Food in Shinto

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(1) Food and religion—fire, food, home and the idea of Ubusuna [産土思想] by YANAGITA Kunio [柳田国男 1875-1962]

The Meiji Taisho shi Sesohen (明治大正史 世相篇: Lives during the Meiji and Taisho Periods, 1931 by YANAGITA Kunio) was an attempt to describe history only by “the facts which appear and disappear before our eyes every day” and the common facts in the world.

After the Meiji Restoration (1868), Japanese society underwent rapid modernization. Most of the pre-modern life-styles changed seriously in this time. Yanagita confirmed this process of modernization by specific facts. Through the changes of color, sound, food, home and scenery (which the then people was exposed to every day and felt directly), he revealed that our society and views would shift gradually.

His interest was how people dealt with the chaotic transition called modernization. It is said “In many cases, history was a book of regret.” Lots of things were losing before people knew it, and their life changed fundamentally. But there was still room for correction.

The feature of this book is that he gave vivid descriptions of pre-modern life-styles. Also, as for the religion what is called Shinto, he began with explaining concrete things like fire and food.

[ⅰ] There was a hearth (囲炉裏: constructed in the floor) in the middle of a house. It was surrounded with Yokoza (横座: on which the householder of the family sits), Kakaza (かか座) and Kyakuza (客座). The order whose center was fire of the hearth existed there.

Over fire of the hearth, the pothook was set. There was the territory where Kojin (荒神様: sometimes called Kamado-gami 竈神, who is the Japanese kami of fire, the hearth and the kitchen) controlled. The food was cooked by pure fire (清い火) he controlled. Dining was communal eating and drinking (共同飲食). Eating was to live, and living was to live a community life. Pure fire cooked food and it became intangible nutrient (無形の養分) for living together. The packed lunches for eating outside were also cooked by the same fire. Yanagita said “The principal of packed lunches was the very similar to Kagezen (影膳: setting a meal for an absent person). Now everyone at home would gather round and eat the same lunch as this. In this respect, intangible nutrient was lurking. In other words, the fact, that packed lunches formed a group of communal eating and drinking, became invisible saltiness.”

[ⅱ] Eating, drinking and living together were to be conscious of home as a unit of human relations. Eating, drinking and living are to eat, drink and live at home. That people keep on eating, drinking and living makes their home be lasting. At home, there are living inhabitants. Also, other members exists there. They are dead ancestors. Their souls didn’t leave their home, and they composed home. The living descendants have an obligation to enshrine their ancestors’ souls. This is the idea of Ubusuna.

People didn’t think that ancestors would go to another world after death. The souls remained in this world. Yanagita said “Though invisible, the ancestors rested and inhabited in mountains, rivers, grasses and trees of their hometown. They watched the good old life which they had formerly participated in. People thought in this way.”

However, the modernization destroyed such orders. Yanagita called the destruction of [ⅰ] the division of fire, the concession of fire Shinto and the destruction of food unity. Also, concerning [ⅱ], he termed the division of home and decomposition of the idea of Ubusuna.

Precisely, the city named Edo was the place where bachelors flocked. Most of the citizens were male. In the Meiji period, moreover, the phenomenon samurais and farmers left their birthplace and moved into cities accelerated. In such a situation, as regards food, eating out became popular. At first the form of eating out was packed lunches, and then teahouses and the like were built in the Edo period. They evolved and developed into restaurants in the modern times. Yanagita read invisible transition of human relations into this change in the form of dining. The change of the way food is was the shift in the meaning of fire. In those days, the aspect around the hearth in houses was changing. Without notice, the head of a family couldn’t be seen on Yokoza. The order of
home and the idea of Ubusuna were changing. The domestic order split, and consequently ancestor worship were falling apart.

(2) The meaning of food in Shinto

[Ⅰ] The food worship in the Grand Shrines of Ise —【Saijin (祭神: the Kami a shrine is dedicated to)】and【Shinsen (神饌: food and alcohol offering to the Kami)】

Yanagita expounded a religion what is called Shinto concretely from a series of life things as fire, food, home and the idea of Ubusuna. Hereinafter, focus on food further, and find what problems are there.

