

## 2.4 Description of the high-column trusses (*kasa-taimatsu*), built by the hamlets Nishide, Ishibashi, Higashide and Sakurai

The four high-column trusses are all built in basically the same way. Four parts can be distinguished in the structure: a central supporting shaft, its rape covering, the reed part, and the supporting stays and guy ropes (2 1/3).

The *kasa-taimatsu* are meant to be portable trusses and, probably because of their extreme height, they are built in a horizontal position on the ground and set up only on completion.

Only the wooden pole used for the central shaft is kept for re-use several years running; but before it is fitted each time, it is ritually washed.

On the ground, long strip-like bundles of rape plants are laid at right angles to the longitudinal axis in a rectangle the length of the central supporting pole and the width determined by the desired circumference of the finished column (14a/1). The amount of material varies in each particular strip in such a way that when they are later rolled up, the result is a column which tapers towards the top. Ropes longer than the circumference of the finished object are laid out under the strips as shown in plate (14a/1). The pole is then laid out across the length of the strips, i.e. along the longitudinal axis of the rectangle formed. The strips are then raised with the ropes laid underneath them and pulled tightly around the pole. This is done by two groups of men standing at either side of a strip, who pass the ends of the rope to one another, cross them over and then, with their legs planted against the bundles, pull them tightly together (14a/2,3). This is repeated for each bundle until the other end of the shaft has been reached. The result of this process is a row of drum-shaped bundles lined-up along the length of the shaft-axis thus producing an upward-tapering column (14a/4). The procedure is repeated with a second outer layer of overlapping rape plants showing rich whitish umbels. These umbels, pointing downward, produce a bulge at their lower end, thus distinguishing one bundle from the next and forming the characteristic texture of the **lower** part of this type of truss (14a/5).

The completed column is slightly propped up for the attachment of the reed part at the top (14b/6). A bamboo cross with equal crossbars is fixed to the somewhat protruding central sup-

porting shaft. A ring of twisted bamboo splinters is attached to the four ends of the cross so that the plane of the circle is at right angles to the shaft.

The reed stalks, (*yoshi*), intended for the reed section are divided into about 12 bundles. **First** Of all, they are distributed around the topmost part of the column with their heads facing downward and are then temporarily secured to it. The parts projecting over the end of the **column** at the top are subsequently bent outwards and are likewise temporarily fixed in bundles to evenly-spaced points about the ring. Once again, each bundle is detached from the ring and the stalks are distributed in sections over the ring and individually **tied** firmly to this. It now appears as a kind of wheel of rays (III/2). Because of its fanning-out upper portion and umbrella-like structure, the whole rush section is called *kasa* ("umbrella"). Once the temporary bonds on the column have been untied and the stalks have been evenly distributed around the circumference, permanent ties are made at three points around the reedclad part of the column (III/3).

A bamboo pole somewhat longer than the shaft is used for **the tedake** and its branches are broken off up to **the top**. This pole is bent at the place where the crown begins, and is placed on the row of knots along the column in such a way that the crown which projects radially comes to rest against the underside of the "umbrella". It is then securely bound with the ends of rope left from the bonds on the column. The ends protruding from the outer knots are left long and are untwisted (III/4).

The ring onto which the radial reed stalks **are** secured, is festooned with cypress branches (III/2). In some places of the region-though this is rare - a *shimenawa* is wound around at this point. In Ueda, the high columns do not have a **shimenawa**. Instead, the merging point between the fixed and the freely fanning-out of the stalks is marked by an evergreen garland. A short section of bamboo with a white paper (*gohei*) is affixed to the somewhat protruding top part of the shaft as a sign of the sacredness of the column. The four stay ropes are also attached to the shaft. The finished column is now raised with supporting poles and then is pulled up by the stay ropes (14b/7). This constitutes the dramatic climax of the building process of this kind of *taimatsu*. The remarkably large edifice is slowly raised to the sound of rhythmical chanting and in an at-

mosphere of concerted exertion. Only when it finally attains the vertical does it become fully effective as a symbolic object in space. When the column is upright, the ropes are tautened on four sides and supporting bamboo poles brace it around the lower part. It is now widely visible as a landmark of remarkably beautiful proportions (1/1).

Each of the four *kasa-taimatsu* is built on the former ritual area of the hamlet it belongs to and stands there for some time. Formerly, the *kasa-taimatsu* were supposed to have been carried on the evening of the festival from their locations in the hamlets to the shrine and set up there for the tire ceremony. Nowadays, they are taken to the area in front of the shrine precinct one or two days after they have been completed and at first set up in the so-called *shinden* ("sacred rice field"). They are then decorated with lanterns and carried one after the other into the shrine precinct by the young men of the respective hamlets. There, accompanied by the beating of the drums set up in front of the hall of worship (*haiden*), they are carried to and fro in a seemingly never-ending frenzy by the youths (1 5a/2), who have by this time become drunken on sacred rice wine (*o-miki*). The heavy column seems to toss about like a ship adrift on stormy seas. In this state, the truss is referred to poetically as *chōchin-fune* ("lantern ship"), a common feature of Japanese ritual festivals). It usually takes quite some time before the more sober youths manage to terminate the ecstatic euphoria of the others and induce them to set the column down at the pre-determined place of sacrifice, erecting it and securing it with ropes to nearby trees.

