

THE RELICION OF THE HOUSEHOLD

A case study of ancestor worship in Japan

By Herman Ooms

The following paper was submitted in December, 1966, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree in the Department of Religion at the University of Tokyo. It is a reflection of a first experience in field research in the interesting world of Japanese religion. The text, a translation from the Japanese, has been slightly modified for the purpose of publication. We should like to express our gratitude to Miss Deborah Hall for the generous editorial assistance.

INTRODUCTION

Every society has its own more or less institutionalized ways of remembering or forgetting its deceased members. In the West, according to G. Van der Leeuw, we are inclined to erase the dead man altogether from our roll: he no longer counts.¹⁾ Other cultures, however, such as China or Japan, have built stronger defenses against the erosive work of time and cherish the memory of the dead through the ages. The dead souls of these cultures are the object of individual ritual commemoration for many years, and when they finally threaten to disappear from the memory of the living the ancestor cult saves them from complete oblivion.

Earlier scholars of religion, Herbert Spencer and A. B. Taylor,

have shown a very strong interest in the widespread phenomenon of the ancestor cult. However, their concern with evolutionary schemes and belief systems, rather than with structures or social systems, has prevented them from paying full attention to the particular characteristics of ancestor worship as distinguished from other religious phenomena. Neither did they engage in the study of the various forms that ancestor cults can take in different cultures.

Already in 1917, W. Cooke made a plea for a more differentiated terminology, proposing to distinguish between worship, placation or tendance and ministration of the dead.²⁾ But his challenge has never been taken up.

Moreover, ancestor worship lost much of the scholarly interest it had enjoyed at the turn of the century. Again in the last decade some remarkable studies on African ancestor cults have been published, but similar studies for the Orient have been lacking altogether.³⁾ The study of Japanese ancestor worship is a feature of Japanese society which has attracted, as Robert J. Smith remarks in a recent article, much attention but little research.⁴⁾ For any general work on Japanese society, ancestor worship is a subject that cannot be avoided, but it is often touched upon merely in the form of references to a phenomenon that is supposed to be common knowledge.

Japanese folklorists have produced a considerable amount of small case studies of customs related to ancestor worship, mainly the *o-bon* festival, but in their treatment of the household religion, they have limited themselves mainly to the recording of overt rites and activities.⁵⁾ Until very recently monographs of field studies on Japanese communities by Western anthro-

pologists or sociologists were also mainly descriptive and none of them has taken up ancestor worship as their main object of research.⁶⁾ When ancestor worship is the subject of more analytical attention, it occurs mainly in connection with the study of linked groups of households, called *dōzoku*.⁷⁾ Recently, however, a new trend has manifested itself. R. P. Dore pays more attention to ancestor worship as the religion of the single household and to its underlying social relationships.⁸⁾ The studies by David W. Plath⁹⁾ and Robert J. Smith¹⁰⁾ go further along this line.

Among Japanese scholars three have devoted a complete work to ancestor worship. Hozumi Nobushige made clear in a legal study, which was very soon translated into English, how ancestor worship had put its stamp upon the Meiji Constitution and Japanese Law.¹¹⁾ No similar study has been made on the connection between the ancestor cult and Japan's postwar constitution.

During the last months of the Second World War, Yanagita Kunio wrote his *Senzo no hanashi* (Comments on Ancestor Worship in Japan), considered by many Japanese scholars as his most representative work.¹²⁾ Subsequent monographs or studies concerning ancestor worship have all been made in the light of this work. For the most part they have corroborated Yanagita's theories. Yanagita's interest lies with the folk beliefs, and therefore he does not treat emperor worship, which was taken up earlier by Hozumi; he is thus very apprehensive of the too institutionalized aspects of Shinto. Even with these limitations, Yanagita touches upon a great variety of problems. The social unit he discusses most in connection with

ancestor worship is the *dōzoku*. But he does so very much in the perspective of historical reconstructions. Through the comparative study of "survivals," he tries to reach the original layer of the Japanese mind. The theoretical focus of this work centers around the parallelism between the rites of *o-bon* and those of New Year. Through minute reporting and discussion of these rites, the used tools, the terminology involved etc., Yanagita builds up the theory of the original identity between *ujigami* and ancestor spirits, and offers several arguments for a further identity between mountain gods, field gods and ancestor spirits. He also expands upon the subject of souls which are not reckoned among the ancestor souls (*muenbotoke*, *hotoke*) and the other world as pictured in folk belief.

Ariga Kizaemon, in a short article on the concept of the ancestors, elaborates on two points from Yanagita's theories.¹³⁾ He stresses the importance, in some cases, of the element of economic dependence in the computation of the first ancestors. Some families, namely, venerate besides their regular ancestors by blood relationship those who economically helped to establish the present house. He furthermore finds some new arguments for the theory that the *ujigami* were originally the clan ancestors.

Takeda Chōshū studied the custom of Japanese ancestor worship from the sociological, historical and Buddhist theological point of view.¹⁴⁾ The connection between ancestor worship, *dōzoku* and the origin of the rural local community, themes already occurring in Yanagita's work, are explored in a more systematic way. He stresses, very much as Ariga Kizaemon does, the fact that ancestor worship does not strictly

follow the lines of blood relations. With very subtle reasoning, not always backed by the necessary facts, he corroborates the main ideas of Yanagita Kunio.

A further Japanese source on the ancestor cult are the public opinion polls made by the Japanese Government in 1953 and 1958. They ask questions concerning ancestor worship, but do not go further than asking merely about overt features like the possession of a *butsudan* (family altar) or the performance of *hakamairi* (visit to the ancestral grave).¹⁵⁾

Generally speaking we can thus say that, as interpretations have been brought into the study of ancestor worship of Japan by native scholars, these interpretations have been centered around two themes: the reduction of Shinto elements to ancestor worship, and the relation between *dōzoku* and ancestor worship. Among foreign scholars there has been a recent trend to explore the connection of ancestor worship with the single household. But the experience of the worshipper itself, his motivation, or the symbol system used in ancestor worship has been rarely made the explicit subject of study. The suggestions made by early Western scholars asking for a more precise differentiation within the wide phenomenon of ancestor worship have not been followed either.

In the present paper we will probe some of these problems left open by earlier scholars. Thus we undertook the study of a small Japanese rural community from the point of ancestor worship. We decided for a community that did not show the exceptional features of a remote mountain hamlet or of a city world, thus hoping to present a study that is representative of a larger section of the population. Through observation of the

ritual and through conversation with the villagers who observe the rites, we intend to shed some light on the particular religious consciousness that constitutes ancestor worship as the religion of the household.¹⁶⁾

We shall first sketch in general the life of the village with the focus upon the religious life. Within this first chapter we shall also include a description of the ritual pertaining to the dead. In a second chapter we shall analyze the sociological components of ancestor worship.

Then we shall proceed to a discussion of its symbol system, and in a final chapter we shall tackle the problem of the experience of the worshipper during the ritual action and present his own view and interpretation of his action and motivation.

Since we aim at the religious consciousness of the "worshipper," we thought that a pure statistical or questionnaire-styled research would not fulfill our objective. In fact a whole village in itself is too wide an area for our perspective. In the administrative unit that constitutes a village, several centers of community life are operative. Therefore, rather than making a random sample of the whole village, we chose to investigate one such community. This choice was also motivated by the fact that such a community is largely composed of interrelated families, which might have an influence upon the prevailing form of ancestor worship. Our hope is thus to gain in intensity what we lose in extension.

I. The General Life of the Community

We shall divide the general survey of the community under study into three parts. After an ecological sketch of the village, we shall outline and discuss the religious life and finally report on the rites in connection with the dead.

Ecological Description

Geographical situation

Nagasawa is a rural community and part of the town of Ikuta, which in turn is situated at the eastern end of the city of Kawasaki (located between Tokyo and Yokohama). Ikuta stretches from the borders of the Tama River, 3 km. wide and 5 km. deep, to the South. The first kilometer consists mainly of flat lands along the river banks. The rest are hills which rise abruptly from the plain (20 m. above sea level) to a height of 100 m. Nagasawa is situated in the hilly southern tip of Ikuta.

A long valley runs in a Northeast-Southwest direction through Nagasawa, a village approximately 2,000 m. long and 900 m. wide. The lowest point (40 m. above sea level) and the wider part of the valley is situated in the Northeast extremity where no natural borderline separates it from the neighboring village. There is, however, no continuity of houses stretching to the next village. The temple of the village is situated here.

About 800 m. from the temple, where the valley has become

narrower and climbed to a 60 m. level, a cluster of some ten houses forms the center of the village. Here is the village shrine. A dead-end valley splits off in a Western direction to the Tōnokoshi hamlet. The hills (which rise to 100 m.) at their outer edge form the natural Northern border of the village. More to the South where the valley reaches a 70 m. level, another road climbs westwards. The Southwestern tip of the village, called Mochiizaka, is formed by another crossroad; here a road in a North-South direction crosses the Northeast-Southwest road which runs through the whole valley (cf. Appendix I).

The hillside at the Northern side of the village isolates it from the more busy section of Ikuta where the Odakyū line runs. It takes about 25 minutes to cross the hills to the station of Ikuta or (for the inhabitants of Tōnokoshi and Mochiizaka) to Yomiurirandomae station. From there it is only 20 minutes to Shinjuku station on the Yamate line of metropolitan Tokyo. Since Nagasawa does not have a school of its own, the children go to the primary and middle schools of Ikuta, not far from the station. A bus links the Northeast border of the village to Noborito on the Odakyū line. Until December, 1965, no line of public transportation ran through the village. Since then, however, a bus has its terminus in the center of Nagasawa and links the village with the Nambu line. The village is thus situated relatively away from the city but still within easy reach.

History

Traditionally the villages have engaged in farming. Rice paddies fill every corner of the valley, dry fields cover the hill

sides and the top of the plateau.

In the *Shimpen musashi no kuni fūdoki*, a geographical description and local history of the Musashi area composed between 1811 and 1825, we find the following information. In 1644, there were about eight villages, scattered in what was then called Onohara, covering the plain and hills of what is now Ikuta, Nakanoshima, Noborito, Sugao etc. In 1691, one of the villages, Kamishitasugao, split into Kamishitasugao and Gotanda. (Today's Ikuta covers more or less the same area and has taken its name from the last two characters of these former villages.)

Nagasawa (which together with three other hamlets is mentioned as the inhabited area) had 112 households around 1810. All four hamlets together belonged at that time to both villages. Precise information about Nagasawa alone is not available, but two land surveys of 1734 and 1759 registered the size of newly opened land in Gotanda: 90 acres and 13 acres respectively. Grassland for fodder occupied 1,062 acres and woodland 9,155 acres at the beginning of the 19th century.

Probably no major changes occurred in the life of the village until the second decade of this century. During a period of 100 years (from the compilation of the *Fūdoki* until the end of the First World War), the population of the above mentioned four inhabited districts of Gotanda increased slowly from 112 to 146 households. By that time, in 1918, Nagasawa counted 47 households (cf. Appendix 2).

In the following years, however, this number almost doubled to 87 households in 1927, all of them farmhouses. This was by far the largest increase among the 14 different villages which

constitute Ikuta today. During the 1920's, the cultivation of silkworms was the main industry of Nagasawa.

By 1927, the Odakyū line had begun its services, resulting in a steady increase in population of those sections of Ikuta which border the railroad. Nagasawa was less directly affected. In the span of 20 years (until 1949), its population increased to 145 households, a low rate of increase as compared with the rest of Ikuta. However, this non-farming population settled on the Northeast outskirts of the village territory. The 1949 statistics remained unchanged until 1960 when households decreased slightly to 142: 90 farmers and 53 non-farmers.

