



Bon Odori in America is Japanese-American, not Japanese.

Bon Odori is generally not observed at Jodoshinshu temples in Japan.

Bon Odori is not "Ondo". Ondo does not mean dance in the Japanese language, it means to "take the lead" in a cheer or toast, and is a form of music with a single singer and a responsive chorus. Ondo meaning "dance" is a term coined by non-Buddhist JA's who wanted to secularize the Bon Odori and mistakenly used the term Ondo to mean "dance".

Bon Odori is not "Nihon Buyo" or classical Japanese dance. It is folk music and dance.

Bon Odori is not performance dance for others to see – it is for people to dance. Bon Odori is not meant to be watched, it is meant to be danced.

Bon Odori is to be danced as you are, symbolized by wearing Yukata (literally – bathrobe) as opposed to a kimono.

Bon Odori is to reach a state of forgetting your ego, and thereby being able to remember and reconnect to those who have died. This is done by forgetting your ego, not indulging it.

Whether you learn every dance or come to the dance cold, your ego will initially flaunt or be embarrassed. Real Bon Odori is that moment when you forget showing off and being embarrassed.

Bon Odori's spiritual meaning is to discover your ego through dance and thus being able, even momentarily, to forget the self. That moment of "just dancing" is Bon Odori – and it is then that one naturally remembers the dead.

Real Bon Odori is thus not used to attract crowds to a carnival.

Bon Odori taiko is meant to help the dancers dance – it is not performance taiko. Bon Odori taiko is not meant to be noticed, except by its complete absence. Taiko players are not necessarily Bon Odori taiko players.

Being a group taiko player does not qualify you to play Bon Odori taiko – knowing the Bon Odori dances does.

Being a dance teacher does not qualify you to teach Bon Odori dance, knowing the spirit of Bon Odori does.

Bon Odori & taiko, like tofu salad & spam musubi, are not Japanese – they are uniquely Japanese-American.

ODORU AHO NI MIRU AHO
A FOOL DANCING AND A FOOL WATCHING
ONAJI AHO NARA
IF IT IS THE SELFSAME FOOLISHNESS
ODORANNYA SON SON
NOT DANCING IS LOSING

~ refrain from the Awa Odori

SEE YOU AT BON ODORI, DANCING!

Gassho, *Rev. Mae*