## 2.5 Stability of the Ueda *taimatsu*

It is essential that a construction should be stable. It should stand as a whole at a particular place and its parts should remain in the planned spatial arrangement. Furthermore, its parts should be **rigid enough to ensure the stability of the structure as a whole.**

If we look at the *taimatsu* and consider the requirements usually valid for building, it becomes apparent that in each particular case of *taimatsu*, it is not the whole structure that meets these requirements. In addition to solid parts, all these structures comprise some parts that do not remain in a fixed position since they are neither

secured nor are they sufficiently rigid. Each truss has one part that is more or less unstable and the elements of which can move around to a greater or lesser degree (16/6-8). As the sectional diagrams also show (17/2, 18/2 and 2 1/3) these are

always longish elements, stalks that have one part embedded in a solid, or are bound together with such a part, but which freely project at the other end. The stiffness of the elements is such that they are more or less movable depending on the length of the projecting part. This is best illustrated in the case of the Ishibashi type (16/7) where the slightest breeze causes the stalks protruding at the top to sway gently.

This polar integration of stable/labile features in one and the same structure is not a mere coincidence resulting from the particular method of building these structures; rather it is a theme with many variations, even a principle, that can be deduced from all the examples found in the region examined for this survey.

This principle becomes more explicable if seen in terms of its evolution from a form which, as previously mentioned, **could** be considered as original (9/frame and 11/1,2). This principle is the spontaneous result of creating a form by combination of stalk elements, the relation of the stable lower and the flexible upper parts of the entity varying with the height of the binding.

If regarded in the light of its association with an original form, the fact that the principle is still so consistently expressed, even despite changed constructional conditions, shows that it obviously has great significance. Indeed, it appears that precisely the representation of this polar interplay between stability and flexibility, between stillness and movement united in the same form, constitutes an essential part of the symbolic significance of these structures.

## 3. Form and symbolism

### 3.1 General

Every structure has a complex pattern. It has a plan - an underlying design - that determines the use of the materials, the relationship of the building components to each other and to the whole structure, the function it should fulfil etc. Anyone who is familiar with the principles of

construction is trained to "read") the plan, that is the {"expression" of the prospective structure and the intentions that are bound up with it. In doing so, one is guided by a system determined by a complex network of relationships. Material, constructional and static considerations on the one hand, functional, spatial and aesthetic considerations on the other, all must be synthesized into a solid structure. Anyone accustomed to thinking in terms of building can employ such thinking analytically to the task of understanding an existing structure. This method is used in the following **pages** in order to consider in greater detail the preconditions of form, the actual form and the formal expression of the *taimatsu*.

In studying these objects from a constructional point of view it must be recognized at once that the forms are not determined by any consideration of practical usefulness. *Taimatsu* are landmarks, signs and symbols in the surrounding space. As such, they share the characteristic feature of any constructed form in that they are not reproductions of natural things. Like the hidden forces which shape buildings, insofar as they cannot be explained by purely functional considerations, a peculiar form-tradition is seen in the case of these trusses, which at first is difficult to understand. What can be said for the moment is, that there is still a close relationship between materials, building techniques and shape which, though manifested in an unusual way in the completed form of these trusses, nevertheless is comprehensible in terms of building theory.

Not only the form, but also the symbolism of these objects appears to be related to material and construction. For instance, the annual rebuilding of the symbols and their explicit time symbolism are obviously conditioned by the perishable nature of the material. The symbolism of structure also has its roots in the specific qualities resulting from construction with this kind of building material; even the sacred fire which destroys the objects depends on the peculiar forms and on the type of material used. From this standpoint it will be shown that these structures can be regarded as models providing us with new ideas concerning the problems of genesis of form and expression. In the history of art, form and expression are usually explained on the basis of a subjective "will-to-art". Instead they could be regarded as the result of specific

material conditions and of traditional technique, that is to say, they could be analysed objectively and eventually be understood as the result of an evolutionary process.

As mentioned earlier, the column- and hut-like types of truss are closely related to the hypothetical original forms, whereas the high-columns are different. However, the diversity of the high-columns renders this type all the more interesting since it has clearly recognizable characteristics that show a relationship with the other types and this would therefore seem to indicate that a transition has taken place. The first part of this chapter will examine the column-type and hut-like trusses, considering both their common features and their differences. The second part will deal with the high-column type and will compare this with the two types dealt with previously. In conclusion, the third part will comment upon the features common to all.

## 3.2 Form of the fixed trusses (*ôtaimatsu*)

### 3.21 Three-dimensional characteristics

The most striking feature of the fixed trusses is their monumental character. By this one means the expression of resting space and the marking-off of a place as distinct from the path which leads to it; they are also monumental in the sense of a physical form which contrasts with the surrounding empty space and stands in the center of that open space. *Ôtaimatsu* are independent units standing upright in space and free of any supporting function.