Meanwhile a huge water purification plant had been constructed in 1955 on the Northern heights of the village. In that same area, but actually outside of Nagasawa, two universities have set up their campuses; in 1965, small dormitories for students who commute from there to these universities have gone up in the yards of some farmers.

Population

From 1960 on, however, Nagasawa began growing into a residential area for commuters to Tokyo, Kawasaki and Yokohama. Ground leveling of the heights between the center of Nagasawa and the Odakyū line started on a large scale. In 1962, the population of Nagasawa territory had doubled to 326 households; three years later, in 1965, it had doubled once more to 625 households, with the prospect of a substantial increase of several hundred units more in the coming years.

These building projects have resulted in a slight decrease in the cultivated paddy fields from 57.8 acres in 1960 to 47.3

acres in 1965. The area of dry fields has decreased one third from 160 to 108 acres ; the area of woodland was reduced almost by one half, from 120.1 to 71.1 acres. These changes, however, occurred on the outskirts of the territory of Nagasawa and left the farming population rather untouched. Whereas the whole of Ikuta has already changed drastically, which is inevitable with a population soaring from 2,000 households in 1955 to 10,000 households ten years later, the real change for Nagasawa as a local community will come in the next five or ten years.

Nagasawa is still the biggest farming district of the whole of Ikuta, both in terms of cultivated area (paddy fields and dry fields) and in the absolute number of farming households, namely, 89. Before the last world war the cultivation of silkworms was widespread, but this industry died out completely and was replaced by vegetable fields. During the last five years, the cultivation of fruit trees and grapes increased considerably. Also some cattle is raised : the number of milk cows doubled between 1960 and 1965 from 101 to 199 and many farmers now raise hundreds of chickens. The size of land possession varies from a size up to 4 *tan* (14 households) to the 15-18 *tan* size (9 households), most of them belonging to a middle category of 5-9 *tan* (36 households) or 10-14 *tan* (30 households). (One *tan* is equivalent to .245 acres.)

The small land holdings had a double influence on labor. Each household is able to provide the necessary labor force for the cultivation of the land, so that organizations for mutual help in the fields are non-existent. Moreover, sons who are not necessary to the fields commute to Tokyo, Kawasaki or

Yokohama to find work. Statistics on the yearly workdays spent on farm work give the following picture: 26 households put in less than 60 workdays a year, 23 households from 60 to 150 days, 36 households more than 150 days. In general, the village gives off an impression of prosperity and modernity. The industriousness of the modern-day farmer is steadily changing the rural scene: more and more the picturesque thatched roofs of farm houses are being replaced by modern tiled ones.

For the farmers Nagasawa still consists of the farming population plus several dozen other households. When the author inquired from some informants about the population of the community, he mostly received a guess of around 140 households. This means that the 500 or so newcomers who actually live on Nagasawa territory are not significant in the minds of the inhabitants of old Nagasawa. The same holds for the number of neighborhood associations (*tonarigumi* or *ku*). First of all we have to note that many of the newcomers settled in three independent units with their own local administrative system: Hiranodanchi, Hazukidanchi and Nakadai). But without taking into account these three separate new communities, Nagasawa actually consists of 13 *ku*, five of them newly created in the Northern part of the village territory. For some time, however, the author relying upon his informants was under the illusion that there were only 8 *ku*. Later it became clear that these 8 *ku* were those where the farming population resides. In some of them, the non-farming population has been rising slowly, but it is the farmers that carry on whatever communal activity there exists in the village, be it a *Nembutsu* fraternity or the

yearly *matsuri* (festival).

The farmers are descendants from the first settlers. Although written genealogies are lacking, many claim to be the 12th or 19th generation or even older. The old tombstones and Kōshin monuments are there to support their claims. Thus we find the same name reoccurring many times throughout the village: more than 70 of the 89 farming households can be classified under one of six names. These are actually nothing else but *dōzoku*.

These *dōzoku* have a certain territorial and occupational unity. In other words, close relatives living outside the village or those living within its boundaries but not involved in farming are not considered members of the *ikke* (the local name for *dōzoku*). Furthermore one *dōzoku* or a great part of it very often dominates one *ku*. Thus this combination of *ku* or *dōzoku* forms the natural basis for a local community. The integrating forces of Nagasawa's farming population beyond the *dōzoku* or *ku* boundaries are rather weak, thereby preventing the village from growing into a real community.

The temple of the village counts 58% of the farmers among its parishioners; the other 42% are affiliated with eight different temples in the area (cf. Appendix 3). Two major festivals used to attract all the villagers. One took place at the village shrine, the other at a small shrine in the compounds of the temple. Since 1964, the former is no longer observed for reasons we shall discuss later.

The absence of a school in the center of the village certainly weakens the community character of Nagasawa. Furthermore the geographical shape of the village, a long valley split into

two, does not stimulate unnecessary social intercourse beyond the immediate neighborhood. For a long time a supply store has been operating from the center of the village ; another one is located at the Southeastern point of the village. Last year a new store opened at a point between the two existing ones. This divides the village again into several selfsufficient units. The youth organization (*seinenbu*) might have been an eventual substitute for the school as a focus for community life, but it disbanded several years ago. Its disappearance was partly responsible for the cessation of the yearly autumn festival and the *o-bon* dance.

Organizations

As mentioned above, old Nagasawa is divided into 8 *ku* (called also *moyori*). Each *ku* still has a popular name which dates probably from the time before the *ku* or *tonarigumi* system originated. As much as possible the border lines of the *ku* are organized taking the *dōzoku* into consideration. When, for instance, some time after the Second World War it was decided to split the third *ku*, the split was made in such a way as to have two "names" in the newly formed eighth *ku* and two others in the third *ku*. Each *ku* has its *kuchō* (head of the *ku*) and also two shrine representatives. On certain occasions the three valleys which converge in the center of the village are used as a division (called *yatō*). So, for instance, the board of directors of the self-governing body (*jichikai*) consists of a representative from each *yatō*. Two men from each *yatō* also represent the village on pilgrimages to the Haruna shrine in Gumma prefecture.

Further associations in the village include the Production Union which unites all the farmers, and a rather inactive Women's Association. Both of these are Nagasawa branches of larger organizations comprising the whole of Ikuta. Finally there is the occasionally active fire brigade.

The Religious Situation in General

Religious monuments

Nagasawa is literally dotted with religious monuments. Religious life in Nagasawa revolves around the village shrine and the Buddhist temple. The former one, the Suwashimmi shrine (age unknown), which since the end of Meiji has kept the *shintai* (object of worship) of the Shimmi shrine (formerly the second shrine of the village) is served now by a priest from the Maruyama *kyōkai* of neighboring Noborito. The latter is the Seigen temple of the Sōtō sect, a branch temple of the Shukō temple, located a few kilometers more to the South. Its priest is in serving the temple the 28th generation. The actual sanctuary is but one room of the residence of the priest, and plans are being made to build a new temple. Its compounds also hold a Kannon shrine which faces the visitor when he passes through the entrance gate, and an Akiba Kasuga Inari shrine. This last one was erected around 1770. The foundation of the temple dates back to 1592. Attached to the temple is a graveyard where only a small proportion (15 families) of the farmers bury their dead. Most villagers have their own graveyard on their property, close by or in a remote

place on a hill side.

Furthermore there are six Jizō (stone Boddhisattvas) in different places in the village, erected by the Buddhist priest of the sixth generation. Not too far from five of these Jizō, but apparently without any direct connection with them, there are five spots along the road where on the 15th of January the bonfire of the year god (*Sai no kami*) is kindled. Several Batō Kanzeon (Kannon with a horse's head) and Kōshin (stones with the effigy of a monkey), located close to the borders of the village, decorate the roads.

The veneration of Inari (fox) is widespread and takes two forms: as a god of the yard (*yashikigami*) and as a god of the *dōzoku* (*dōzokushin*). In the second instance he is venerated every year in February on the first day of the horse of the lunar calendar at the five *dōzoku* shrines (*hokora*) of Nagasawa. The lists on the following pages will give a resumé of the religious topography and the religious calendar of the village.

The religious calendar

Each festival brings together a certain number of people whose unity as a group is reinforced through these periodical celebrations and reunions. A quick sociological examination of the level of integration brought about by each of the above festivals will help us discover the focal points of the social life of the village. One reason for this approach is that one cannot just consider the whole village as one single community where civil belonging and religious belonging are identical, as is the case in the Canadian parish surveyed by Horace Miner.¹⁷⁾ Furthermore, by clarifying the different communities within the

Religious Monuments in Nagasawa

Seigen temple (Sōtō-Zen sect)

parishioners from Nagasawa 52 farming households
21 non-farming households

Kannon shrine (*dō*): c. 25 members of the *Wasan* (Buddhist hymns)
fraternity

Akiba shrine (*sha*) (located with the Kannon shrine in the compounds
of the Seigen temple)

Suwa shrine (*jinja*) (village Shinto shrine)

Inari shrines 1. A Inari (12 households)

(*hokora*) 2. B Inari (14 households)

3. C Inari: the most numerous (27 households); at the
occasion of the destruction of the shrine by
a typhoon in 1959, the *dōzoku* split into 3
geographical groups: 10, 7 and 10 house-
holds.

4. "Mixed" Inari: D *dōzoku* (7 households)
(shrine rebuilt in 1966)

E *dōzoku* (12 households)

F *dōzoku* (2 households)

G *family* (1 household)

5. H Inari: H *dōzoku* (2 households)

J *dōzoku* (7 households)

K *dōzoku* (6 households)

Inari sanctuaries in private farm yards: c. 30

Batō Kanzeonbosatsu (Kannon with a horse's head): 7

Kōshin stones: 6

Graveyard of the temple: graves of 15 farming households

Private graveyards: c. 40

Roku Jizō: 6 Bodhisattvas

The Religious Calendar

Month	Day	Event	Explanation
Jan.	2	<i>Nenshi</i> (beginning of the year)	Parishioners pay a visit to the village temple.
	3	<i>Nenshimawari</i> (New year's tour)	A Buddhist priest visits houses of his parishioners.
	10	<i>Shohai</i>	Representatives from each <i>ku</i> pay New Year visit to village shrine.
Feb.	First day of the horse	Inari festival	Each <i>dōzoku</i> assembles at one of the 5 common Inari shrines.
March	<i>Sha</i> day	God of the earth festival	Each <i>ku</i> assembles in one house of the <i>ku</i> ; private roads are repaired.
	21	Spring <i>Higan</i>	Visit to the ancestral graves.
July	15	<i>Tenō</i> festival	Offering of first ears at village shrine.
Aug.	5	<i>Segaki</i>	Gathering of parishioners at village temple
	13	<i>Obon</i>	Construction of temporary shelf. Welcome fire.
	14		Recitation of sutra by Buddhist priest in each house.
	15		Sending-off fire.
	16		
Sept.	7	<i>Miko</i> festival	Distribution of fire preventing pebble amulets at village shrine
	<i>Sha</i> day	God of the earth festival	Id. as festival in the spring
	23	Autumn <i>Higan</i>	Visit to the ancestral graves
	27	Great Autumn Festival	Celebrated on a full scale for the last time in 1965
Nov.	17	Akiba festival	Distribution of fire preventing amulets at the Akiba shrine in the temple compounds.
Fraternities <i>kō</i>		Every month on the 17th (except May, June, July Oct., Nov., Dec.) Every month (except June, Oct.)	<i>Wasan</i> fraternity at Kannon shrine in temple compounds. In each <i>ku</i> at a house <i>Nembutsu</i> .

village we will be able to locate the most appropriate one for an investigation of the ancestor cult.