Taking the Grand Shrines of Ise (伊勢神宮) for instance and thinking about the food worship, we'll understand that food has an important meaning in【Saijin】and【Shinsen】.

First, let me explain【Saijin】. Ise Shrine comprises the Inner Shrine, Naiku (also officially known as Kotoiarugu 皇大神宮) and the Outer Shrine, Geku (also officially known as Toyookedaijingū 豐受大神宮). Concerning Saijin, Naiku and Geku are dedicated to Amaterasu-Oomikami (伊勢之御魂大神) and Toyoke-no-Oomikami (豊受御魂大神) respectively. Amaterasu-Oomikami is Ohomiyoakami of the Emperor (天皇の大皇祖神) meaning that she is said to be directly linked in lineage to the Imperial Household of Japan and the Emperor). Toyoke-no-Oomikami is called Toyokebime-no-Kami (豊受毘売の神) and is the original spirit of grain. She is Miketsu-Ookami (御食津大神: the kami of food), who was deified heavily by Amaterasu-Oomikami (MOTOORI Norinaga, the Ise niku saki take no ben (伊勢二宮さき竹の弁). Toyoke-bime-no-Kami was termed Toyokebime-no-Mikoto (豊受毘売大神) in the Kojiki (古事記: record of Ancient Matters). The ke (己) in this name means food (食) and offerings (勧進). Also, she is the tutelary deity of Oomike (大御饌: means the food Amaterasu-Oomikami has).3

This issue of Saijin concerns with the birth of Ise Shintoism (Geku Shintoism) in the thirteenth century, but here it is sufficient to only confirm that food is enshrined in Geku as Kami (Shinto god).

Next, I give the explanations of【Shinsen】.【Shinsen】is the generic name of the food and drink which are offered to Kamis. The meaning of it is to wish for the appearance of Kami, to be hospitable to them, and to meal with them together (神人共食). The various foods, as alcohol, water, salt, grain, fruit, vegetables, beasts, birds, fish and shellfish, belong among Shinsen.4

In the Jingu which is the Japan's biggest shrine, complex rites continually take place at all seasons. Excepting a little shift with the times, Shinsen offered to ceremonies almost don't change. The old rituals are still valued now, and Shinsen are produced and prepared with ensuring cleanliness.5 The main things of Shinsen are rice (御料米), salt (御塩), vegetables, fruit, abalone and dried bream. Jingu set up own factory (調進所) and directly produces each of them there.

In the case of Jingu, food has important meaning as to Saijin and Shinsen. Then, generalize and consider this.

[Ⅱ]【Saijin】Food turns to Kami

In Japanese ancient times, most of Kami were food. I try to cite some examples from the Kojiki.6 As the water Kami, for example, Mikumarino-Kami (水分の神: meaning the Kami who divides headwaters), Mizuhanome-no-Kami (弥都波能売の神: meaning the woman of the water starts to spring. The Kami of irrigation water.) and Miwi-no-Kami (御井の神: means august well) exist. Then as for rice Kami, there are Toyokebime-no-Kami (豊受気毘売の神: means the woman of rich and choice food. The uke in this name means fine food and rice. The ke = food and offerings, Ootoshi-no-Kami (大年の神: means a fine crop of rice. The toshi means that grains get ripe.), Mitoshi-no-Kami (御年ノ神: means the Kami of the abundant crop in a year) and Ukanomitama-no-Kami (宇迦之御魂の神: means the mysterious spirit inhabits in rice. The uka is an old form of uke. The rice spirit.)

