

Abstract

Traditional Japanese festivals *matsuri* used to play an important role in the annual cycle of Japanese agricultural communities. They marked special days outside of the everyday order, reserved for relaxation and for prayers to deities who were believed to have influence over the quality of the crops. However, with the beginning of the modern period in Japanese history, the agricultural community that used to form the core of Japanese society began to dissolve and with that changed also the perception of festivals. The aim of this thesis is, through illustrating various factors and analyzing available as well as my own statistical data, to find the answer to the question of what role such slávnost's play in modern Japanese society. At the end of my thesis I will present a case study of the Gion matsuri, that has been held almost without interruption for more than a thousand years.

Key words: Japanese culture, traditional festivals, matsuri, Gion matsuri, social ties, commercialization