Seen from the standpoint of the history of building, this is of some significance. On the basis of present archaeological evidence it is not easy to understand the meaning of a freestanding pillar, devoid of any supporting function, which exists as an independent architectonic entity. The ethnographic material presented here makes this clear: the function of single, freestanding pillars consists mainly in their structural effect on the surrounding space.

The place where the *ôtaimatsu* stand is not a matter of chance. It is determined by the spatial relationships of the shrine area. In this area, the static trusses stand in close associations with the

shrines. Every *ôtaimatsu* is specially allocated to one of them. This is expressed by their place of erection in front of the shrine as well as by the alignment of their horizontal elements, which point towards the shrine (e.g. II/1). As cult objects standing before a particular shrine, they also naturally partake in the relationship between the shrine and the path leading to it. Furthermore, as sacred structures and abodes of the deities, they are closely related to the shrines. As long as they exist, they remain closely linked to their shrine. In contrast to the *kasa-taimatsu*, which can stand at various places, *ôtaimatsu* are built at specific positions and remain there until they are destroyed at this place. The identity of their position is thus maintained throughout their existence.

### 3.22 Aesthetics (19)

By virtue of their formal character, the static trusses also generate a field of spatial tension, a complex of interwoven polar relations.

- Vertical arrangement: a natural, vaguely defined, freely moving upper part rises above a shaped, clearly delineated and fixed lower part (II/2,4).
- Horizontal arrangement: the truss is differentiated into anterior and posterior aspects (V/5,6) in that the position of the knots determines what is to be considered as the front, not only visually, but also because the tying of the knots constitutes the concluding act in the process of construction.

The aesthetic features of the static trusses will now be dealt with.

The most striking component of all *ôtaimatsu* is the main rope, *shiemawa*. It divides the form into two parts. This division is particularly apparent on the hut-like type because of the radical change in the contours at the point where the rope is attached. The whole form resembles two cones with their pointed ends directed towards each other. This is reminiscent of the widespread symbol of the hour-glass (II/5). Compared with the hut-like type, the two-fold division of the column-type truss, seen from a distance, is not so striking (II/2). It is only when one approaches it and the details and other features become visible that the division makes its impact.

The lower part of both types is firmly anchored into the ground, filled in, tightly packed and offers tactile resistance. The upper part pro-

jects freely and on the inside is only relatively sparsely filled with material. Within the upper part of the column-type truss there is virtually nothing but a void: a row of upright stalks surround a cylindrical cavity (I 7/2). In the case of the hut-like type, only loosely inserted bamboo stalks fill the space provided by the upwardly opening cone (I 8/2). All the same, the bamboo brush tops are relatively thick compared to other examples from the region, where natural stalks are inserted in such a way that they remain freely movable. This thickness, however, is not the same as that in the lower part. It is a loose and unbound density that alludes to the bound and packed density in the lower part.

In both forms the surface texture of the lower part is manipulated, tied-up and is in fact quite "technical". In the upper part we find loose material left in its natural state (I7/1 and I8/1,3). The clearly defined outer surface of the lower part marks off the body of the structure from the surrounding area, whereas the upper part vaguely merges with it. Admittedly, the surface of the upper part of the column-type truss is also relatively clearly defined, yet, when examined more closely or when the light falls from a certain angle, it appears translucent and then becomes ambivalent as a defined surface of the structure. The relationship of the stalk elements to the whole form is also peculiarly different in the two parts. In the lower section, the component parts are joined together and bound into one body-like form. In the upper part, the individual character of the stalks prevails. In both types, the symbolic rope binding, *shimenawa*, is attached at the point of this sudden transition from unity to multiplicity.

The partition of the form into two components is also emphasized by the contrast in brightness and color. The flaxlike warmish yellow of the reeds and straw in the lower part reflects the light fully, whereas the funnel of the upper part tends to form shadows. This dark surface extends upwards into the fresh dark green of the bamboo bush. The hut-like prototype (I 1/2) presents itself in a similar way. The sunrays falling on the lower part of experimentally made prototypes soon dry out the involucreal leaves to a warm brightish brown, while the inner cone of the upper part, shadowed by the bush, forms a dark triangle in an environment of naturally growing grass. It seems to float above the lower part. The involucreal leaves of the stalks in the

upper part therefore keep their dark, fresh color for a long time. Such prototypes, experimentally made from *kaya*-grass are especially beautiful in autumn. Above the tuft of leaves at the top of the upper part of the stalks and focussing on the binding-point, a new element appears and crowns the structure. The graciously waving reed ears collect the weak autumn light and reflect it as a gleaming white, visible from afar.

### 3.23 Symbolism of Structure

Opposing characteristics are perceptible not only with regard to the process of construction, but also in terms of space and form. The principle of polarization, as defined in the chapter headed "construction", which reveals itself in an association of rigid and flexible sections within one and the same unit of construction, also finds expression at the level of space and form.