Four levels of social interaction can be distinguished in the village: the village as a whole, the *dōzoku*, the *ku*, and finally the *ie* (household).

In connection with the integration of the village as a whole, Buddhism seems to play no effective role since the allegiance of the villagers is distributed over different temples. It is not the affiliation of these temples to different sects that hinders an eventual community feeling of all the villagers, but the fact that no single temple brings the whole population together on any occasion. If everybody belonged to one temple, the whole village would meet, for instance, at the *segaki* ceremony, and then the situation would greatly resemble that of the above-mentioned parish.

Shinto, however, brings all the *ujiko* (members of a village shrine) together. The first time *ujiko* gather, in a loose way, is on the *Tenō* festival, when each family brings one *shō* (half a gallon) of wheat (or the equivalent in money) to the village shrine. With this contribution some rice wine is purchased and a common meal takes place in the afternoon in which mainly the representatives of each *ku* participate. The principal occasion when the whole village used to meet was at the Great Autumn Festival. A kind of simple float was pulled through the streets (in former times by oxen; some ten years ago the ox cart was replaced by a small truck). The beat of the drums was heard all over the hills. At night vendors would line up their tents in the entrance alley to the shrine and people gathered to enjoy a *kagura* performance. This festival, however,

lost much of its vigor over the past and disappeared altogether in 1965. The main reasons given for its cessation were the lack of interest and collaboration of the younger generation, the impact of TV and the financial burden. The only occasion when the village, as one unit, seems still to come together is the Akiba festival at the Akiba shrine in the compounds of the village temple. The short rite at the shrine is performed by the Buddhist priest, and afterwards there is a common meal at the temple, prepared by nine families, three from each *yatō* (valley).

The unit which is smaller than the village, but which crosses *ku* divisions, is the *dōzoku*. As indicated in the preceding table, the heads of households with the same family name assemble once a year for the Inari festival. Ideally each *dōzoku* possesses its own communal Inari shrine. From the five communal Inari shrines where the *dōzoku* gather, only the fifth one (H Inari of the table) seems to be based primarily on geographical proximity: all the members of the H Inari live in the first *ku* or in the neighbouring section of the second *ku*. In the fourth case, all members, except a few belonging to the E group, live in the former third *ku* (now split into 3 and 8), but the presence of two large *dōzoku* (D and E) makes it resemble much more the three first Inari fraternities. These Inari fraternities are strictly limited to one *dōzoku*: all households with the same family name, even if not related by blood ties, residing in Nagasawa and following farming as an occupation, are *de facto* members. There seems to be no integration of *dōzoku* members on the economic level (every house is self-sufficient), and only the religious expression of what once might have

been a functional group seems to survive.

The *ku* seems to constitute the most natural unit for social life. Each *ku* has its *Nembutsu* fraternity (the big *juzu* [rosary] and the small drum used at the monthly meetings are common property), mainly attended by middle-aged and elderly women. Besides the regular meetings, there are some extraordinary ones: when somebody dies in the *ku*, the *Nembutsu* fraternity will gather for the wake; they also gather on the evening of the funeral, on the 49th day after the death, at next year's *o-bon*, on memorial anniversaries etc. Besides these occasions, the *ku* will gather twice a year at the god of the earth festival; on this occasion private roads are repaired in the morning and a common meal is held in one of the houses of the *ku*.

All fraternities (*Nembutsu*, Inari, god of the earth) meet in the same way. A scroll (common property) representing the 13 Buddhas, a fox or the earth god, as the occasion demands, is hung up in the *tokonoma* during the common meal in the afternoon. The same food that is offered to the guests is offered to the gods in the *tokonoma* in a way that gives the impression that the gods are not merely recipients of an offering but rather that they are also guests. They are treated in the same way as the ancestors in the family shelf. It seems to be a meal with the gods, but not much of a sacred atmosphere surrounds it.

During a *Nembutsu* meeting, *Nembutsu* hymns are chanted and the *juzu* is recited. In the morning of the day the Inari fraternity meets, some villagers pay a visit to the common shrine where rice, vegetables and sake are offered. Until a few years ago a Shinto priest was invited in the morning to recite some

prayers in front of the common shrine with all the *ujiko* of that particular Inari fraternity attending. But with the death of the priest this custom disappeared altogether.

The last and most basic social unit is the *ie* (household). It is the *ie*, of course, which has been the object of different levels of integration (into the village, *dōzoku* and *ku*). The last level of integration, however, is that of the members of the *ie* as one unit, composed of its living and dead members. Of course, there are other integrating processes besides the religious one: e.g. the socialization process of any new born member of the family or the acculturation of the new bride or adopted son to the *kafū* (particular ways of the house). If we look at the list of events, we find three festivals which are strictly familial in character: the spring *higan*, the autumn *higan* and the *o-bon*. Although these may be called Buddhist festivals, no Buddhist priest officiates on these days. On the *higan* the family grave is visited. On the *o-bon* it is the head of the family who welcomes the ancestors and leads them back to the grave. The priest's rapid recitation of a few verses of a sutra is a very short rite in relation to the whole *o-bon*.

The discussion of the religious activities of a given community from the sole point of view of social integration has certain advantages we mentioned earlier. It is, however, not without its biases. Namely, there might exist some religious practices which can not be classified along the lines of social integration. Some of these practices where the magical elements are more dominant do not find their place on a religious calendar.

Until some six or seven years before the present study was

made, there existed a Batōkanzeon fraternity in Nagasawa, composed mainly of cattle raising farmers. Each year on the 19th of February a delegation of three men was sent to a Umakannon temple in Kamioka (Saitama prefecture) for bringing back *emas* (horse amulets). It is interesting to notice that although the number of cattle rose sharply the last few years, this custom fell into disuse.

As already mentioned by the compiler of the *fūdoki*, the two plagues which threaten the life of the villagers most are heavy rains and droughts. The villagers seek protection against them by means of religious practices. For example, protection against storms is hoped for by dispatching a six-man team (two from each *yatō*) on a two-day pilgrimage to the Haruna shrine in Gumma prefecture on the 11th of March. This custom seems also to be a thing of the past. When drought occurs, as for instance in 1964, three men are sent to the Afuri shrine in Isehara (Kanagawa prefecture). They bring back some water and carry it to the two highest spots of the village at the extremities of the two valleys in Tōnokoshi and Mochiizaka. Then to persuade the gods to grant rain, the men pour the water into the two ditches which irrigate the fields of the village.

In the analysis of the social aspects of the more public events enumerated in the religious calendar, the everyday religious practices which go on in the household have been left out of consideration. These practices are mostly concerned with the care of the dead members of the family: customs around the funeral, memorial days and veneration of the ancestors at large. We will treat this aspect in a separate section of this chapter.

The sense of religious belonging

From what we discussed above, it is clear that in Nagasawa, there exists a certain diversity in religious belonging. Each household belongs to a certain number of religious associations : each household is a member of a certain temple, *ujiko* of the village shrine, *ujiko* of an Inari fraternity, member of the earth god fraternity, eventually member of the *Nembutsu* fraternity and perhaps follower of a new religion. This plurality, however, is not a plurality of a faith—excepting for some new religions—but a plurality of different communities, varying in geographical extension, to which each household is a *de facto* member.

These communities can be pictured as concentric circles. Place is of decisive importance in determining one's diverse religious affiliations, if we may call them so. To live in the village is decisive for the double *ujiko* membership (of the village shrine and of the Inari fraternity). Membership to other fraternities is determined by the *ku* to which one belongs; the family temple is on the place where the ancestors are buried and where prayers are said on their behalf. The mere fact of moving to another *ku* and certainly to another village would alter the nature of one's religious affiliation. If one moved far away from the family temple so that no proper visits can be paid to the grave of the ancestors, there would be a danger that they will lapse into the unhappy state of *muenbotoke* (forgotten souls).

The influx of a new population, however, will considerably weaken this kind of religious belonging. A further increase of the non-farming population in the farming sections of Nagasawa

is very likely to occur in the near future. And probably no new community is going to emerge. The newcomers will have their center of work and recreation outside the village and move to a different rhythm of life. They will not be able to participate in a festival taking place on the "first horse day" of February or on the "*sha*-day" before *higan*. Neither will they feel a need for it since these festivals are primarily of an agricultural nature.

A new type of religious membership is already emerging and it is strongly dissociated from the territorial religious belonging. The object of worship and belief becomes more the focus of religious life. Members of the Nichiren-shōshū refuse to be considered *ujiko* of the village shrine, and some of them equally refuse, although farmers, to participate in the Inari meeting because "they do not venerate foxes." They dissociate themselves also from the *Nembutsu* fraternity because "these prayers from the heretical religions (*jashūkyō*) are ineffective." The prayers of their own religion are the only ones which might placate the deceased. The return of the ancestors at *o-bon* is considered to be a "crazy belief." But here the criticism of the Nichiren-shōshū followers is directed only toward the form of religious belief, not against the veneration of the ancestors itself. The veneration of the ancestors is given a greater dogmatic content and is not rejected as is the case with the gods of Shinto, Inari etc. Dogma is used to fight the false gods of Shinto, not the ancestors. False prayers offered for the ancestors are attacked with a fanaticism which partly reflects the high esteem they keep paying to the ancestors. Therefore, it seems that throughout the village the

religion at the level of the *ie*, ancestor worship, has still a high amount of strength, both among adherents of traditional and new religions. The more public cults, however, seem to face a serious crisis.

Public cults are indeed the first to be affected by changes in society. R. Firth formulates the following hypothesis: "The more public the cult, the more closely it is related to cardinal features of the social structure, the more liable it is to change when affected by external forces."¹⁸⁾ This is what seems to be happening in this village. The Great Autumn Festival gradually lost its strength and appeal although one would be led to think that, with the increase of population, the burden of each household to support the festival should be less than it was 40 years ago when the village consisted only of 47 households. Thus the financial burden mentioned above refers mainly to the fact that the hiring of a troupe of actors for the performance of some *kagura* play is not in proportion with the number of spectators, which grew less and less during the last years. Young people are also increasingly unfamiliar with the old musical instruments played at the festival. The public aspect of *o-bon* (namely the *bon* dance) and the Inari fraternity (the priest reading *noritos*) also disappeared. Sociologically speaking ancestor worship in the strict sense does not happen on a social scale larger than the *ie* and is thus more immune to the change of time.

Rites in connection with dead souls

Rites in connection with the dead souls occur under three different forms. Once a year the whole Buddhist parish gathers

at the temple for a common service for the dead ; the *Nembutsu* fraternity of each *ku* is explicitly recognized as a service for the dead ; and finally there are the services at home for the members of the family : the funeral, the yearly *o-bon*, memorial services etc.

