

## 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)<sup>1</sup> 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)<sup>2</sup>. 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 *Kotajingu* 皇大神宮) and the Outer Shrine, Geku (also officially known as *Toyokedajingu* 豊受大神宮). Concerning Saijin, Naiku and Geku are dedicated to *Amaterasu-Oomikami* (天照大御神) and *Toyouke-no-Oomikami* (豊受大御神) respectively. *Amaterasu-Oomikami* is *Ohomiyakami 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). *Toyouke-no-Oomikami* is called *Toyoukebime-no-Mikoto*, 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)). *Toyouke-no-Oomikami* was termed *Toyoukebime-no-Mikoto* (豊宇気毘売命) in the *Kojiki* (古事記: record of Ancient Matters). The *ke* (気) in this name means *food* (食) and *offerings* (饌). Also, she is the tutelary deity of *Oomike* (大御饌: means the food *Amaterasu-Oomikami* has).<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> 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*.<sup>6</sup>

As the water Kami, for example, *Mikumari-no-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 *Toyoukebime-no-Kami* (豊宇気毘売の神: 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* (御年の神: 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.), *Inahi-no-Mikoto* [稻泳の命: The *hi* represents spirits. His name means the rice spirit.] (He goes to *Haha-no-Kuni* 妣の国.), and *Mikenu-no-Mikoto* [御毛沼の命: The *mike* means offerings. The *nu* is master. His name means the master of food.] (This Kami goes to *Tokoyo-no-Kuni* 常世国.) 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, *Oogetsuhime* (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).<sup>7</sup> 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 moss covers something.)” and “Kusa ga musu. (meaning that the grass sprouts.)”. 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 marvels. 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 and pray to them. Then, what do we pray for? Needless to say, it is that we can stably obtain food 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 Saijin. 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 *innovation*.

### (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.<sup>8</sup>

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).

【the inside】	【visible outside】	【invisible outside = other worlds】
<p style="text-align: center;">人・・・他者・・・共同体</p> <p style="text-align: center;">person...other people...community</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">物・自然・宇宙</p> <p style="text-align: center;">object, nature, the universe</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">神・仏 (超越的なもの)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Kami, the Buddha (transcendent object)</p>

- ①The 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
- ②The significance of religion (the abstract meaning)  
Religion shows the *significance* of human living and maintains the *order* of community.
- ③The significance of religion (the meaning in modern times)<sup>9</sup>  
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(氣)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.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>. 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*).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>. 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])<sup>14</sup>. 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 (*Culture and Communication*)<sup>15</sup>. 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-tsu (宗族 Souzoku: Chinese paternity kindred), the funeral is rites of separation (分離儀礼)<sup>16</sup>. 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】 .

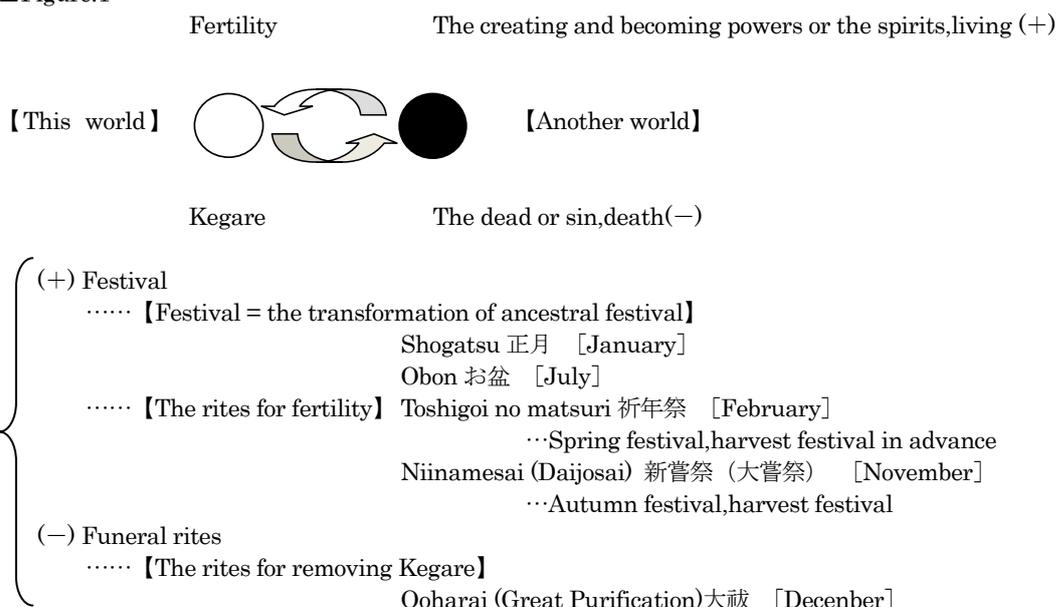
The sacrifice is killed (i.e. Oogetsuhime), is destroyed (i.e. clay figures), loses its worldly figure (i.e. Shinsen) and is sent to invisible another world. Shinsen doesn't be killed or destroyed, but it loses its worldly figure as the sacred object. Consecration equals being killed or destroyed.

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.

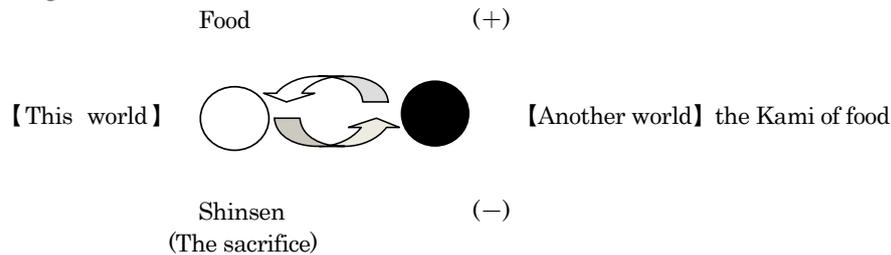
The sacrifice is sent to invisible world and revitalizes the activities in another world. The sacrifice (i.e. Shinsen) loses its worldly figure, moves the vitality and energy (religion = the invisible outside) which work on another world, and appears as the concrete food (nature = the visible outside). 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.

■Figure.1



■ Figure.2



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『山崎闇齋—日本朱子学と垂加神道』(ペリカン社、1992、p.520)、『お伊勢まいり』(神宮司庁、1988、p.11)。
4. 國學院大學日本文化研究所編『神道事典』(弘文堂、1994、p.205)などを参照。
5. 前掲『お伊勢まいり』p.133。古儀については『延喜式』卷第四(神祇四 伊勢大神宮)などを参照。
6. 西宮一民校注『古事記』「神名の積義」(新潮社・新潮日本古典集成、1979)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』(ペリカン社、2000、p.57)を参照。
8. J.G.Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, London: Macmillan and Company, 1890 (永橋卓介訳『金枝篇』第3章、岩波文庫・岩波書店、1952)、Edmund Leach, *Culture and Communication*, Cambridge University Press, 1976 (青木・宮坂訳『文化

とコミュニケーション』第6章、紀伊國屋書店、1981)を参照。

9. 高島元洋「近世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～)。
11. 前掲『文化とコミュニケーション』、Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968(M・モース「贈与論—太古の社会における交換の諸形態と契機」(有地亨・伊藤昌司・山口俊夫訳『社会学と人類学』I、弘文堂、1973)などを参照。
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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