Also, all the names of the Emperor Jinmu (神武天皇) and his brothers in the Kojiki mean food (the rice spirit). Itsuse-no-Mikoto (五瀬の命: The se is se of waseda (early rice field), and means rice. Itsuse means solemn and divine rice.). This Kami dies., Inahī-no-Mikoto (稲沢の命: The hi represents spirits. His name means the rice spirit.) (He goes to Haha-no-Kuni 嫡の國.), and Mikenu-no-Mikoto (御毛沼の命: The mikue means offerings. The nu is master. His name means the master of food. (This Kami goes to Tokoyo-no-Kuni 常世國.) The Emperor Jinmu was called Wakamikenu-no-Mikoto (若御毛沼の命: means the new birth of young grain spirit.) and succeeded to the throne as the first emperor. From these facts, we can see that the essence of emperor is the shaman who deifies the rice spirit.

Except for above-mentioned Kami, Ogotsuhime (大宜都比売) means the great woman of food. The
ge equals ke), Toyuke-no-Kami (登由気の神: means abundant food. Saijin of Geku as I have already mentioned.), Mikenu-no-Mikoto (I have already described.), Miketsu-Ookami (御食つ大神: means great Kami of food. Saijin of Kehi-Jingu 気比神宮) and Kehi-no-Ookami (気比の大神: means great Kami of the food spirit. The saijin enshrined in Kehi-Jingu in the city of Tsuruga in Fukui prefecture. The ke is food, and the hi is spirit.) exist as the food Kami.

[Ⅲ] The birth of the fundamental idea of Kami (vitality or the creating and becoming powers)

Most of Kami in the Kojiki were food. In the idea of Kami, there were Kami corresponding to each individual food. Moreover, the fundamental idea of Kami abstracted from them existed (vitality or the creating and becoming powers). It was Musubi-no-Kami.

Concerning this Kami, the Kojikiden (古事記伝: Commentary on the Kojiki) written by Norinaga said “Musubi (産霊) is mysterious Mitama (神霊: spirit) which generate every things.” The musu in musubi is the same as the musu of “Koke ga musu. (meaning that the grass covers something.)” and “Kusa ga musu. (meaning that moss covers something.)” It means “generating”. Also, Musuko (息子: son) and Musume (娘: daughter) are the same too. The children are born as the grass and the moss.

Ancient people probably conceived the birth of humans or things to be marvles. They had holy feelings toward the creating and becoming powers. The meaning of Musubi is what the divine generating power and the mysterious creating and becoming powers have been apotheosized.

[IV] Shinsen The food as Shinsen

As has been mentioned in [Ⅱ] and [Ⅲ], food is Kami. We offer food to the Kami. Through offering, we wish for the appearance of Kami, delight them at all times and keep on sustaining our lives. What it does mean? As to the meaning of invocation, I want to consider again in the next chapter titled “(3) How do nature (food) correlate with religion (Shinto)? (【Saijin】 II III)”.

Consider next [IV] the food as Shinsen.

The intent of rites (festivals) themselves consists in praying to Kami with the whole of complex structure. There are many procedures (factors) for realizing prayers. One of them is [IV] Shinsen. Shinsen is offering to Suijin. Generally speaking, it is the same category as sacrifices. The essence of Shinsen which realizes prayers can be comprehended from sacrifices.

Suppose Shinsen is sacrifices, there is the problem how does it connect to the realization of prayer. In subsequent chapter titled “(4) How does religion control nature? (【Shinsen】 IV)'', we consider this mechanism of realizing invocation.

(3) How does nature (food) correlate with religion (Shinto)? (【Saijin】 II III)

Nature consists in the outside of human relations. There are food and the source of human life. Let’s think about this by ordering human view of nature again.

The characteristic of modern view of nature is that the idea humans can objectify and control nature has established while natural science (technology) has developed. The human progress equals the technological advance. Science seemed to solve all matters and bring eternal happiness to human beings. However, the results were the problem of pollution, the threat of nuclear weapons and anxiety about biotechnology by genetic manipulation for example. Therefore we reflect on natural science in recent years. Also the thought of nature conservation and the idea of environmentalism appeared. The above summarizes change in the view of nature.

To sum up like this, although the relationship between human beings and nature seems to be changing complexly from pre-modern times to modern times, the basis of this relationship doesn’t change in fact. On the contrary, it can’t change. As for this, we can easily understand by considering pre-modern times first.