Segaki ceremony

Every year around the *o-bon* festival, the whole Buddhist parish gathers at the temple for the *segaki* (literally : “Feeding of the hungry spirits”). In general the ceremony may take place before the *o-bon* as well as after. Its date is fixed by local custom and by considerations of practical convenience. If the temple priest also functions as a school teacher, as for instance is the case at Seigenji, he will decide on a date during vacations or on another free day. Another factor to be considered is the fact that several priests are necessary for the rites to be performed. They come from neighboring temples and assist each other. It seems that the practice of *segaki* is specially connected with the Zen sect.¹⁹⁾

The *segaki* in Nagasawa takes place on the 5th of August. From one o'clock the farmers, men and women start gathering in the garden and in the rooms adjacent to the temple room. All sliding doors have been taken out in order to accommodate the fifty or sixty people who will attend. The entrance to the temple room is blocked by a temporary altar put up for the occasion. Five-colored ribbons and bamboo branches decorate the back of the altar. The faithful never get a frontal view of it since during the whole ceremony the priests turning their back to the main altar fill the space between the temporary

altar and the main altar.

The provisory altar actually is nothing but a more elaborate *shōrōdana* (shelf for the souls) which we find in every house at *o-bon* time. Bamboo branches decorate a wooden scaffold where offerings are placed in front of a few *ihai* (ancestral tablets). During the ceremony which consists mainly of the recitation of sutras, the headpriest offers water and burns incense on the shelf.

The detailed meaning of the rites escapes the parishioners, but the ceremony as a whole undoubtedly bears the character of a service for the dead of the community. However, at three points during the ceremony the public is involved in a direct way. The first one is the sermon which takes place before the ceremony proper starts. This half-hour sermon is the only one during the whole year that the people come to hear. Its content, however, is of a general moralizing kind and holds no reference to the service which follows. In a later chapter we will come back in more detail upon its content. A second time when the parishioners are actively participating is when they get up individually to offer incense. Finally, when the ceremony is over, each one receives a new *tōba* (slat) which he will take home with him to be placed against the provisory altar during the *o-bon*. When *o-bon* is over, this *tōba* will be carried, together with the sending-off fire, to the ancestors. There it will find a place next to the *tōbas* of former years.²⁰⁾

The Nembutsu and the Wasan fraternity

The *Wasan-kō* is the association which gathers on the 17th of every month in the Kannon shrine in the temple's compounds.

From 15 to 25 elderly women gather there under the leadership of the wife of the temple priest for an afternoon of hymns, chants and a common meal. A small candle burns on the bare altar during the hymns; every member brings his own booklet, a little handbell and hammer for accompanying the songs with rhythmic beats.

It is hard to find out what exactly the religious purpose of this group is. On the part of the participants there seems to be a certain reluctance to see these gatherings as a regular service. Most of them agree that they differ from the *Nembutsu* fraternity but the nature of the difference is unclear. When this author insisted upon an answer, they admitted that after all this was also a service. However, such an answer may not exactly be an answer to the question, but rather an attempt to cut short a seemingly meaningless and irrelevant problem.

As we analyzed the content of the most popular among the *Wasan* hymns, we hardly ever found any direct reference to the service for the dead. Most of the hymns were directly Buddhist in inspiration. Some of the titles were: The Right Law, The Birth of the Buddha, Religious Discipline etc.

The *Nembutsu-kō*, however, is different. It cannot be denied that this fraternity also has a significant recreational aspect, but when the participants were asked about the meaning, the answer was rather unanimous in that it was a service for the dead (*kuyō*). This came out rather clearly in the explanation of the scroll representing the 13 Buddhas which is hung up on this occasion. Although only a few informants could explain what the 13 Buddhas meant, the hymns made clear that the scroll's main concern is with the dead. Actually each of the 13

Buddhas is connected with a particular memorial day : the first seven Buddhas for the seven seventh days, followed by the 100th day, the 1st anniversary, the 3rd, the 7th etc.

Two old women who possessed hundreds of handwritten *Nembutsu* hymns (written in *hiragana*) selected independently the most popular and best known among them. The hymn that arose two or three times in slightly different versions was the one (sometimes called *Hakoneyama*, sometimes *Sai no kawahara*) that laments the sad fate of the souls of children who suffer at the banks of the Sai river because nobody offers the proper services for them and who are finally saved by a merciful Jizō. In this *Nembutsu-kō*, however, the person or persons for whom the services are performed, are not clearly present in the minds of the people : one might say that the *Nembutsu* is performed for the deceased members of the *ku*. There are, however, occasionally other *Nembutsu* meetings of the whole *ku*, when the direct attention is focused upon one household on the occasion of a funeral or the memorial day of some particular person.

Family rites

Furthermore there are rites which take place at private houses for one or more of their past members. (Under this aspect they differ from the earth god festival, the Inari fraternity etc.) We call these family rites. If a member of the family passes away, he will be remembered through two kinds of rituals : one series of rituals he will go through only once, so for instance the funeral, the first memorial etc. ; the other kind will be repeated every year (*o-bon* or *higan*).

Funeral. When a person dies the first ceremony which awaits him is the funeral. As soon as a person dies, each household of the *ku* sends two men to lend a helping hand in the preparations of the funeral. Envoys are sent two by two to inform the relatives. They are called *hiyaku*. According to one of the oldest men of the village, these *hiyaku*, since they are in mourning, and thus unclean, can not enter any house and therefore carry their food with them. The remaining helpers prepare the paraphernalia of the funeral, dig the grave, prepare the food for the people who will assemble for the wake or for the *Nembutsu* on the evening of the funeral.

In connection with the funeral there still exist a few old customs directed to ward off devils from the soul of the deceased, to ensure him a safe transit to the other world and to prevent uncleanness from spreading. These are the reasons for edged tools and coins being placed next to the dead body. The author was unable to learn why the coffin had to be nailed, not with a hammer, but with stones from the garden, stones which are buried with the coffin. Perhaps the original purpose was not to pollute the tools of the house through contact with the coffin. When the coffin leaves the house, it is carried around in a circle so that the dead soul cannot find its way back on its own. The close relatives who carry the offerings and the newly-made tablet (*ihai*) do not wear shoes but put on straw sandals without a heel, which they leave behind at the grave. There a purification fire is burned. Moreover, all participants at the funeral receive a small packet of salt (called *nami no hana*) which they throw over their shoulder for purification before entering their own home. It is interesting to

note that none of these prohibitive rites that surround the departed soul at the funeral exist at the *o-bon*. This seems to indicate that the treatment towards the recently deceased and towards the ancestors differs in nature.

The hymns heard on the evening of the funeral are mainly the same as those of a normal *Nembutsu* gathering. One or two exceptions are funeral songs whose words lament the transitoriness of this world and express especially the grief for the death of young people preceding their elders to the grave. For instance the following hymn :

When you fool the transitoriness of this world
Children preceding their parents to the grave
Older brothers, younger brothers
Mother and child still together this morning
Separated now,
Remember that this is the way of the world
And that even kings cannot avoid
The winds of transitoriness.

The hymn is dedicated to the deceased person in question with a special formula.

From the funeral till the 49th day

Until the 49th day after the funeral the soul of the deceased person is believed to wander around the house and to reside on the rooftop. On the 49th day it will leave for the grave. Then once more the *ku* gathers to celebrate the event with a *Nembutsu*. On a certain day before the 49th day, the older people of the *ku* will gather and pay a visit to the new grave.

Until the 7th day (*shonanuka*), in some families until the

49th day, the clothes which were worn by the deceased are hung in some dark corner, facing the North, and are kept wet by continuously pouring water over them. This practice still exists in the majority of the village's families. Another less popular taboo observed during the mourning period forbids the members of the affected family to visit the shrine during a period of 100 days (participation in the Inari festival if falling within the 100 days is also prohibited). In former days when the youth club was still active, this posed some sort of a problem since the clubhouse of the youth club was located within the shrine compound. A middle-aged man, however, reported that the young men could go to the clubhouse even during the mourning period: if they avoided passing under the *torii*, the taboo was not broken.

Another taboo worth mentioning is the one concerned with birth. Mothers who give birth to a child cannot approach the fire place or the well during the first 12 days after birth. But this custom is disappearing as the mothers more and more move out to the hospital at the time of childbirth.

Until the 49th day, the new ancestral tablet, sometimes together with a photograph of the deceased is placed upon a low table under the family shelf. Every day water or tea and rice will be offered to the deceased. During the whole period an incense stick will be burning continuously. A few families, however, reported the following interesting adaptation of this custom. During the year on normal days, water is never offered to the ancestors. Only during the 49-day period water is offered every morning. A rule requiring the water to be taken down at noontime is strictly observed because "the dead would look

into a sea of blood." A further clarification of this strange explanation could not be found. One reason for the sole offering of water (a custom for which no rationalization was given) may be that water is an offering limited to wandering or unsettled spirits or *muenbotoke*, as H. Miura and T. Ōshima disclosed in their separate research work on *muenbotoke*.²¹⁾

From the 49th day till the last memorial service

On the 49th day, the new *ihai* joins those of the ancestors on the family shelf while the soul leaves the house for the grave. From now on, the soul of the deceased will be treated indiscriminately together with the other ancestors except on some special occasions. On this it is extremely difficult to trace common lines between the households. Each household has its own rhythm in commemorating its deceased members. Some faithfully observe the customary memorial services, others skip the services altogether or combine the services of two or three members. Some insist on performing the services until the customary 33rd year. On the other hand, one old woman whose husband had died more than 33 years ago and therefore had already been honored at a final memorial service, expressed the hope that before she herself would die she would like to perform one more service for her husband. Others report that it is customary to perform services on the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 13th, 17th, and 23rd years. In one family the last service had been held on the 13th year.²²⁾

Some of the villagers excuse themselves for not observing the memorial services saying that when there are one or two new dead in the family it is too complicated to observe the

numerical order of the services for the former dead who slip so easily into oblivion. Still others find it too expensive to perform all the customary memorial services and have the same reproach that Hirata Atsutane formulated 160 years ago, namely, that the priests want as many memorial services as possible for obvious financial reasons.²³⁾

Normally memorial services involve the calling of a priest who comes and reads the sutras. As a rule the people of the *ku* and the close relatives are invited. One family, however, found a way to escape the financial costs involved in the calling of the priest without ignoring altogether the 11th and 7th anniversary; they organized a *Nembutsu* gathering without the formal ceremony for the *ku* and close relatives.

The last of the memorial services (the *tomurai-age*) hardly differs from the former ones. This *tomurai-age* seems to symbolize the fact that the deceased, as an individual person faded from the memory of the living and joined the anonymous world of ancestors. This process of forgetting, however, might already have taken place before the *tomurai-age* occurs (as, for instance, in places where the 100th anniversary is observed) or might not have been completed yet, as, for instance, when the *tomurai-age* is set at 13 years.

One single instance, however, might be mentioned of an unusual *tomurai-age* after 13 years. The man in question who had died during a trip far away from home had been cremated and his bones and ashes had been transferred to Nagasawa. At the *tomurai-age*, however, the family decided to give him a proper grave. Thus his bones were dug up, properly cleaned and given a second burial. It was as if this were a spontane-

ous enactment of the practice of the second burial.

O-bon. The first time that the soul who has left the house on the 49th day comes back is on *o-bon*. Thus if a death occurs within 49 days before *o-bon*, the *niibon* (first *o-bon*) is celebrated the year after. This first *o-bon* is celebrated in a special way.

The psychological significance for the family members' reunion with the deceased is obvious. The event is known throughout the village, and the whole *ku* gathers for a recitation of the *Nembutsu*. A white lantern outside marks the houses where the *niibon* is celebrated. The priest who tours the village for the recitation of the sutra does not perform any special rites at a *niibon*, but in parishes which are too big to allow the priest to visit each house during the three days of *o-bon*, he will visit the representatives of the parishioners and only the households where a *niibon* is celebrated that year.

