the eyes of community members and elders who have a lesser degree of separation from the original custom than they themselves have.

To some degree, most local American festivals contain this amalgam of cultures, depending upon the make-up of the community itself. The various cultural displays can be evident in the kind of food sold, type of games or booths, possible inclusion of rides, crafts displayed for sale, parade participation (such as floats, marches, dances, etc.), peripheral events, and even local decorations. In addition, this cultural coalescence may not necessarily pertain only to a blending of ethnicities, but also of hobbies, interests, and subcultural activities, such as an antique car show, beauty pageant, sporting events, or dance contest.

Defining Matsuri

They are perhaps, the ultimate celebrations. Amid a spectacular display of costume, color, and age-old ritual, participants summon the gods down to earth to mingle and rejoice with them. A most eloquent form of worship, Japanese festivals are intimate, joyous encounters with the divine.

(Vilhar and Anderson, 1994, p. 5)

Matsuri, which is often translated as *festival*, is celebrated throughout Japan. In fact, according to C. Scott Littleton (1986, p. 195), each Japanese community, whether urban or rural, hosts its own annual matsuri. The translation of matsuri as a festival is a little troubling and misleading though, as matsuri is considered as so much more than the joyous celebratory ritual events that English-speakers envision when they hear the term *festival*. Some Japanese make such a distinction between matsuri and festivals that they use a separate term in translation for festivals, *shukusai*, 祝祭 (Inoue et. al., 1988, p. 6). When followed by the kanji for day, 日, the word becomes *shukusajitsu*, meaning holiday. On the other hand, the Kodansha Dictionary defines *matsuri*, 祭り, as annual, traditional Japanese festivals, which are typically held at the shrine.

Perhaps the main reason for this distinction is that matsuri are intertwined with religious belief. The vast majority of matsuri begin and end at the *jinja* (神社), a Shinto shrine dedicated to one or more *kami*. Traditionally, the Shinto priests of the *jinja* and the

assembly of the local community share in the practice, orchestration, symbolism and implementation of the festival. Matsuri are often connected to agriculture, which has historically been the lifeblood of the community; the most prevalent occur in the spring and autumn, thanking or praying for successful harvests (Sullivan, 2002, p. 22).

Another explanation for the increasing number of local matsuri celebrations could be as a result of two laws passed by the Japanese government. The first of these is the *Cultural Properties Protection Law* of 1950 (revised in 1954), abbreviated hereafter as CPPL, known in Japan as *Bunkazai Hogohō* (文化財保護法). Its purpose was to provide for and preserve Japanese cultural properties, both tangible and intangible, “thus contribut[ing] to both the cultural elevation of the Japanese people and the progress of world culture” (Hashimoto, 1998, p. 36). The second law, enacted in 1992, is the *Festival Law*, or *Omatsurihō* (お祭り法), and was jointly crafted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (Hashimoto, 1998, p. 40). This law came about after Japan’s economic bubble burst in 1989, crippling their economy, as a way to stir investments that would increase tourism and industry in regional areas of Japan. The intent of the Festival Law is stated as such:

The production of events that utilize regional traditional performing arts and similar elements will result in a greater diversity of touristic venues that take advantage of each region's unique characteristics, and will thus contribute to increasing the appeal of tourism to Japanese and foreign tourists, while at the same time responding to changing modes of consumption by assisting in the revitalization of specific types of commerce and industry suited to each region's special characteristics. In light of these

circumstances, this law is intended to develop reliable and effective measures to support the production of such events, and thus to promote the growth of tourism and selected regional commerce and industry, in order to provide the Japanese people with a richer leisure life, to develop a diverse range of local communities with unique characteristics, to ensure the healthy growth of the national economy, and to contribute to the enhanced mutual understanding among nations. (Hashimoto, 1998, p. 40)

When one looks at the letter of these two laws, it is quite apparent that matsuri, abundant with displays of folk-life, ancient rituals and religion, and monumental exhibitions, falls under their heading of creating industry, promoting tourism, and enhancing the life of the Japanese people.