First of all, let’s think about what nature was for human beings in pre-modern times. Naturally, it wasn’t the object of natural science as in modern times. In medieval times, it was also the object of a sense of beauty as Kacho fugetsu (花鳥風月), but this wasn’t all its aspects. In addition, considering past view of nature, we realize that nature is the most fundamental thing which our lives originated from.

We live through negotiating with nature. For instance, we want good water. Also we get food by collection, hunting and fishing, and sustain our lives. In brief, there is the fundamental schema that food is gained in nature where is the outside of human relations.

In fact, that is the same today. Particularly, in
the case of Japanese cities, the negotiation between human beings and nature became extremely rare in modern times. People seem to be working and living only in the human relations at their office for example. They work in companies, get salaries, procure food at neighboring stores and lead daily lives. They consider food to be produced from work at office.

However, this is the delusion generated by modern capitalism or technology. Needless to say, it is impossible now that human beings live without having to do with nature. In brief, humans don’t live by human relations. Humans aren’t food, and there is no food in the inside of human relations. Thus finally, human lives are sustained by the outside nature after all.

Then, how does this nature (food) be related to religion (Shinto)?

At first the relationship between human beings (the inside) and nature (the outside) was always unstable. Since food wasn’t always available sufficiently, human lives were wrapped in fears at all times. As for even water, the water of good quality didn’t exist everywhere. Day after day people tried to get food through collection, hunting and fishing, but they couldn’t necessarily gain. Nevertheless, people began to vary this unstable relationship with the source of life. For example, the cultivation of food typified by rice farming prevailed. Also, the techniques to gather, hunt and fish progressed. But to say nothing of it, it is the development of natural science (technology) that changed rapidly this relationship. In this way, nature was conquered. Like this, the relationship with the outside which had been unstable became stable. The more stable the relationship became, the less conscious of the object people became. Without being conscious of nature, people could get food. Finally, the illusion that lives of human beings had nothing to do with nature were generated.

Natural science (technology) stabilized the relationship between human beings and nature. But human beings had wished for the stabilization of the relationship from the remote past. This is the religion. The problem of nature is always related to the problem of religion.

Once in Japanese ancient times, most of foods were Kami as has been mentioned. Wishing to these Kami means stabilizing the relationship with nature. People wish to the Kami of water that water would spring without cease. Also, they pray to the Kami of rice and food that rice and food would steadily be available.

Kami (that the Buddha is in the same category as) were the device that stabilize the unstable relationship between internal human beings and external nature without physically conquering. Natural science (technology) worked on nature directly and mastered it. On the other hand, magic (religion) controlled nature in the different way from the way of natural science (technology). Magic was essentially similar to technique. The difference between the two was whether it works on the object directly or not.

Thus we can understand that the idea of Kami is the sign showing our lives are formed by depending on the outside. Humans sustain their lives by external nature. Nature becomes their food and turns to their vital energies. Religion that is further external than nature is the device for stabilizing this relationship between human beings and nature. Through praying to Kami, this relationship with nature becomes stable.

The meaning of religion is ambiguous. As concerns believing in Kami (or the Buddha) and praying to them, there are no other means besides their literal means. However, their functions are complex in actual fact.

In the case of the Kojiki, there is the magic that is the first stage of religion (①). This idea of Kami shows the material meaning that human food and life depend on nature. Also, the idea becomes proof that supremely ensures living (lives).

The religion in the next stage (②) abstracts and generalizes the first stage. This idea of Kami supports, establishes the inside and gives forms (orders and meanings) to the inside. Like this, religion varied from the stage of pure magic to the religion for considering the meanings of human living. Although there are still other stages after (①) and (②), let me skip them (③).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>the inside</strong></th>
<th><strong>visible outside</strong></th>
<th><strong>invisible outside = other worlds</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>人・・・他者・・・共同体</td>
<td>物・自然・宇宙</td>
<td>Kami, the Buddha (transcendent object)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The significance of religion (the material meaning)
   It is to stabilize the relationship between human beings and nature. It gives food and vital energies from the outside to the inside.
   Kami and the Buddha = the Spirits = vitality

2. The significance of religion (the abstract meaning)
   Religion shows the significance of human living and maintains the order of community.