Between the *Segaki* (5 August) and the 13th of August, the graveyard and eventually the little path leading to it are cleaned; bamboo branches are cut and flowers gathered. At noon or in the afternoon of the 13th, a special shelf (*shōrōdana*) is built in almost all of the houses; it is located close to the outside corridor (*engawa*). Sometimes the usual family shelf serves the purpose. In former times the *mizuhagi* flowers had to be cut on a certain spot on a hillside in the village. The ancestral tablets are taken down from the family shelf and placed on the temporary *shōrōdana*. Before them are put *satō* leaves which serve as a natural container for water, and *mizu no ko* (small chopped cucumbers), the *mizuhagi* flowers (symbolizing the ancestors in some regions of Japan), an incense stand, a candle, and a small chime. Melon and other fruits

from the fields also decorate the *shōrōdana*. In the back, behind the ancestral tablets often hangs the scroll of 13 Buddhas or some other scroll, different for each Buddhist sect. Four branches of bamboo form the corners of the *shōrōdana* and are interconnected with a rough cord on which are hung many vegetables. Next to the shelf stand the *tōba* received at the *segaki* and a few branches of hemp. Thus everything is ready for receiving the ancestors.

In the late afternoon or early evening of the 13th of August, the welcome fire is lit. Some villagers go to the graveyard with the small effigies of two horses made of cucumber and hemp. Sometimes noodles are hung over their backs to symbolize the ancestors riding the horses. Others light a fire at the entrance of the farm yard, still others light three fires successively at intervals of a few meters to symbolize the approaching of the ancestors. A rather common practice is the following. One goes to the graveyard, usually no farther away than 100 or 200 meters, with a certain number of straw torches. The first torch is lit at the grave; then at each crossroad a new torch is lit as the old one is extinguished so that the soul may not take the wrong road and wander astray. The last torch before the entrance of the house is used to light a candle; this in turn joins the two small horses on the newly built shelf (*shōrōdana*) inside. A less complicated version of the welcome fire is to carry a burning incense stick back from the grave.

At the sending-off fire, on the morning or evening of the 16th, the procession goes the other way. Villagers having their grave at the temple sometimes must cover quite a distance; thus it happens that the ancestors are sent off by car. With

the flame of the candle, the first of a series of fires (if more than one is made) is lit; the *tōba*, the two mock horses and the main decorations of the *shōrodana* (the bamboo branches and the *mizu no ko*) are bundled together and brought to the cemetery where they are thrown away in the bush. At the last fire, incense sticks are lit and placed before the family graves. The graves are also washed with water someone brought along in a jug.

Once the grave is put into order, the water poured, the incense sticks lit, the flowers planted and the new *tōbas* placed next to the discolored old ones, the silence is broken and the family relaxes returning along the path where the smoke of the smoldering torches still lingers among the trees.

The performer of the rites is generally the head of the household, although this is not a strict rule. During the two days that the ancestors stay in the home, there is a barely perceptible change in the normal routine. The atmosphere is not what Westerners would describe as "sacred." Some elderly informants said that they were happy and felt relaxed that this year again the ancestors arrived safely. Part of the atmosphere surrounding *o-bon* is certainly due to the fact that the event means a holiday (although several farmers were working in the fields) and a break in the type of work done in the fields: the weeding period is mostly finished, and soon after *o-bon* work will start on the autumn vegetables. For the children *o-bon* is no doubt a great affair. The charm of the welcome and sending-off fires fascinates them in a special way. The rice dumplings of the 14th and the red rice (*sekihan*) of the 15th mark the *o-bon* as festive days. Furthermore the *shōrō-*

dana is much more the size of the children so that they can satisfy their curiosity. Whereas the ordinary family shelf is high and dark, the *shōrōdana* is low and bright; they can playfully clap their hands in prayer, ring the chime and make offerings to the *hotoke* (dead).

On the 14th or 15th the priest comes around to say prayers for the ancestors. But this is only a short rite lasting no more than 3 or 4 minutes to which very few people pay attention while the lady of the house is occupied with preparing refreshments and the fee for the priest.

The offerings on the 14th and 15th of August are made to the ancestors in the morning, at noon and at night. Rice, water, two pieces of hemp and three sticks of incense are offered. In many houses special offerings are made to the *muenbotoke* (wandering spirits): one piece of hemp and sometimes some rice is placed under the shelf. This is the only time of the year a special offering is made to the *muenbotoke*.

During the *o-bon* no services or ceremonies take place in the temple, except on the 13th when the priest performs a lonely ceremony of purification of the graves by sprinkling *mizu no ko* over them. He also pays special attention to the *muenbotoke tōba* at the entrance of the graveyard.

The *o-bon* has sometimes been compared to the Christian holy day of All-Souls' Day which occurs the 2nd of November. However, if a general comparison has to be made, then a parallel should be drawn between the *segaki* and All-Souls' Day rather than between *o-bon* and All-Souls' Day. Except for the visit to the grave, the Christian holy day is not so much a family affair as a community affair, and herein lies its simi-

larity with the Japanese *segaki*. In the West, where institutionalized religion has lost its vitality, the commemorative day of the dead is also the highpoint of the year. Lawrence Wylie writes about a village in the Vaucluse (France): "The most solemn occasion of the year is the celebration of All-Souls' Day, which unites the family about the tomb. Formal religion is given formal recognition, but the deepest religious feelings relate to the family."²⁴) However, the manner in which the Japanese family becomes the sole instrument for communion with the dead probably has no parallel in the West.

For the Japanese family the *o-bon* is the highlight of the year. During these days, each house becomes its own temple so to speak: a temporary sacred place, the altar is built where "the sacred" will stay during the time of *o-bon*. The members of the household themselves perform the rites.

Higan and daily worship. *Higan* offers the least institutionalized aspect of the veneration of the dead. It is an occasion for the family to reunite and to pay a visit to the grave, but no rites are performed. Family visits are also more facultative than at *o-bon*. One older man uttered some complaints about the younger generation which is forgetting the meaning of the visits to the grave. "They lack the necessary recollection," he said. They merely "come" to the grave, they really do not "visit" it. The graveyard is cleaned but no special decorations are made for the family shelf. The day is marked by the eating of rice dumplings (*o-hagi*) which may also be offered to the ancestors.

As to everyday offerings, let us first say that every house (except two newly established non-farming branch families)

investigated by the author had a family shelf. In all of them—with three exceptions—daily offerings to the ancestors were made. The three exceptional informants admitted that they were not very devoted and that they limited themselves to offerings on special occasions, which sometimes meant two times a month. However, in all the families gifts are always shared with the ancestors. Normally breakfast is shared with the ancestors: rice and tea is offered (only two households offer water). An incense stick is burned and the little chime is rung. No prayers are said except in the case of new religions (Risshōkōseikai, Nichiren-shōshū): here sutras are recited. The offerings are taken away the following morning when the new offering is made. The old one is disposed of in different ways: they are thrown away or given to the cat or the pigs.

In some houses other offerings besides those to the ancestors are made: on the 1st and the 15th of every month the gods on the Shinto shelf also receive some offerings, and occasionally the Inari in the garden receive a share.

II. Social Aspects of Ancestor Worship

The best studied aspect of the ancestor cult is the social one. This problem should be discussed within the range of four general topics. We shall examine: first, who is worshipped; second, who is worshipping; third, how this form of worship and belief is transmitted from one generation to the next; and finally what this kind of worship means for the community (this last point is the functional problem of the ancestor cult).

The Object of Worship

Many scholars have drawn attention to the fact that ancestor worship involves more than worship of ancestors. D. Plath argues that in Japan at least three categories are involved: first, the departed (divided into household members who died recently and non-members whom the living chose to honor); second, the ancestors proper who are all departed members of a household that have been expunged from living memory, and third, the outsiders (homeless souls).²⁵⁾ As we have seen, these three sets of souls are clearly distinguished on the occasion of *niibon*.

Hirata Atsutane has drawn four distinctions among the world of the deceased worshipped in the home: 1) the first ancestors, 2) the generations of ancestors following those first ancestors, 3) "relations," namely, the brothers of the ancestors following those first ancestors and the near relations of the mother, 4)

those souls who fall out of these categories but who are worshipped for some special reason.²⁶⁾

Yanagita Kunio distinguishes between the ancestors in the common acceptance of the word and the ancestors who are worshipped as the object of affection.²⁷⁾ Ariga Kizaemon also speaks about some cases where double ancestors are involved.²⁸⁾ As can be seen from these previous studies, the concept of ancestor is an elastic one whose dimensions can be stretched or shortened for different reasons. Furthermore, ancestor worship in the strict sense can be combined with the remembrance of other deceased members or non-members of the household.

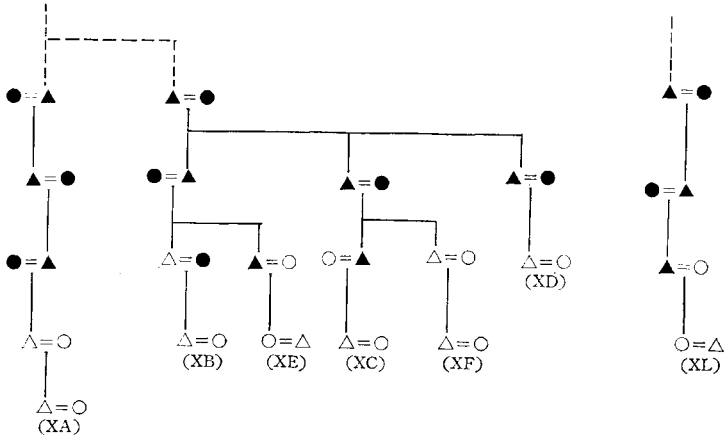
From all the ancestors one has, only some come into consideration for worship. If we look back into the past, practically all members of a *dōzoku* descend from the same ancestors. How does this common ancestry relate to the practice of ancestor worship in the case of Nagasawa? This is the first point we want to examine.

We selected two *dōzoku* (X and Z) which we investigated thoroughly from the above point of view. We chose these two because the first one, X, was a small *dōzoku* whose members were concentrated in one *ku*, a factor that might foster a strong feeling of togetherness expressed on the religious level. The second *dōzoku*, Z, we selected because the *honke-bunke* (stem family-branch family) relation was more ramified and composed of a greater specification of *giri* on occasions like marriage ceremonies etc.