The traditional matsuri structure seems to be composed of two paradoxical elements, starting with ultimate formality and solemnity, and quickly followed with joyful, jocular, and sometimes even obscene informality (Inoue et. al., 1988, p.5). The solemn aspect begins with a purification ceremony, in which the priests and worshippers purify themselves, sometimes through washing, other times using holy incense, and sometimes with a combination of both (Sullivan, 2002, p. 22). After this purification rite, the head priest directs the people in a solemn prayer of greetings for the kami, accompanied with a ritual of clapping and bowing (Sullivan, 2002, p. 22). After this ritual, the celebrating begins, as the priest opens the doors to the innermost sanctuary of the shrine to allow for the arrival of the kami (Sullivan, 2002, p.22).

The kami themselves are believed to descend upon the *mikoshi* (神輿), the portable shrines carried through the streets with great enthusiasm during a matsuri (Sakovich, 2008). Generally, they have the appearance of a miniature, elaborately decorated Shinto shrine,

sitting atop poles for carrying (Sullivan, 2002, p. 22). Due to the heavy construction of mikoshi, large teams of young men (in rare cases, women) are required to uphold and maneuver them, as they race through the parade route, spiritedly trying to get their mikoshi to the shrine first (Renard, 2007, p. 65). The entire matsuri event is constructed around entertaining the tutelary kami with dance, music, feasts, and other activities which historically have included masquerades, singing, drum ensembles, parades with floats, archery contests, Noh theater, horse racing, sumo wrestling, tugs-of-war, and fireworks (Sullivan, 2002, p. 23). Although the matsuri is ceremonially celebrating the kami, much of the entertainment seems to be for the human festival attendees as well. There are booths with games for the children, such as scooping up goldfish with a paper net, food booths with the most delightful fried dishes, and of course plenty of sake and beer to go around. The people also offer their prayers to the kami, on papers tied to the branches of the sakaki tree (Sullivan, 2002, p. 23).

At the end of the matsuri, which is usually closed with *hanabi* (花火), fireworks, the prayer offerings are removed as the kami in the mikoshi reach the shrine entrance (Sullivan, 2002, p. 23). The chief priest closes the ceremony with one final prayerful greeting, and the people go home to dream of all the fun they experienced, awaiting next years' celebrations (Sullivan, 2002, p. 23).



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The Autumn Leaf Festival

From information received from the Clarion Area Chamber of Commerce, I learned about the history of the Autumn Leaf Festival. The first recognized Autumn Leaf Festival (shortened as ALF by community members) in Clarion, PA was held in October of 1953. At this point, it was little more than a football homecoming celebration for Clarion State College (known today as Clarion University of Pennsylvania) involving no more participation from the town than the local businesses decorating their storefronts. It included nothing more than the typical homecoming parade with floats constructed by the college's fraternities. The following year, the Clarion Chamber of Commerce sought to increase local tourism and incorporated two parades into the celebration, one in the morning with the Girl Scouts, volunteer firemen, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Lion's Club, the Autumn Leaf Festival Queen's float, and marching bands from throughout Clarion County. In the afternoon, the college held their own parade as they had done the year before.

In the years to follow, the festival grew, the parades were merged together, and more events were added, including a tractor pull, fishing contest, the Autumn Leaf Ball, the "Tournament of Leaves" parade, and scenic tours of the county. These tours highlighted Cook Forest, Piney Dam, Helen Furnace, and the oldest golf course in the nation, Foxburg Golf Course. By 1958, ALF had become a permanent, annual event for Clarion. The county high schools and colleges collaborated to produce intricate floats for the parade, joined by horses, marching bands, drill teams and more, creating a parade that lasted over an hour in

length. By 2008, the festival had grown significantly. The duration now runs for 9 days, including several events for all members of the ethnically, economically, and generationally diverse community. The parade and homecoming game are still highlights, but much more has been added to celebrate the fall foliage, including a 5K run, Junior Olympics, fireworks, rides, sidewalk sales, and festival booths.

What has remained the same is the heart of the community. The festival has become a community homecoming celebration for all former residents along with a celebration of all that constitutes the present-day community. Every fall, hundreds of former residents, including students, return alongside new and old tourists to the small town of Clarion. Many arrive just to participate in one of their favorite festivals, but even more return to catch up with old friends and family members while enjoying all that the festival has to offer. Some even return with new families, adding to the generations who claim the Autumn Leaf Festival as an intrinsic part of their lives.