The boundary line between rigidity and flexibility, which is also the narrowest point in the case of the hut-like truss, is marked by the symbolic main rope situated at the center of the vertical structure. Admittedly, this is no longer constructionally functional, but it is entirely reasonable in terms of constructional thinking; it is the *conditio sine qua non* of the whole. In spite of the real constructional circumstances, it presents the truss as something which ultimately depends upon one single bond.

Looking at the truss as an entity, the only bond that really counts is the symbolic main rope. It unites the components into a single form, yet paradoxically at the same time it separates them into two parts, each with a quite different nature. It does so without impairing the identity of the single elements. However, this applies in only a limited sense to the hut-like type, on which the reed stalks have to be bent in order to produce the characteristic form. The validity of the principle implied by such a pattern is a characteristic feature that is more or less evident in almost all structures in the Ômihachiman region. The impressive nature of these objects, that which generates their more profound beauty and symbolism, certainly lies in this paradoxical duality caused by a third element. It can probably be assumed that the mystery of this relationship, still expressed so clearly in these trusses, is one of the reasons why this kind of cult structure has been preserved throughout the centuries.

A side glance at building history will remind us of the widespread use of plant motifs on the capitals of columns in conjunction with suggestions of fastenings (e.g. torus, originally a rope) on the shafts of stone columns. This raises the question whether the explanation of this polar symbolism has not been overlooked by art history for the reason that what was gained by execution in stone—namely durability—at the same time excluded the dynamic quality of the upper structure, an essential element of the symbolism. At a time when the organic models were still in use, their explicit symbolic expression must also have been understood in the case of the types made for durability.

To return to our cult-symbols, if we try to understand these forms from the point of view of building and in particular of the evolution of primitive ways of building, we may not only find a basis for the understanding of the significance of the sacred rope in Japan but also of the widespread symbolism of binding and unbinding. The latter may then be seen in terms of its original relation to a synthetic cult-symbol. In illustration of this idea we refer to our prototype: there could hardly be a better model to demonstrate the significance of this type of binding. If its bond is loosened, the formal organization of the object somehow magically disappears. The whole breaks down into its components which are merely of material significance.

if one thus understands the importance of the rope as based on its original constructive-functional relation to a formal entity, the existence of which it in fact incorporates, it should be remembered that the *shimenawa* in its many variations is always basically a symbol. Even where it appears close to constructive function, as in the *taimatsu*, it is, as mentioned above, not really meant technically. It is superimposed upon the functionalropes as something that is essentially the same and yet, at the same time, entirely different: namely, a symbol.

In terms of development, it must probably be interpreted as a refinement which appeared very early in connection with the custom of distinguishing non-synthetic things as religious objects simply by attaching a cord around them. At first, the rope may have been a symbol on the sacred tree or stone and, as a symbol, it was formally refined and then transferred back to the actual trusses.

These associations lead us to believe that the *shimenawa* in the form of the main rope of the *ôtaimatsu* is used in a particularly original way on the trusses studied here. In contrast, the thin rope, also called *shimenawa*, which is used to delimit a sacred square around the *ôtaimatsu* can be interpreted as a derived, later-developed use of the same symbol.

### 3.24 Symbolism of Time

Although the existence of the *ôtaimatsu* is limited to the time of the festival, in a sense it represents the year. The twelve encircling ropes that are fixed on the lower part are called *jûni-tsuki*, "12 months" they thus symbolize the twelve months of the year. In a leap year, with thirteen months - according to the old calendar - thirteen ropes are pulled around the lower part. The *shimenawa*, being superior to the twelve ropes representing the months, could therefore, by analogy, be regarded as representing the year.

This explicit symbolism of time which is found in different variations in several villages of the region around Ômihachiman only makes sense if an original type lasting for the entire year is assumed as the prototype of the temporary cult-symbols of today. This assumption is certainly justified, since in southern Japan, in Kyûshû, as well as in the north (e.g. in the prefecture of Fukushima) within a cult-system closely related to the *ujigami*-system similar symbols of annual duration are found. They are usually made of rice straw (*inewara*) or *kaya*-grass, are generally called *waramiya* and represent the *yashikigami* (deity of the yard). They usually stand for one year at their location and are then replaced by new ones.

As to the cult-torches of the Ômihachiman region, it must be supposed that such cult-objects of annual duration were either entirely displaced after the introduction of durable wooden shrines built in the Chinese style or were kept in a temporary form before the wooden shrines in those places where their annual renewal constituted an essential part of the ritual.

This concept may provide us with ideas as to how Japanese cult-related locations might have been designated before the introduction of the Chinese style of architecture. HARADA (1961) has described the bundles of sakaki-twigs set up at various places in the precinct of the Matsushita-shrine in Mie prefecture and has interpret-

ed these bundles as a traditionally preserved type of cult-symbol closely related to the *himorogi* of ancient Japan. Among these cult-objects of the Matsushita-shrine is one especially remarkable. This is found *under* the main hall (*honden*) which is built in the style of the Ise shrines (*shinmeizukuri*). It clearly indicates that a more developed type of sacred building has been superimposed over the site of an ancient cult.