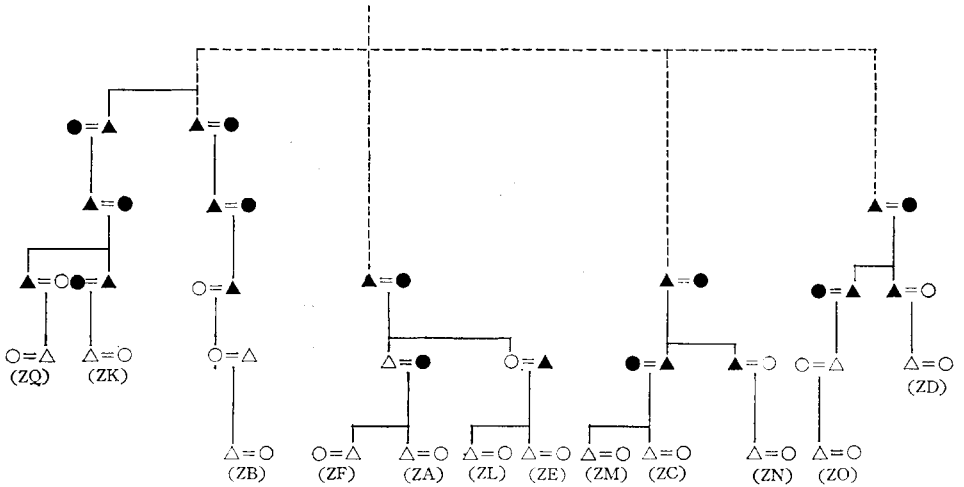
Composition of the two *dōzoku*

The two *dōzoku* under discussion lack any economic func-

X Dōzoku



Z Dōzoku



▲=● : dead household heads+wives
 △=○ : living " " " or succeeding couple

X *dōzoku* = D *dōzoku* from the "mixed" Inari (cf. p. 16-a)
 Z " = the first third of the split C Inari (cf. id.); ZF, ZL are non-farming households

tion, and they have no inner structure that goes beyond a stem family-branch family relationship.²⁹⁾ The stem family certainly still enjoys a prestige as does the *sōhonke* (general stem family). In *dōzoku* X, for instance, the claim of two houses (XA and XB) to be the *sōhonke* is a latent point of friction; some of the informants were eager to know which house had been indicated by others as the *sōhonke*. Occasionally where the help of people outside of the household is required, members of the *ku* rather than the *dōzoku* give assistance. But there seems to be some difference on this point between nowadays and before the war. In the case of X, however, this means that *de facto* the whole *dōzoku* is mobilized plus three members of *dōzoku* Z who live in the same *ku*. The two non-farmer members of the *ku* collaborate practically only through monetary contributions.

In the case of Z, however, the situation is more complicated. The *ku* consists of 7 Z farmers (A, B, E, N, O, K, Q), 3 non-Z farmers, 20 non-farmers (three years ago they numbered only 10) among whom are 2 Z households (F, L); 3 Z farmers (C, D, M) live in the *ku* where X dominates. As already noticed before, ZF and ZL are not members of the Inari fraternity.

On the occasion of funerals, marriages and festivals, contribution and participation is expected between a first degree stem family and branch family, no matter how many generations ago the branch family might have been established. This is, for instance, the case with ZA and ZD. Thus usually the stem family does not have any obligations toward a second degree branch family and vice versa: this is the relationship, for instance, between ZA and ZM. *Ku* membership, however, over-

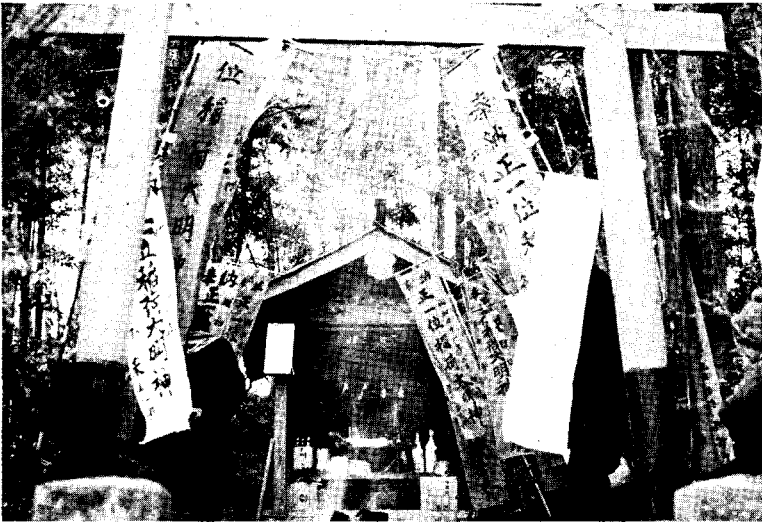
rules this. When the second degree branch family is situated in the same *ku* then the obligations do exist. Thus ZA does not have relations with the second branch family ZM of the other *ku*, but it does have them with ZQ, because of their mutual residence in the same *ku*.

Dōzoku membership is not an exclusive matter of blood relationship, as Nakane Chie among others has pointed out.³⁰⁾ This is clear from the case of XI, who is a member of the X *dōzoku* although not related to it by blood ties. Four generations ago the line came from another *dōzoku* and changed its name and affiliation to X and no family member ever married someone of the X *dōzoku*. However, the main part of the *dōzoku* is somehow related through kinship ties. How far do these kinship ties extend?

One way of solving this problem, besides asking the simple question: "Whom do you consider to be a relative among these people?" is to study the distribution of what is improperly called *kaimyō*. (*Kaimyō* normally means the posthumous name written on ancestral tablets or *tōbas*. In Nagasawa, however, the word is also used for paper *ihai*.) They are distributed to relatives only when upon investigation it appears that the distribution for the two *dōzoku* is different. When a death occurs in the XA *sōhonke*, *kaimyō* are distributed to the three main branch families (XB, C, D). When a death occurs in any of the branch families (from B until F), they distribute them to all members of the *dōzoku*, except XL who is not considered a relative. XL in its turn gives a *kaimyō* to its own stem family of four generations ago but none to the other members of the *dōzoku*. Thus all members of *dōzoku*



Kōshin stones



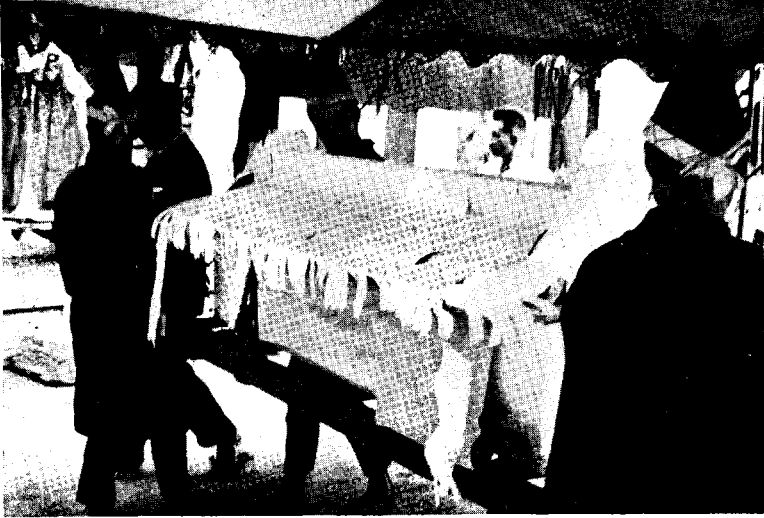
Inauguration of the "mixed" *Inari* shrine



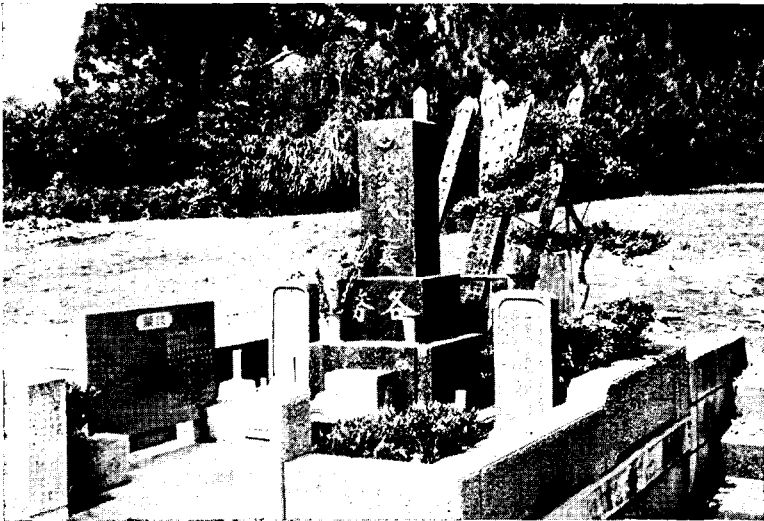
Monthly *Nembutsu* meeting; rhythm is made by the drums and small bell.



Monthly *Wasan* fraternity in the Kannon shrine, at left the wife of the Buddhist priest leading the group.

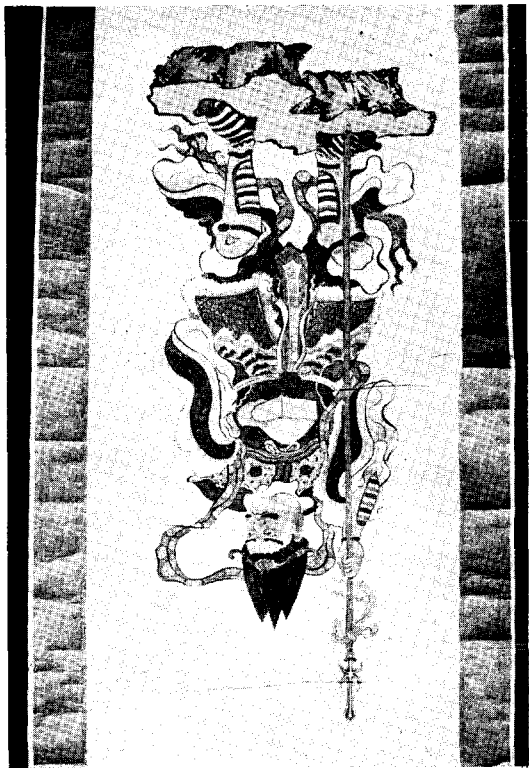


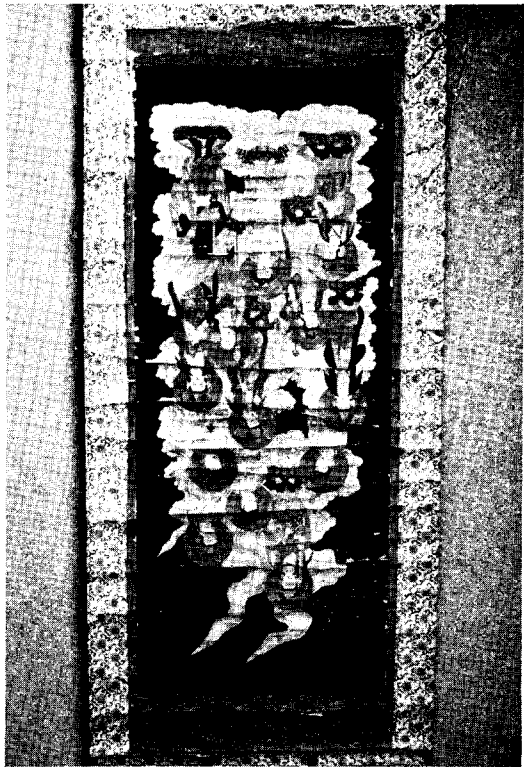
Funeral. The coffin bearers walk the coffin around three times; notice the straw sandals worn by them and the close relatives.

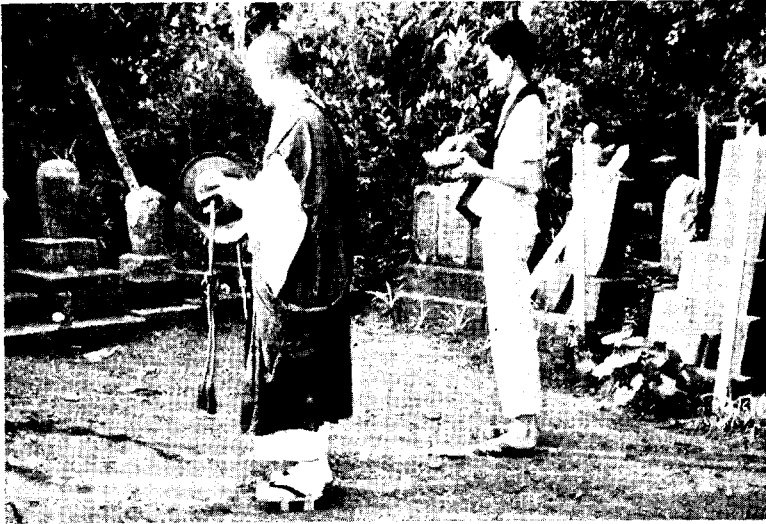


New tombstone at temple graveyard. In the back, *tobas*; at right and left of central stone, old tomb stones. At left marble plate with names of deceased children.