As a former member of the community, and a descendant of community members, I have much personal experience in the Autumn Leaf Festival. As a child, I remember dressing up in themed clothing for the parade. I was in an outfit that was orange, red, and gold leaves, while my brother's costume, that of a furry long-nosed 80s alien TV star, was a play on the acronym we use for the festival (ALF). I recall the excitement as the festival week approached, watching my town transform for the celebration. ALF was where I rode some of my first carnival rides, and learned some of the traditions of the Seneca, from whom I'm descended. In 1996, while in high school, I participated in the Miss Teen ALF pageant,

tying for third runner-up, which included various duties during the festival, including riding in a convertible in the parade and passing out candy to the on-looking children, as well as going to various events throughout the week.

After moving away from the community for a number of years, I intentionally decided to return for a visit during ALF. My reasons were mostly because I missed the beautiful Pennsylvania autumns, and that I wanted to enjoy the festival once more. As I discovered upon arrival, I wasn't the only one who chose that week for a visit. Most of the people I went to school with, who were now in college around the country, also returned for the festival, giving us a great chance to reunite. After joining an online community for alumni of Clarion Area Jr./Sr. High School, I have discovered, through various posts, that most official reunions are scheduled during the festival, drawing the Clarion diaspora back home for a week of fun and communal celebration.



Festival Friends
© Sarah Freebourn Photography. ARR.



Hamajima Pride
© Sarah Freebourn Photography. ARR.



Jakoppe Finale
© Sarah Freebourn Photography. ARR.

The Ise Ebi Matsuri

The Ise Ebi Matsuri celebrates the lifeblood of the community, Ise Ebi, or the Japanese spiny lobster. The spiny lobster, or *Panulirus japonicus*, is approximately 25 cm in length and tastes mostly like shrimp. The first Ise Ebi Matsuri was held in Hamajima in June 1961, as a way to give thanks for the gift of the spiny lobster as both a source of sustenance and income, petitioning the kami for the year's bountiful harvest (Sakovich, 2008). Sakovich writes, "The imagination and enthusiasm of the local residents fueled its growth and turned it into the well-known event and tourist attraction that it has become today." The festival is held on the first Saturday in June, marking the end of the ise ebi fishing season, which resumes in October, allowing for the spiny lobster's repopulation (Sakovich, 2008). When the season begins again in October, the first catch is offered to the tutelary shrine of Hamajima, Ise Jingu.

Hamajima is a small fishing village in the Mie Prefecture of Japan. It is approximately 320 kilometers (200 miles) southwest of Nagoya by toll way (longer by non-highway roads). My host family, the Takenouchi's, drove over four hours from our house in Asahi, through the mountains, to the small fishing village of Hamajima to experience this festival, which turned out to be much more than a celebration, but also a homecoming for them and many other Japanese who once lived there.

My host father, Taisuke, worked in Hamajima years ago, studying the spiny lobster, assuring its continued place in the economic and ecological systems. Each year, the family

returns to Hamajima to meet with friends, and in particular, their adopted “mother,” who became a part of their family and the families of Taisuke’s co-workers. When we arrived in the village, we went straight to her house, where she had prepared an extravagant meal for us, including uni, or sea urchin (an expensive delicacy), before heading down to the shoreline where the matsuri celebrations were taking place.

On our stroll to the beach, I couldn’t help but notice all of the people, adults and children alike, dressed in traditional Shinto ceremonial dress, summer yukata, and spiny lobster antennae, among other costumes. When we arrived at the festival grounds, in the middle of the celebrations, the dance contest was in full swing. I watched various groups, from what appeared to be a high-school cheerleading squad, to a group of middle-aged business men and women, and even a professional dance team, compete dancing the *Jakoppe*, a local dance created by the people of Hamajima specifically for the festival (Sakovich, 2008). The competition is held on the center stage, in front of a 10-foot-tall, approximately half-ton spiny lobster, complete with fully robotic and lifelike antennae and legs as well as lighted eyes which flash on and off. These dances were accompanied by the traditional music of the jakoppe, which is unmistakably Japanese with the melody and rhythm, yet is performed by a very Western-style horn and woodwind section. The dances, while all based on the traditional jakoppe also vary from group to group. My favorite was a hip-hop style rendition which included break dancing, acrobatics, and even juggling.

After the dance competition, the festivities continue with a free sampling of Ise Ebi miso soup (Kikuko, 2007). Since part of the reason for my host family’s visit was to reunite

with old friends, instead of participating in the soup sharing, we retreated to their “mother’s” house for more home-cooked cuisine, before returning to watch the main event of the festival, the Jakoppe Dance Parade.