### 3.25 Sex Symbolism

The sex symbolism in both of the column-type trusses from Ishibashi and Nishide is also remarkable (17/1,4). These trusses represent the relationship of male to female. The figures allude to man and woman, but obviously the allusion does not consist in their being replicas of the physical differences between man and woman. With the flexible material and techniques which allow of extraordinary variations of form, simple imitation could be far more realistic than it actually is. One needs only to think of the many three-dimensional figures made out of rice-straw, that play such a large role in Japanese folklore (EDER 1951, TAKEDA 1949). But in the case of the trusses traditional constructional forms and customs of dress lend the distinctive marks for masculinity and femininity. A garland of dark-colored twigs placed on the *ôtaimatsu* is called *hachimaki* by analogy to the widely-used headband of the same name (II/3). In the female *ôtaimatsu* the reed stalks of the upper part are bent downward, thus resembling a female hairstyle, and then trimmed to a circular shape (17/5). The symbolism of secondary elements, too, is not modelled on nature but is expressed in a constructional mode. The main rope like a plait, the knot as "*onna-musubi*" (20/2), the rope ends hanging down in locks from the knots, the slightly curved contours and the bamboo section that inclines forward (XIV/3), all these are formal elements which were probably brought into use for purely constructional reasons and were only later interpreted in terms of non-constructional objects. The formal adaptations to the interpretations, which in other cases may have led to anthropomorphic sex symbolism (phallicism and the like) have, however, not yet taken place in the traditions studied here. Hence in fact the sex symbolism points to differences in structures and not of human figures.

And the structural differences here are likely to have been ultimately generated by the spatial concept underlying these objects.

### 3.3 Form of the movable trusses (*kasa-taimatsu*) of Ueda (21)

The movable high-columns differ from the static trusses, *ôtaimatsu*, on account of their outstanding height, their different shape (the reed body being only part of the whole), their varied relationship to ground and location and also because their form no longer has the same logical structure. Singly, they relate to the hamlets; as a group, to the Shinoda shrine. In respect of their size, shape and manoeuvrability, they can be regarded as being opposed to the *ôtaimatsu*. A similar antithesis of differently shaped cult objects can be found in many variations all over the region investigated.

#### 3.31 Monumental Tendency

Let us first deal with the size. The high-columns in Ueda are about six to seven meters high. In other places, the same type of column can be as high as thirteen meters. These structures, which are often of enormous circumference, are built around a supporting shaft while lying horizontally and are then erected as shown in the chapter headed "Construction". The size of the fixed trusses is more or less determined by the length of the reed stalks. In the case of the high-columns, the reed body is transferred to the upper end, thus forming only part of the whole column. The column itself, within limits, can be of any length, the lower section of which can now be interpreted as the support of the truly symbolic upper part.

This subdivision of shape into a lower supporting section and an upper symbolic part is, however, not clear-cut for there is an almost uniform transition from the reed part to the lower section, and, as a result, the whole column can also be regarded as being divided into two parts, the shaft and the "capital".

While the *ôtaimatsu* are characterized by the well-balanced contrast of the two polar sections of the unified whole, in the case of the *kasa-taimatsu* the emphasis lies in the contrast between a towering umbrella-like symbol and a strong,

rigid main column body, which supports the former. The high-column type is thus a form that tends toward the monumental. In many places, where they still reach considerable dimensions, the people boast of the height of these columns in former times, reportedly twice as high as they are now.

#### 3.32 Multiple Locations

As the reed part is lifted away from the ground and the stalks are inverted-on the fixed trusses these are still in an upright, <<natural>> position – the whole form of the high-columns acquires a different relationship to the ground and place. Mainly due to the different method of construction, they are independent of their link with the ground and a fixed location. If one wished to move one of the fixed trusses, which are built around a framework and secured with posts in the ground, one would have to destroy its form. The movable high-columns, however, can satisfy both static and dynamic conditions. This is because their outer supporting posts and pegged tethers have been, so to speak, transferred outside of the form. Characteristically, various positions in space correspond to static/dynamic conditions; when at rest, they are vertical, when they are being moved, they are always horizontal (15/1,2). The ecstatic ritual of movement (*taimatsu-watari*), briefly described in the previous chapter, during which the columns are carried around in a frenzy as the central object of worship, impressively illustrates the fact that *this* dynamic value of the structure is not a speculation of building theory, but has its roots in local tradition.

Independence of a fixed location makes it possible to set these columns up in different places. This seems to be an important characteristic, if not one of the reasons of their origin. Consequently, the high-columns are mostly found in places of worship where cult locations of varied status are to be found within the same worship system. The *ôtaimatsu* being static trusses, then represent a single primary place of worship, whereas the movable *kasa-taimatsu* represent several secondary places. For their ritual destruction by fire however, the high-columns are taken to the primary place. Ueda is a good example of this (7/2). The *kasa-taimatsu* are set up in the hamlets, on sites where formerly the *kosha* (small shrines) were situated. They then

stand there for a certain length of time. Before the fire ceremony, they are carried into the precinct of the village shrine where they are erected in front of the common main shrine, Shinoda Jinja, and not in front of their own hamlets' shrines(6).