God-of-the-earth scroll







Purification ceremony at graveyard on the eve of *o-bon*



Bamboo branches, the mock horses,
mizuhagi flowers and *mizunoko*



Niibon meals for death which occurred last year. At right *shōrō-dana*; the *tōbas* are standing at extreme right. Photo on low shelf in center is for recently deceased (within 49 days before *o-bon*). Her *niibon* will be held next year.



Shōrōdana. 13 Buddhas' scroll in the background. On right old *ihai*, in middle new *ihai* and *ihai* box. In background at left *kaimyō*.



Distribution of *tobas* at end of segaki ceremony

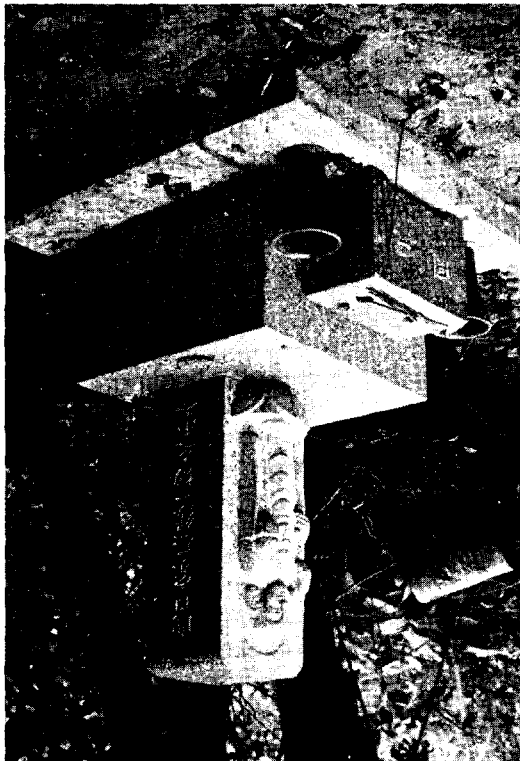


Procession to the grave with the sending-off fire

New grave. Long *toba* is burial *toba*; 7 small *tobas* stand in center; at left of them an *ihai* of the deceased.



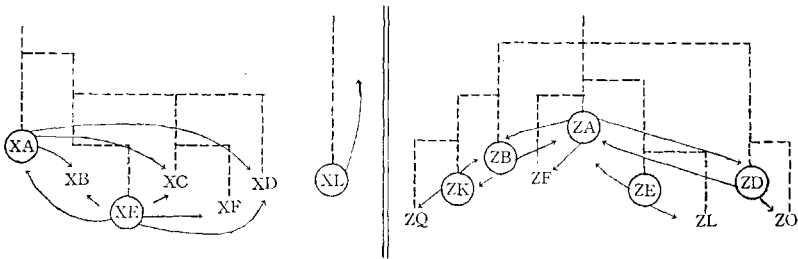
Muenbotoke grave in form of *Boddhisattva* in private graveyard



X, with the exception of XL, consider themselves relatives. This wide range of kinship consciousness may be rather exceptional and may be due to the limited number of houses involved and to the geographic proximity: XA and XB or XE and XF would probably think of each other as strangers if it wasn't for the fact that they are neighbors.

In the case of Z, *kaimyō* are distributed to first degree stem families and first degree branch families: they are exchanged, for instance, from ZD to ZA and ZO, or from ZB to ZK and ZA. Thus the horizontal kinship consciousness is not so wide in this *dōzoku* although the awareness of common ancestry is alive.³¹⁾

Distribution of *Kaimyō* in *Dōzoku* X and Z



Reckoned ancestors and worshipped ancestors

How does the range of consciousness relate to the range of worship? Does ancestor worship include only the worship of clan ancestors of that part of the *dōzoku* which is bound by blood relationship? In general the branch house does not worship because it is felt not to have the right to worship the

ancestors of the stem family. This is the general rule. It is indeed quite understandable that a long established branch family with its own line of ancestors venerates its own dead. But what happens in a newly established branch family? Is there a blank period of no worship, as there is a blank period of no affiliation to any temple until the first death in the family occurs?

When asked which ancestors were venerated at the home of XD (the grandfather who had founded the house, had died three years ago), I was told: "Well, since we are only the second generation, the ancestors of this house are the ones of the stem family." In other words, this branch family was still too young to have "ancestors." In the case of XF where the first generation is still alive, there were no ancestors as yet, the informants said. The case of XC is of interest. To the same question the grandmother of the second generation said: "Since this year we had the last memorial service for the founder of the house, we now have an ancestor." The following indicates that the ancestors of the stem family were not taken into consideration. All the first five children of the same informant had died at a very young age. She had been told that these frequent deaths in the family were caused by the curse of some black cat. At the author's suggestion that the deaths might have been caused from punishment inflicted by some ancestor, she immediately rejected this possibility "because the house did not yet have any ancestors."

This conception of the ancestors starting with the first generation of the branch family confirms what Yanagita Kunio says about the pride of the individual in *his own* ancestors and his

longing to be numbered among them some day.³²⁾ However, although the founder is the starting point from which one begins to count one's ancestors, he is generally not venerated separately (although Hirata Atsutane distinguishes them clearly in Japan). In this respect Chinese ancestor worship differs fundamentally from that of Japan.³³⁾

Furthermore, it seems that a horizontal link between two or more families based upon the consciousness of worshipping the same ancestors does not exist. As noted before, geographical proximity is a factor of more weight than worship of the same ancestors. Thus rather than unite the clan, the practice of ancestor worship partitions it into small sections. The scope of these sections does not go beyond the stem-branch family relationship of two houses: for a certain time a newly erected branch family may consider the ancestors of the stem family as its own. But even after having acquired one's own ancestors, the consciousness of descending from this particular stem family persists through generations and resists even a change of name as in the case of XL. But a second degree branch family (XF) will never venerate the ancestors of a second degree stem family (XB). Thus the line of the worshipped ancestors may run through many generations of families. The line will not be broken when the line of blood ties is broken (when an adopted couple inherits the house). Its limit and barrier is the former social unit, the house, the stem family from which this branch family originated. The boundaries of the household in its beginning set the boundaries of the beings to be worshipped: the founders of the house (it is worthwhile noticing that Hirata Atsutane in his definition of "relations" does not include the

brothers of the first ancestors : they have indeed no relation to the new house — their birthplace is the stem family). Its boundaries in the following generations are equally determinant : all those who endeavored for the continuity of the house, whatever the line of succession might have been : thus they include all the household heads and their wives and, eventually, some of the other relatives born in the house.

It is clear therefore that this kind of ancestor worship does not only foster a vertical consciousness of the past. It stretches also into the future. Since the household as such is the center which gives shape to the ancestor cult once a household has been established, the worst calamity that can occur is its disappearance. This imperative for continuity has already been stressed by many authors.³⁴⁾ There is, however, no urgency to establish branch houses. There is no offense in not establishing a branch family, but it is very reprehensible to allow one's house to die out.

Thus while there is considerable consensus as to the upper limit of the line of ancestors to be venerated, there exists agreement concerning its lower limit. Most informants (with one exception) agree, however, that a person at his death is not immediately considered an ancestor. Most common is the thought that some time has to elapse before one's father or grandfather is considered an ancestor. Some start to count from the grandfather on (this is not surprising in stem families with a long tradition), others will say that they do not include in the category of ancestors people whom they have known personally.

Ancestral souls and other souls

Among all the families we interviewed, only two were without *hotoke* (ZF, ZL): both young, non-farming, newly established households. (They usually celebrate *o-bon* at their stem family since they have no ancestors yet to come home). All other families have besides the ancestors a series of other *hotoke* (deceased).

To this category belongs any offspring from the ancestors who dies in the house without marrying out such as infants or unmarried adults. They might or might not receive a regular *ihai*. Mortuary tablets for children seem not to be kept as long as ancestral tablets: although several houses had 150-year-old ancestral tablets, none of the mortuary tablets for children dated back more than two generations.

Some indications lead us to believe that the distinction between ancestors and the other dead has become more pronounced in recent years. This is manifested on the family shelf and at the graves in the following way. In the last two or three years, several houses bought a new gold-lacquer *ihai* box. This box is so partitioned that it can contain two rows of small wooden tablets. On these wooden tablets, several families may have transcribed the posthumous names of the old *ihai*. In front of the two rows of *ihai* is a black lacquer tablet with the following golden inscription: *ie senzo daidai reii* (the souls of all the ancestors of the house) and *muen issai no reii* (all wandering souls). In this second half of the box, preserved for the *muenbotoke*, we found exclusively the tablets of children. At the grave this same distinction is kept: the tombstone is

reserved for the ancestors proper, next to it is erected a marble plate on which the names of the children are engraved.

These *muenbotoke* form a very intriguing question. Why does such a category exist? Who enters this category? How does this category differ from those of the ancestors? What is it that these *muenbotoke* have no *en* (relation) with? For each of these questions more than one answer exists. All over Japan there exists a variety of conceptions about these *muenbotoke*, and it was our assumption that these varieties were regional ones. But it was surprising to find that a variety of interpretations existed even within the same village.

Among the different opinions concerning the *muenbotoke*, it was rather easy to distinguish those informants who merely tried to offer some general theoretical explanation aimed at satisfying the impertinent curiosity of the inquirer, from those who revealed some significant and relevant meaning for the informant in question.

The first respondents almost invariably conceived of *muenbotoke* as souls of persons who died a violent death or as forgotten souls which are not taken care of by proper services (*kuyō*). But these were rather theoretically possible cases without much relevance for the inhabitants of Nagasawa. Nobody presented a concrete case except the priest of the temple. He told about a Korean electrician who had died in the village during repair work on a high tension wire and had been buried in the graveyard classified as *muenbotoke* together with the souls of cats. This case was thus the only example of a wandering soul without relation to some living family. It is worthwhile to note that Hirata Atsutane does not include in

the souls to be worshipped souls without any connection with the house.³⁵⁾ Yanagita Kunio holds the same view that in former times distinctions between ancestors and *muenbotoke* were not existent: everybody became ancestor.³⁶⁾

A second kind of *muenbotoke* has a close connection with the household. As each house has its own ancestors, each house also has its own *muenbotoke*. They are remembered on *o-bon* in most houses. *O-bon* is, as one old woman put it, the festival when the ancestors are remembered “up until the *muenbotoke*.” As we mentioned earlier, the word *matsuru* (venerate) does not involve more than the offering of special gifts to the *shōrō-dana*. In one case, however, we found that in 1966 just prior to *o-bon*, a special stone statuette of a Bodhisattva had been erected at the family graveyard for the equivalent of \$115. The family in question had been plagued during several years with deaths and sickness, and the lady of the house, a Nichiren-shōshū follower, although the family religion was Sōtō-shū, had thought that some of the *muenbotoke* of the house might have been instrumental in sending these troubles. Therefore she ordered this statue set up to pacify the *muenbotoke* of this particular house. At *o-bon* the Sōtō priest came and “put a soul” into the statue by drawing two eyes with black ink.³⁷⁾

A third conception of *muenbotoke* found in three houses that is close to the second one but more precise, considered *muenbotoke* all children or even older persons who die before marriage. Yanagita Kunio also mentions this kind in his study.³⁸⁾ Some informants were rather explicit and affirmed that persons who die a violent death but who are married are not counted among the *muenbotoke*, because “*engumi ga aru*”

(“they are married,” a play on words with the character *en* meaning relation, found in both *muenbotoke* and *engumi*). But children, even if their parents are still alive, are *muenbotoke* because “*engumi ga nai*” (“they are not married”).