The dance parade, which winds its way along the Dream Coastal Road, running alongside the Hamajima-cho Seashore Park (the events festival grounds), is a spectacle that should not be missed when attending the matsuri (Ise Ebi Matsuri). The parade lasts an hour and a half, and is complete with floats bearing musical ensembles, known in Japanese as *matsuri bayashi* (祭り林) (Thornbury, 1995, p. 213). These floats (all of which are playing the jakoppe tune) are scattered throughout the parade, accompanied by Hamajima residents of all ages and backgrounds dancing and singing along with the jakoppe, each attired in costumes befitting the event. The parade was led by the mayor of the village, who was also dressed in costume (pictured above). The parade even included some foreign guests, European jugglers from the nearby theme park, Parque España (which was especially delightful for me, as I had just studied the park in a previous class). The parade ended with a competition of two atypical mikoshi, both in the shape of the ise ebi, with one larger than the other, as all of the parade participants wound their way onto the central stage in one mass jakoppe dance. Of course, the larger ise ebi mikoshi won the competition, just as the closing fireworks show began, bringing an end to the year's matsuri.



Small mikoshi

© Sarah Freebourn Photography. ARR.



Large mikoshi

© Sarah Freebourn Photography. ARR.

Drawing Parallels and Distinctions

While the Ise Ebi Matsuri and the Autumn Leaf Festival differ quite a bit from each other, I have also found that they have many similarities. First let us start with the differences.

The Ise Ebi Matsuri is held at the beginning of summer when the temperatures are climbing and the rainy season of Japan is about to begin. The climate is typically warm and muggy, although there is usually a cool coastal breeze coming off the ocean. The Autumn Leaf Festival is held at the beginning of autumn, as the weather is starting to cool, and the green leaves of spring and summer are turning shades of yellow, orange, red, gold and brown. Hamajima is located on the coastline and is comprised of an ethnically and racially homogeneous society. Clarion, alternatively, is located on a plateau at the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, and home to an ethnically and racially heterogeneous amalgam of people, including Native American populations originating in the region. In addition, the Ise Ebi Matsuri is a one-day event that while containing secular aspects is religious in nature, whereas the Autumn Leaf Festival is now celebrated for a week and a half and is secular in nature, although it is partially supported by a varying group of religious bodies in the community. Of course another key difference between the two is linguistics, with the festival in Japan conducted completely in Japanese, and the American one conducted exclusively in English.

Another difference I noted in my observance of the two festivals is the touristic markers of the events. While attending the Autumn Leaf Festival in Pennsylvania, one can't help but notice the vast amounts of official souvenir regalia available for purchase to immortalize that year's experience, such as the official tumbler, t-shirt, pen, or coffee mug, among other things. In Hamajima, at the Ise Ebi Matsuri, there were no such souvenirs to be purchased (which is an oddity if you consider the practice of *omiyage*, a Japanese tradition of bringing back gifts from a place traveled to loved ones at home). What can be purchased is some of the freshest fish in the area, caught right off the village coast, and perfect for making delicious sashimi dishes.

While these distinctions may seem vast, in the scope of things the two festivals have much more in common, the first of which is their origins. Both festivals are fairly new to history, being created in the post-World War II era, a time when nations were struggling to find identity and meaning to life. In addition, both festivals center upon an element of the natural world and seasonal change, albeit differing seasons and aspects of nature. The Ise Ebi Matsuri is an early summer celebration of the spiny lobster, commemorating its gift as a source of food and income for the fishing village. The Autumn Leaf Festival, as its name implies, is an autumnal celebration of the changing of leaves and weather patterns observing the beauty in the various colors of Pennsylvania trees. The two festivals also contain entertainment for a vast array of people, appealing to both young and old, rich and poor, male and female, local and tourist. Both events display unique aspects of important elements to

the host community. Moreover, each festival offers its attendees a memorable and unforgettable experience, one that entices them to return each year.