3. The significance of religion (the meaning in modern times)
   Before the Middle Ages, the significance of religion was the mighty power which Kami and the Buddha had, and worked on the community. While this power was awe-inspiring, it gave divine protection. However, in modern times, it came to work on directly each individual away from the frame of communities, and then Kami and the Buddha became the existence that just did divine protection. In other words, religion became the place for the realization of personal desire or the place where consoles on individual anxiety and supports internally.

4. How does religion control nature? (【Shinsen】IV)

   Nature existed in the outside of human relations, and there were food and the source of human lives. When people try to control this nature by setting religion at the further outside of nature, food becomes Kami. Religion controlled nature and stabilized the relationship between human beings and food.

   Now, how does religion control nature? Food is Kami. We offer food to this Kami. Then, how does Shinsen (offerings) act on the realization of prayers?

   Hereinafter, consider this question from the general system of sacrificing.

   In the Kojiki, there is the goddess called Oogetsuhime (大宜気都比売). Yaoyorozu no kami (八百万の神), meaning “eight million Kami”, asked her for their food. She produced a variety of delicious foods from her nose, mouth and buttocks, and gave them these foods. Susanoo no Mikoto (須佐之男命) regarded this as dirty acts, and he killed this Kami. However, from the body of this Kami, silkworm, rice, millet, small beans, wheat and soybean came. This is the myth about the origin of five grains. A similar-looking story exists in the Nihon Shoki (日本書紀) too.

   The mythology that someone kills god and the body engenders food can be found through the world. A representative one is Hainuwele myth. Among the Wemale in Seram Island of Indonesia, there is the myth about the primitive girl named Hainuwele who was born of coconut blossoms. The girl excreted valuable items. One day, she gave these treasures out to the village, but they hated her and killed her. Thereafter, her corpse was cut into pieces and buried around. These pieces grew into the various tuberous plants.

   These myths can be read as food-origin myths, but more generally they can be understood in the theory of sacrifice or gift. The death of God is the sacrifice we human beings in this world offer, and food is sent to us through this. Leach said that dedicating sacrifice is the gift we offer to gods, and we receive divine favor in return for this gift (Culture and Communication).

   There is no end to give specific cases, in the well-known Ainu ceremony of the Bear Festival (熊送り: Iomante), the bear is sent off to the world of the gods, and becomes the sacrifice by being killed. The meaning of this rite is that the bear sacrificed comes back to this world again. Also, living bears don’t be sent off to the gods. The bear should die and lose its worldly figure in order to move into another world. In the archaeological case, the fact, that clay figures (土偶) are found to be not perfect but broken to pieces, can be interpreted as the sacrifice. (e.g. the clay figurines from Tateishi Site in Iwate Prefecture [the Middle Jomon period] and Shakado Site in Yamanashi Prefecture [the Middle Jomon period]. The clay figures were made to be broken, crashed to pieces and buried around. Through sacrificing the clay figures, people prayed for the productiveness of the earth and gained it.

   According to Leach, there is the metaphor for the
death in sacrificing \((\text{Culture and Communication})\)\(^{15}\). The gift for the next world should be sent off along the same road where the souls of the dead travel. Thus the gift is killed to separate its metaphysical substance from its body. Then its substance is transferred to the next world through the rites like the funeral.

【Figure.1】 shows how does this world connect to the next world. Through annual rites, the fertility of another world is sent to this world, and Kegare (pollution) of this world is sent to another world.

As for (+) Festival and (−) Funeral rites, I apply the interpretation of cultural anthropology to the idea of Ritual (礼) in Chinese thought and order it. The essence of Ritual in China is ancestor worship as the practice of Filial piety (孝). It is said that main rituals are the puberty rite, the marriage rite, the funeral and the festival (冠昏喪祭, 礼之大者,『小学』程伊川). While the puberty rite, the marriage rite and the festival are rites of integration (統合儀礼) for tsung-tsou (宗族 Souzoku: Chinese paternity kindred), the funeral is rites of separation (分離儀礼)\(^{16}\). Souzoku don’t exist in Japan, but similar-looking one exists as the rites of community.