### 3.33 Relation to History of Settlement

The tendency of various forms of *taimatsu* to lend themselves to the designation of local socio-spatial hierarchies can be observed in numerous variations all over the region surveyed. During a short-lived religious event, relationships of order among closely neighboring settlements are expressed. The relationships are mostly of a genealogical nature, which can be seen from the names of the local shrines (*motomiya* and *wakamiya*). The original or main shrine, *motomiya*, would therefore then be the primary place of worship, in front of which the corresponding village would set up its *ôtaimatsu*, while the secondary villages, which have branch shrines, *wakamiya*, take their *kasa-taimatsu*, that are at first set up in front of the branch shrines, to the main shrine, *motomiya*, for the burning. The institution of politically controllable settlement units in the Meiji era, effected by the integration of several *ujigami* shrines into a central principal shrine (*gôsha*), is also reflected at the level of these temporary cult objects in the way mentioned above. The extent to which the *taimatsu* festivals formerly served the purpose of political and ritual organization can only be revealed by ethnological studies in relationship to local history.

### 3.34 Evolution of Form

In the following pages, the morphological relationship between the high-columns and the *ôtaimatsu* will be briefly discussed. A comparison of the sections of the three kinds of *taimatsu* dealt with here demonstrates the morphological homologies, clearly showing the relatedness between the *kasa-taimatsu* and the *ôtaimatsu* (22a).

Looking more closely at the reed part of the high-column type (22a/3 and 21/1,3), it can be seen that the stalks are inverted. This inversion is a typical feature of all high-columns in the whole region surveyed around Ômihachiman. The inverted reed part is attached around the firmly bound part of the upper section of the co-

lumn and, as seen from below, consistently tied up to the bending point of the stalks. Seen from the upright "natural" state of the reed stalks, the tying is now around their upper part. The ring of bamboo splinters which is found around the periphery of the lower part in the case of the hut-like *ôtaimatsu* appears to have moved up to the middle of the stalks' lower part on the high-column type and now functions as the uppermost fastening at the level of the "capital". Above this fixture, the ends of these inverted stalks fan out loosely like rays. By analogy to the upper part of the column-type truss, this new "upper part", the "capital", is essentially void and transparent. The element of emptiness is extremely important to the form here. Looking from below through the filigree-like wheel of reed which mingles curiously with the background of the sky, the observer perceives a strong contrast between the massive body of the column and its radiating corona; and as its designation "sun-wheel" (*nichi-rin*) suggests, one is reminded of legends of an originally earthbound sun, often encountered in other cultures.

The upward sweep and inversion of the reed part have a certain logic consistency in design and detail, but the distinct structure of form, that we found in the case of the fixed trusses, becomes less distinct here. The identity between main bond (*shimenawa*) and narrowest point which emphasizes the transition from the solid to the void from the immobile to the mobile (as expressed in the hut-like truss), is no longer clearly preserved here.

These comparisons seem to show that the high-columns developed from the fixed trusses, probably as a contrasting modification. The fact that intermediate types exist in the Ômihachiman region (22b/1-4) makes it possible to reconstruct the transitional process as follows: Initially, a second, inverted reed part is superimposed (22b/2) on that of a fixed truss (22b/1) which is similar to the column-type truss. This formal variation is closely related to the column-type truss. In contrast to this, the formation of a <<capital>> (22b/3) is derived rather from the form of the hut-like type. In the course of time, the lower upright reed part on such an intermediate form was felt to be superfluous (22b/3) and was therefore omitted. It was certainly noticed that the enlargement which was produced by the superposition could be further developed. By effecting such enlargement and adding further phases, the

characteristic form of the high-column type was finally developed (22b/4). The upper part resulting from the new formation had to be kept free from material at its upper end if the traditional system was to be preserved. All high-columns found in the region show the motif of **the void and transparent, capital-like, fanning out upper part**. The constancy of this feature shows how deeply this polar principle is rooted in the local tradition.

Seen from this standpoint, the result is a model, possibly of significance for cultural history, that may show how, on one hand, the dual principle (of the *ôtaimatsu*) could survive through the centuries in a relatively pure form and, on the other hand, how by re-interpretation, it could evolve into new forms. But above all, we gain an insight into the structural and formal developments possible to primitive building methods, a subject which has so far been largely neglected.

The position of the main rope, *shimenawa*, is no longer clearly determinable because of the structural vagueness of this truss. In Ueda, there is no *shimenawa* on the high-columns at all. In other places around Ômihachiman, where the *shimenawa* is still found, it hangs from the bamboo ring in the middle of the fanned-out stalks, i.e. from the highest bond. The secondary ropes, symbolizing the months in the case of the hut-like truss, are not found here either; also the overdimensioning of single parts falls back in favor of emphasis on the vertical.