Most importantly, each festival bolsters the community both financially, with increased tourist revenue, and relationally/emotionally, with the homecoming of former community members during the festival celebrations. This homecoming aspect of each festival is something that really grabbed my attention. Both of these annual festivals are homecoming events for the community. By offering communal celebrations and a touristic experience away from the rigors of everyday life, the festivals give former community members the perfect opportunity to travel and gather together. For the Takenouchi's, the Ise Ebi Matsuri was an annual one-day vacation which allowed them to reunite with family and friends seen only on this day since moving away from the village. For myself and other former Clarion residents, the Autumn Leaf Festival is an annually occurring week of fun-filled activities, presenting a perfect opportunity to journey home and enjoy the festival atmosphere while catching up on old times. It coincides with the official homecoming for the local university and is used by most graduating classes from the high school to schedule official reunions around.

As one looks deeper into these festivals, it is not difficult to see that even though they represent different communities of people, from different cultures and nationalities, there exist similar motives in the usage of festival. Festival and matsuri alike share in some of their motives, including the profit motive (through tourism), escapism from the tedious routine of everyday life, the desire for shared communal experience, and the longing to spend

special moments of jubilee with those closest to you. In all, I have found that even though these two festivals are representative of distinctly unique cultures, each share in the same heart for communal cohesion. They allow community members, both past and present, a time of celebration and fun, and an opportunity to share experiences with one another, maintaining and strengthening bonds of friendship.

Ise Lobster Festival

(Ise-ebi Matsuri)

1st Saturday of June
1:00p.m. - 9:00p.m.

Hamajima-cho Kaihin-koen
(Hamajima-cho Seashore Park)

13:00-14:00	ceremony
13:50-	Jakoppe dance by children
15:00-17:00	Jakoppe dance contest
18:00-	free lobster soup called "choju-jiru (long life soup)" is served
19:00-20:30	Jakoppe dance parade
20:00-20:30	Ise-ebi-mikoshi (portable shrine shaped in lobster) parade
20:00-21:00	fireworks

Postponed to Sunday in case of rain

access

Take Kintetsuline from Kintetsu Nagoya sta.

Get off at Toba sta and change the line to Kintetsu Shima line

Get off at Ugata sta.

Take Mie-kotsu bus bound for Yadoura/Hamajima-ko,
and get off at Hamajima.(bus 23min.)

inquiries

TEL: 0599-53-3003/3004

Festival Schedule courtesy of <http://kikuko.web.infoseek.co.jp/english/ise-ebi-matsuri.html>

Weeklong Activities

* = CLARION AREA CHAMBER ORGANIZED EVENT

AIRPLANE RIDES - Clarion County Airport. Info: 814-226-9993
ART SHOW AND SALE - Main Street Senior Center, 516 Main Street. 10:00a.m. - 4:00p.m. Info: 814-229-0821

AMUSEMENTS BY SWANK'S STEEL CITY SHOWS - (weather permitting) - Sunday, September 28, 12:00 noon - 8:00p.m.; Monday, October 3, 11:00a.m. - 5:00p.m. & 6:00p.m. - 10:30p.m.; Saturday, October 4, 12:00 noon - 10:30p.m.; Sunday, October 5, 12:00 noon - 6:00p.m. Ride-A-Rama @ \$12.00 per person. Wednesday, October 1, 5:00p.m. - 10:00p.m. & Friday, October 3, 12:00 noon - 5:00p.m. Info: 814-226-9179

CLARION MODEL RAILROAD CLUB DISPLAY - Basement of the Clarion Masonic Lodge, Main Street, rear entrance. Sunday, September 28, 11:00a.m. - 5:00p.m.; Tuesday, September 30, Wednesday, October 1 and Thursday, October 2, 6:00p.m. - 9:00p.m.; Friday, October 3 and Saturday, October 4, 11:00a.m. - 9:00p.m.; Sunday, October 5, 1:00p.m. - 5:00p.m. Info: 814-226-0699 or 814-223-9719

FOOD CONCESSIONS - Memorial Park, across from Courthouse and along Main Street

TUMBLERS/GLASSES - Clarion Area Chamber of Business & Industry, 21 North 6th Avenue. Info: 814-226-9161, info@clarionpa.com or www.clarionpa.com

MODEL HOME & FACTORY TOUR - Structural Modulars, Inc., Strattonville, Monday - Friday, 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m.