【Figure.2】 shows how does Shinsen (the sacrifice) be sent from this world to another world. We can understand that Shinsen (the sacrifice) moves to another world by the same route as the dead, sin and death take in 【Figure.1】.

The sacrifice is killed (i.e. Oogetsuhime), is destroyed (i.e. clay figures), loses its worldly figure (i.e. Shinsen) and is sent to invisible another world. Shinsen doesn’t be killed or destroyed, but it loses its worldly figure as the sacred object. Consecration equals being killed or destroyed.

Food is sent to another world as the sacrifice. For example in the case of Oogetsuhime, food died as the sacrifice. It isn’t the tradition concerning mere the death of food, but it is about the death of Kami. The dead food would become Kami. Therefore the Kami of food comes to exist in another world, the sacrifice is committed to memory as the death of Kami.

The sacrifice is sent to invisible world and revitalizes the activities in another world. The sacrifice (i.e. Shinsen) loses its worldly figure, moves the vitality and energy (religion = the invisible outside) which work on another world, and appears as the concrete food (nature = the visible outside). It is equivalent to working on the Kami of another world, revitalizing their activities and receiving food as their blessings. This is that the gift demands the return.

In this way, the food (the sacrifice) as Shinsen lurks, is sent off to the Kami of food and becomes obvious as the concrete food. The circulation of the vitality and energy is formed between this world and another world. The grounds that religion controls nature are here.

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Figure.1} \\
\text{Fertility} & \text{The creating and becoming powers or the spirits,living (+)} \\
\text{Kegare} & \text{The dead or sin,death(−)} \\
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
(+\text{ Festival} \\
\text{⋯⋯【Festival = the transformation of ancestral festival】} \\
\text{Shogatsu 正月 [January] } \\
\text{Oton お盆 [July] } \\
\text{⋯⋯【The rites for fertility】} \\
\text{Toshigoi no matsuri 祈年祭 [February] } \\
\text{Niinamesai (Daijosai) 新嘗祭 (大嘗祭) [November] } \\
\hline
(-\text{ Funeral rites} \\
\text{⋯⋯【The rites for removing Kegare】} \\
\text{Ooharai (Great Purification)大祓 [December] } \\
\end{array}\]
Figure 2

Food (+)

【This world】

【Another world】 the Kami of food

Shinsen
(The sacrifice)

注
1. 柳田国男『明治大正史 世相篇』（平凡社・東洋文庫、1967、p.1、4、332、334）。
2. 同上 p.80、39、38、66、217、210。
3. 高島元洋『山崎藩著―日本朱子学と垂加神道』（ぺりかん社、1992、p.520）、『お伊勢まいり』（神宮寺庁、1988、p.11）。
4. 高島元洋『日本人の感情』（ぺりかん社、2000、p.57）を参照。
5. 前掲『お伊勢まいり』p.133。古儀については『延喜式』巻第四（神祇四・伊勢大神宮）などを参照。
6. 西宮一民著注『古事記』『神名の釈義』（新潮社、1994）を参照。
7. このような非人格的な「神」観念（マナ）については、高島元洋『日本人の感情』（ぺリカンド社、2000、p.57）を参照。
9. 高島元洋『近代仏教の位置づけと排仏論』（『日本の仏教』第4号、法蔵館、1995）を参照。
10. 佐々木高明『日本の歴史① 日本史誕生』（集英社、1991、p.201～）。
12. 前掲『文化とコミュニケーション』p.167。
13. 山田孝子『アイヌの世界観』（講談社・講談社選書メチエ、1994、p.211など）、前掲『日本の歴史① 日本史誕生』p.206、296。
14. 前掲『日本の歴史① 日本史誕生』p.201～。
15. p.前掲『文化とコミュニケーション』p.163～。
16. 統合儀礼・分離儀礼については、前掲『文化とコミュニケーション』p.160などを参照。

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