The impression that the high-column type is formally derived from the *ôtaimatsu* is further strengthened by other characteristics. The fact that one comes across many form-variations of *ôtaimatsu* in the whole region (see plate 9), whereas the high-columns seem to be rather standardized, i.e. varying only in size or in small details, implies that the *ôtaimatsu* look back on a far longer tradition. The varying cult-related **contexts** in which both kinds are found also hint at such a conclusion. High-columns generally designate several secondary places in the religious system and are usually associated with a subordinate group in the village. As previously mentioned, they are carried by a young men's religious group, *wakarenchû*, an association which the sons of the family heads, *koshu*, join at a certain age. In this case the representative

status of the *wakarenchû* is not so evident as in the case of the *koshu* the cult-organization in charge of the *ôtaimatsu*, where every member at one and the same time represents a house, a family and a share of the village property.

### 3.4 Taimatsu in General

If one compares all three types of *taimatsu* that we have investigated so far, it becomes apparent that the most distinct common feature is the formal independence of the body of reed. In all types, the reed is neither employed partially nor casually; the stalks are used in their entirety and are arranged in a particular way. The reed appears on the outside of the form. Where a *shimenawa* is present, it is connected to the reed part at a more or less middle zone. In the case of the column-type truss, the reed body constitutes the actual form of the whole object. The stressed significance of the reed part in almost all ritual trusses **in the region upholds the supposition that this is the most important and most original part of the *taimatsu***. In the old Sasaki shrine in Azuchi, ritual trusses made wholly of reeds around a wooden shaft, are still found today. **Probably these are especially close to the original form. Though nowadays most *taimatsu* use a core made of straw and rape plants, if we are correct in assuming that a truss originally consisted wholly of reeds, then the present filling must be seen as a substitute introduced probably because rice straw became easier to obtain and rape plants were easier to burn. One would probably not be wrong in assuming that the reed-part points to early times when the plains surrounding the present-day rivers Echigawa and Hinogawa were still largely covered with reeds and that such trusses marked territorial claims within a sacralized traditional legal system.**

Reed used as a covering produces remarkable textures. The "cannelure" formed in the lower part of the column-type *ôtaimatsu* (XIV/1), through which the rope runs and makes either a thick or thin "torus" encourages a comparison with the shapes of well-known stone columns in architecture and brings theories to mind which claim that these are derived from bundles of reed. (ANDRAE 1933; cf. also BOTTICHER, 1853,

concerning the term "torus"; see also "cannellure" from latin "canna", small tube, reed and the Greek *kanna* <tube>, reed, reed basketry, see KLUGE 1967 <<kanne>>, "kanal" and "kanon" as well as WALDE 1938 "canna").

The textured surfaces on the upper part of all *ôtaimatsu* are characterized by the natural condition of the material and the lack of technical elements. Similar features are also to be found on forms commonly known in the history of building, for example the plant columns common in ancient times (BORCHARDT, 1897).

Another striking feature is the many geometrical forms which are manifested in these structures: circles, cylinders, cones and polygons. There are also indications of spherical shapes. It is evident that these shapes are primarily not deliberate creations, but rather a result of the interplay between the nature of the materials used and the combination of these materials by binding. For instance, the cylindrical form results here quite simply from tying the elongated elements into a bundle, and the circular form joining together the ends of bamboo splinters.

In this connection, another brief remark about the aesthetic evaluation is appropriate. Considering the simple material used, the richness of formal expression is remarkable. It would be difficult to classify these cult objects as primitive, as would happen if they were considered from the prevailing ethnological point of view. In contrast to the general attitude which tends to emphasize the material aspect, the exact study of these truss forms reveals that something superior and spiritual transcends the mere material. This transcendence determines the nature of such objects and evokes an expression of beauty in a deeper sense. In this respect, one should bear in mind the aesthetic term "harmony", an early meaning of which denotes "connection", "joint" in the constructional sense (MEYER 1932). If one considers the symbolic main rope of the fixed truss as a junction in both its unifying sense as well as its dividing sense, then it seems that the definition of the term as <<concord of the parts of a unit>> was derived from such objects. It appears that this kind of harmonious union by binding at least as a traditional concept was not completely alien to Plato. About proportions we read in his "Timaios": regarding the creation of the world which he considers to be "proportioned": "It is impossible to join two things together properly without a third element, for only a mediating bond can complete the union between the two. The most

beautiful bond of all is that which, as far as is possible, unifies both itself and the objects that it links to a whole" (Platon, Timaios 30C-32A). It should be noted in this context that originally "proportion" (as an architectonic term) certainly had a dominantly spatial meaning. The expression *prô partiône* (acc. to WALDE IF 39,93 from *pro partiône*) implies at least two parts, of which one is thought to be in front of, or jutting out from, the other. It is obvious that this relationship finds clear expression (also spiritually) in the dual symbols dealt with here.