Info: 814-764-5555

SUTTON-DITZ HOUSE MUSEUM - Exhibits, souvenirs, Monday - Friday, 10:00a.m. - 4:00p.m. Info: 814-226-4450

CORN MAZE - at The Amaze-ing Farm Adventure, Route 66 in Lucinda, Friday/Saturday, 10:00a.m. - 10:00p.m. and Sunday, 11:00a.m. - 7:00p.m. Haunted Maze beginning first weekend in October. Friday and Saturday, 7:00p.m. - 11:00p.m. Info: 814-226-6609 or www.amazinglucinda.com

BROOKVILLE CORNAIZA - Asilin Astor Farm, 158 Greenawalt Road, Brookville. Thursday 6:00p.m. - 9:00p.m.; Friday 6:00p.m. - 11:00p.m.; Saturday 1:00p.m. - 11:00p.m.; Sunday 1:00p.m. - Dusk. Info: 814-849-2832 or www cornfieldmaze.com

SAVE THESE DATES

National City 2009 ALF

Sept. 26-Oct. 4, 2009

Schedule of Events

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24
* BUSINESS AFTER HOURS AND SPONSOR RECEPTION - National City, Main Street Clarion Branch 5:30p.m. - 7:30p.m. (Invitation Only)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

* CLARION COUNTY COMMUNITY BANK "FOODSTOCK" - 333 Main Street, 12 Noon - 8:00p.m. Info: 814-226-9161

CLARION FREE LIBRARY AUTUMN LEAF RECEPTION - 5:30p.m. - 8:00p.m. Info: 814-226-7172

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

UNITED WAY 5K RUN - (Walkers Welcome) - Clarion University Stadium, Registration: 7:30a.m. Race: 9:00a.m. Info: 814-226-8760 or clarionunitedway@verizon.net

A.B.A.T.E. DICE RUN - Check-in: 10:00a.m. at Clarion Eagles, Greenville Pike and Stone House Road. Info: 814-752-6332 after 5:00p.m.

MISS TEEN & MISS JUNIOR TEEN NATIONAL CITY AUTUMN LEAF FESTIVAL SHOOLARSHIP PAGEANT - 7:30p.m., Clarion Area High School Auditorium. Sponsored by Clarion Family Practice - UPMC, Randy Kreider, MD and David Zlobnicki, MD. Info: 814-226-1611

CRAFT SHOW - WallMart sidewalk, 10:00a.m. - 4:00p.m. Proceeds benefit Children's Hospital.

PEDDLERS RIDGE FLEA MARKET - Exit 70 on I-80, Route 322, 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Roof covered and free parking. Info: 814-275-2850

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

* S & T BANK AUTORAMA sponsored in part by Brady's Bend Underground Storage - 4" to 8" Avenues on Main Street, 12 Noon - 4:00p.m. Info: 814-226-9161

FLY-IN & DRIVE-IN BREAKFAST - Clarion County Airport, 9:00a.m. - 1:30p.m. Info: 814-226-9993

BOUNTIFUL BAKE SALE - Immaculate Conception School/Meslinger Center, 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m.

RIVERHILL BATTERY HOUSE POWER WHEELS DERBY - 1:00p.m. - 4:00p.m., Main Street between 2nd and 4th Avenues

SCOOT 'N' BOOTS LINE DANCING - Main Street in front of Courthouse, starts at 5:30p.m.

CLARION COMMUNITY CHOIR CONCERT - Immaculate Conception Church, starts at 7:30p.m.

FIRST UNITED NATIONAL BANK KICK-OFF CONCERT - Clarion University Stadium, 6:30p.m. - 8:30p.m. featuring "American Pie" oldies group.

* FIREWORKS - Clarion University Stadium at dusk, displayed by Cartwright Fireworks.

PEDDLERS RIDGE FLEA MARKET - Exit 70 on I-80, Route 322, 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Roof covered and free parking. Info: 814-275-2850

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

* CLARION UNIVERSITY & COMMUNITY CULTURAL NIGHT - In front of the Courthouse, 7:00p.m. - 9:30p.m. Featuring "Jill West and Blues Attack", Clarion University International Association, Clarion University Show Choir and Clarion-Limestone "Sensations" and Dancers. Sponsored by Golden Living Centers (Clarion & Shippensburg)

ALL AMERICAN AWARDS & ENGRAVING MONDAY EVENING QUARTERBACK SHOW - 5:30p.m. - 6:30p.m. C93 live radio broadcast from S & T Bank, Main Street by courthouse or listen to C93 at 92.7 FM

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

CLARION UNIVERSITY MEDIA DAY - Memorial Park Gazebo, 11:00a.m. - 7:30p.m. Live remotes throughout the day. With special guest Larry Berger of Saturday Light Brigade, 6:00p.m. - 7:30 p.m.