Another phenomenon that one observes in the tradition of these cult objects is the existence of interpretations which suggest cosmological associations. In this way (according to KITAGAWA, 1966), the upper part of the hut-like *ôtaimatsu* is said to represent the canopy of heaven, and the fanning-out, radiating upper part of the high-column is referred to as "sun-wheel", *nichi-rin*. In some places of the region the *shimenawa*, which are wound around the cult objects, are in the form of snakes or dragons and are named accordingly (*hebi, ryû, tatsu*). The characteristics of such ritual ropes (e.g. with double heads) and the way they are treated ritually (cutting, winding the "snakes" around cult symbols whereby their heads are positioned like guards symmetrically towards the shrine, destruction of the "snakes" together with the symbols by fire etc.) remind us of descriptions found in the old texts. One feels inclined to ask whether mythical concepts, which today have only poetic value and are usually understood as the phantastic imagery of a prelogical mentality, could have had their origin in cultic behavior of the kind described. If one assumes that such types of cult and the symbols associated with them were widespread in ancient times, mythical concepts found in many cultures, such as the destruction of the world by fire (*Ekpyrosis, Ragnarök* etc.) and its periodic recreation, could have been related not, as this is generally assumed, to a modern geophysical concept of the world but to SYMBOLS for a LOCAL WORLD.

Taking the symbols dealt with here as models, such an interpretation would seem to be easily possible. We have previously hinted at the significance of some *ôtaimatsu* as "constructed time", i.e. the expression of time through symbolic bonds. This type of time symbolism reminds one particularly of the Indian *Agni-altar*. In general, the cyclic nature of the *taimatsu* is also shown by the periodic renewal of the structures and by the fire ritual. Furthermore, if one

also considers their significance as signs of the temporary presence of a deity, then it is reasonable to compare them with cosmic pillars symbolizing the middle of the world, **trees of life** and the like, which are all well-known from the myths and cults of many civilizations (cf. ELI-ADE, 1957, 1966). The *taimatsu* would then represent the rare case where such cult objects - their social and spatial relationship being mostly preserved - are still actually built and available for research.

With these brief comments it is suggested that these objects could also be regarded in a cultural-historical context; indeed, considered in such a way, they offer great promise for further study.

#### **4. Time relations as determined by materials used**

With respect to modern concepts of building theory, time is not a factor of primary importance, at least not spiritually. Because of the durable materials used, the building usually outlasts those who inhabit it. Thus the relative newness or oldness of the building is not of primary concern.

The situation differs however, when the structures are made of readily decomposing matter such as reeds and the like. Time then becomes a criterion, which is definitely a part of the concept of building, especially in the case of structures with a particular significance for a group of people.

With this view of the *taimatsu* in mind we encounter some strange circumstances. Generally, when man creates something, he does so with the intention that it may withstand the test of time. The fact that he sometimes creates beautiful things and then deliberately destroys them on the very same day is a rare phenomenon that provokes philosophical speculation. For the paradox is that this form is able to survive precisely because it is deliberately destroyed and in spite of the perishable material of which it is made. It survives in an interplay with the human mind (23). *Taimatsu* worship objects are not born once in the imagination of a person and then integrated into the material existence of a civilization as, for example, works of art are; instead they are annually transformed from their spiritual existence in the memory of a social group into a new, physical form. It is also characteristic that the material of which they are made also passes through an annual cycle of regeneration. This close relation of the cult objects

to the annual vegetative cycle is, however, not to be understood as a primitive veneration of the regenerative and fertile forces of nature. In the first place, the essential materials, reeds and bamboo, are not significant in terms of nutrition. Rice-straw is used without the ears; in connection with *taimatsu* it is simply used for tilling, combustion or rope-making. Secondly, the cultic veneration is in fact not actually concerned with the natural state of the material. It only begins when the material is assembled, integrated in a construction and brought to a coordinated form.

This leads to the suggestion that the described cult procedures provide a model by analogy with which other rites could be interpreted quite differently from the way in which this is usually done. Fertility cults, where proved to exist, could then be interpreted as relatively late differentiations, connected to the spread of agriculture, of something much older and more original, namely, constructive and symbolic behaviour with the essentially territorial function of organizing the environment.

In Ueda the *ôtaimatsu* are to be seen standing upright in their materialized state for a single day only and they then undergo their spectacular destruction by fire. During their transformation into light, they temporarily roil back the darkness of night over a wide area. Next day a small heap of ashes is the sole reminder of the site of the monument and of its impressive structure (20/5). The dramatic atmosphere of the event is reflected in the behaviour of the villagers. The monumental fire in the nocturnal wood of the shrine is both an uninhibited celebration and an emotional break in the orderly work-a-day life of the community.

This regular cycle of time within the village is one of the strongest experiences that the study of Japanese folk religion has to offer. This is especially so if one witnesses the events year by year and sees how the same symbol, appearing at the appointed time and at the same place in front of new and ever-changing people, conveys the idea of continuity within the changes of life. And one is inclined to ask oneself Do not these seemingly simple structures provide a fundamentally profound illustration of the relationship between man and his world? Do they not belong to a higher category of expression of the essence of human existence? Could it be that their essence reveals the core of an organizational pattern or a kind of world-perception which has so far been little comprehended?'