Clarion Area Chamber of Business & Industry

21 N. 6th Avenue • Clarion, PA 16214

814-226-9161 • www.clarionpa.com

info@clarionpa.com

Clarion Area Chamber of Business & Industry

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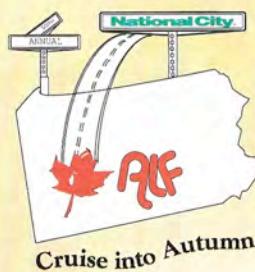
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Schedule of Events

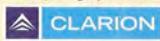
National City

55th Annual Autumn Leaf Festival

September 27th - October 5th, 2008



Participating Sponsor:



Clarion Industries

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Cooperating Sponsor:
C93 FM / RADIO 13



* = CLARION AREA CHAMBER ORGANIZED EVENT

CLARION FREE LIBRARY U SED BOOK SALE - Library Lawn, 9:00a.m. - 5:00p.m.

CLARION UNIVERSITY ALUMNI DISTINGUISHED AWARDS RECEPTION AND BANQUET - Gemmill Student Complex Rotunda and Multi-Purpose Room, 5:30p.m. Info: 814-393-2572

PA INTRAMURAL RECREATION AND SPORTS ASSOCIATION WORKSHOP - 8:00a.m. - 12 noon, Clarion University Student Recreation Center. Info: 814-393-1663

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4

CLARION UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION HOMECOMING PARADE RECEPTION - Walter Hart Chapel Parking Lot, 10:00a.m. - 12:00 noon. Info: 814-393-2572

PEDDLERS RIDGE FLEA MARKET - Exit 70 on I-80, Route 322, 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m. Roof covered and free parking. Info: 814-275-2850

* CLARION HOSPITAL "TOURNAMENT OF LEAVES" PARADE - Parade steps-off at 12 noon. Info: 814-226-9161. Sponsored in part by Burns & Bunn Associates, Inc., Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., Dr. Marc Maslow - Ear, Nose & Throat Association of NW Pennsylvania, Kline's Wines, McDonald's, Meijer's, Inc., and Wal-Mart

ATA SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE - 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m. Info: 814-226-9161

WILD WORLD OF ANIMALS AND FALL EXPO - Clarion Mall. Presented by The Clarion Mall and Mega Rock.

CLARION UNIVERSITY HOMECOMING FOOTBALL GAME - Clarion University Stadium, Kick-off at 2:00p.m. with California University. Info: 814-393-2572

CLARION UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AFTER GAME SOCIAL Clarion VFW, 603 Liberty Street, 5:00p.m. - 7:00p.m. Info: 814-393-2572

2ND ANNUAL LOVE FOR SAKÉ BENEFIT CONCERT - Clarion Area High School Auditorium, 6:00p.m. Proceeds benefit Clarion Forest VNA Hospice House in Shippensburg. Info: 814-229-1000

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5

PEDDLERS RIDGE FLEA MARKET - Exit 70 on I-80, Route 322, 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m. Roof covered and free parking. Info: 814-275-2850

ADAU RAW POWER CLARION BENCH PRESS CLASSIC - Quality Inn and Suites Banquet Center, 10:00a.m. Info: 814-226-6709

ST. JOSEPH'S ANNUAL FALL DINNER - Lucinda, Turkey and Ham Dinner, 11:00a.m. - 1:30p.m. Info: 814-226-7288, 9:00a.m. - Noon, Monday - Thursday or 814-226-4868

MCDONALD'S MOTORCYCLE SHOW - 4th to 5th Avenues on Main Street, 1:00p.m. - 5:00p.m. Info: 814-782-8332 after 5:00p.m.

NORTHWEST SAVINGS BANK ANTIQUE TRACTOR SHOW - 3rd to 4th Avenues on Main Street, Noon - 5:00p.m. Info: 814-764-3402

CLARVIEW JUNIOR OLYMPICS - Clarion University Stadium, 1:30p.m. - 3:30p.m. Open to children ages 5 - 12. Info: 814-226-9161



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