On the other hand there were some families who made no offerings for *muenbotoke*. Astonishment was their reaction when they were confronted with the question: are the souls of infants called *muenbotoke*? Many were also ignorant of the existence of *muenbotoke tōba* at the temple graveyard. This might be partially explained by the fact that the great majority of the inhabitants have no connection with the graveyard of the temple.

If we consider the different varieties of *muenbotoke*, we must conclude that they are not generally thought of as harmful, hungry spirits (*gaki*), except in one case. They are identified with a particular house. In some way this category of souls did not follow the normal course of human life. Everybody expects to become an ancestor and to be remembered by his offspring or by those who eventually take the place of direct offspring. Thus those who failed to reach this point of veneration are the abnormal cases: the souls of those who failed to marry and thus failed to lay the basis for their own path to ancestorhood by succeeding the office of household head (in the case of the eldest son) or by establishing a branch house or entering another household as adopted son or as bride (for the other siblings).

Besides the ancestors proper and the *muenbotoke*, there are the souls of the recently departed. Sociologically speaking, they do not differ from members of the household who expect to

become ancestors or who are *muenbotoke*. It is these souls who are the subject of the memorial days and the *niibon*.

The last category of souls who are on the fringe of veneration are those relatives whose so-called *kaimyō* are kept on the family shelf or whose name is recorded in the family booklet (*kakochō*) and who will ideally be remembered every month on the anniversary day of their death. These souls are not venerated at *o-bon*, although their *kaimyō* are also put out on the *shōrōdana*, but they may be remembered at the daily offering in the morning.

We found, however, very few *kakochō*: only two were opened on the proper day in the family shelf. In the other houses, if there was any, its whereabouts was not exactly known. One lady said — and she was a rather precise informant — that, although the house did not have any *kakochō*, she remembered the death anniversaries of her own relatives and those of her husband.

If in the conception of the *muenbotoke* personal interpretations play a great role, personal devotion has even a greater one because of the range of freedom for the commemorations of departed relatives. The *kaimyō* may be disposed of at the fire of the year god, the 15th of January, or on the occasion of the sending-off fire of *o-bon*, but more often they are kept for years and not disposed of. It even happens that they are moved together with the ancestral tablets to the new family shelf in a new house. When asked why they were kept, the answer was: “They are things we received, so to burn them would be improper.” Each *kaimyō* does of course not have an equal affective value (*kaimyō* of the father or mother of

the bride are evidently more precious than others). Some informants said the veneration of *kaimyō* has a symbolic meaning and the same value as a visit to the grave of the person in question, a substitute for a tiring trip if the grave is at a far distance from the residence.

In one house we analyzed *kakochō* established only two years ago from the *kaimyō* which had been piling up for many years.³⁹⁾ From the twenty entries, three could not be identified and the others were direct relatives of the old couple or of the actual household head and his wife: the list was as bilateral as possible, but only for two generations (this was a second generation branch house). Even three rather distant relatives of the two unmarried wives were on the list: a nephew of the grandmother and a niece of the wife of the head of the household and her daughter. But for lack of comparative material, we are unable to say how far this *kakochō* is unusual. R. Smith also found that only some 2 per cent of the houses he surveyed possessed a *kakochō*, and that they were, with almost no exception, completely out of date.⁴⁰⁾

The Subject of Worship

Our informants did not only have trouble in identifying *kaimyō*, but very often they could not identify ancestral tablets older than two generations. Frequently, after we had explained what the purpose of our investigation was, we were referred to the older woman of the household. (That is the reason why the greater part of our informants were older women). She is supposed to know best, since she is informally in charge of

the offerings on the family shelf.

However, when we came to the problem of identifying tablets, she sometimes lost her poise, because the person in the family who supposedly knows most about the genealogy is the grandfather (which would probably mean the direct successor to the line) — the grandmother if her husband were an adopted son.⁴¹⁾

This creates a particular situation in the household. Since the person who cares daily for the offerings to the ancestors is not the one who knows most about them, he is more impersonal in the performance of this task.⁴²⁾ Thus it is only in a very indirect way that the whole family worships the ancestors. It is only occasionally that the husband takes over the task or that the children are associated with it. This is one more indication that the ideology connected with ancestor worship in Japan does not have its focus on blood ties; otherwise we might have expected that the privilege of caring for the ancestors would be reserved for the direct successor.

Another aspect is the following: the more the soul of a deceased person approaches the status of ancestor, the more it becomes the sole task of the household members to care for it. At the funeral, the members of the household are literally overwhelmed by friends, relatives, people from the neighborhood who all pay their tributes; the leading role is played by the priest. The night of the funeral and on the 49th day, close relatives gather once more with the *Nembutsu* fraternity, but their number is much smaller than on the day of the funeral. Thus gradually the participation of outsiders will decrease with the growing lapses of time between the memorial days. If the services are held as scheduled, the priest continues to play

a reduced role and the main part is taken over by the members of the household. Once the last memorial service is accomplished and the soul has presumably become an ancestor, only the household is really expected to take care of the ancestors. As Hirata Atsutane says: "The person who worships his ancestors' souls is therefore the priest of his ancestors, which means, he is the staff or the attendant of the souls of his ancestors."⁴³ He alone can prevent them from lapsing into the unhappy state of *muenbotoke*.

The Transmission of Ancestor Belief

Any rite is in some way the expression of a belief. The relation between those two phenomena — ritual and belief — pertains to the study of the symbolic forms of religion. But rites and belief have a social dimension in time also: they have to be transmitted from one generation to the next.

In the case of Nagasawa this transmission of belief can possibly occur at three places: at the temple (through the yearly sermon at the *segaki* ceremony), in the *Nembutsu* fraternity (through the content of the hymns), and at home (through participation in the rites).

The temple

Every year the parishioners (almost every household is represented) gather for the *segaki* ceremony where they listen to the sermon of the priest or some guest priest. The analysis of three sermons (the sermons of two consecutive years at the Seigen temple and one at another Sôtô temple in Tokyo)

showed that practically nothing is said about either *segaki*, *o-bon* or the devotion to the ancestors. The topics were of a very general moralizing nature : the beauty of labor, the necessity of becoming Buddha during one's life, advice on the education of children, thankfulness, the decrease of faith in the world etc. Sutras are not quoted, and if any authority is invoked to strengthen the message, proverbs or popular wisdom are referred to or examples from *faits divers* from the newspapers are taken.

The only reference to *o-bon* was an explanation given in connection with the scroll which is usually hung up in the *shōrōdana* during *o-bon*. The priest explained how the three Buddhas represented there are characteristic of the Sōtō sect. Thus the temple does not seem to be instrumental in instructing people how to care for their ancestors.

The Nembutsu fraternity

The *Nembutsu* hymns are loaded with references to the services for the dead (*kuyō*). Not all of them are, however. Some hymns relate the history of some famous temple or narrate the temptations of the Buddha during his ascetic exercises; others are simply prayers for prosperity or songs about the transitoriness of the world (lamenting the death of young people, comparing man's existence to the existence of a flower etc.). Almost all of those related to the dead, however, stress the necessity of the services and the saving power of the *Nembutsu*. The most popular are the songs about the troubles that the souls of young children encounter at the *Sai no kawa* (the river of the nether world). The souls of children who

died ten years of age are condemned to pile up pebbles at the *Sai no kawa* and thus gather merits (*ekō no tō*). They are disturbed by devils but finally rescued by a Jizō who declares himself to be their parent in the underworld. The real cause of the tribulations of these poor souls is the fact that they are neglected by their real parents who are still alive. Thus attainment of reward — or rather peace after death — depends upon the religious activity (religious service, recitation of the *Nembutsu* etc.) of the family members. It is exactly this aspect of the power and effectiveness of the prayers for the dead that members of Nichiren-shōshū fiercely oppose in the old religions while maintaining the superiority of their own religion. On the other hand, the followers of the traditional religions accuse these members of the worst impiety: namely by not reciting *Nembutsu* to neglect the ancestors. They even accuse them falsely of burning their ancestral tablets and of claiming no *hotoke* (the followers of Nichiren-shōshū indeed refuse to call dead persons *hotoke*).

There is, however, one short hymn which seems to reflect this conception of the afterlife where everybody is rewarded according to his behavior in this world.

If you have a heart (pure)
like the full moon
you will not go to the
land of pain, but
to the pure land
of eternal bliss.

The belief in rebirth is taken less seriously than the certitude that everything is transient:

Man is born alone
and alone he dies ;
he has no friends on his road
and won't come back to
this world.
I pray for my
afterlife.

Thus the conceptual content of the *Nembutsu* hymns does not go much beyond the fact of stressing the importance of prayers for the departed, lest they suffer in the afterlife. There seems also to be a great stress put upon the fact that children under a certain age have a different lot awaiting them after death. The only reference made to the doctrine of rebirth is a negative one expressing disbelief in it.

This is, in our opinion, the doctrinal content of the most well known *Nembutsu* hymns in the community. These songs, however, have only formative influence upon the older section of the population and, as we will see later, the older members themselves take a rather distant attitude toward any conceptualization of the afterlife as expressed repeatedly in the songs.

The household

Finally we have to consider what happens in the household. During the interviews we asked if anything concerning the proper attitude towards the ancestors was the object of instruction to the children. The answer was unanimous : " No, they learn these practices naturally." This " naturally " was precisioned by one informant by the words *mìyōmimane ni* (by imitation). Conscious and explicit instruction does not take

place. The children learn by participation in and imitation of the rites that they see their parents perform. At the welcome fire during *o-bon*, a boy of six eager to help the author said that the *hotokesama* were coming, and the writer watched him several times playfully fold his hands and bow before the *shōrōdana* saying in a loud voice: "*Hotokesama arigatō gozaimashita* (Thank you)." After placing a flower on the incense stand, he exclaimed to his grandmother: "*Hotoke wa kawaisō da kara* (The dead souls are pitiful)." Another spontaneous reaction was reported by the mother of a student of the middle school who, without being told when he came home with his graduation diploma held it in front of the ancestors' shelf and proudly announced: "Grandfather, I got it!"

Using the same term (*miyōmimane*) as the above-mentioned informant, Hirata Atsutane also explains the importance of the importance of the example of the parents: the parent is the instructor when his actions are imitated by the child.⁴⁴⁾ Ritual training proceeds in the same way in China.⁴⁵⁾

Thus the atmosphere in the house never loses this presence of the "others" — the *hotoke*, the ancestors — and this is the way in which the social values of respect and deference and gratitude toward others is fostered. The *hotokesama* are always there, and even if all other doctrinal contents concerning the fate of the ancestors or their form of existence have considerably weakened — if ever they were strong — this core of consciousness remains: they cannot be ignored and require some attention. All the actions in front of the family shelf (offerings, sharing of gifts etc.) express this constant awareness and attention. This performance of the rites is more

enduring than their eventual doctrinal interpretation which might change over the course of time. As Radcliffe-Brown explains: "... it is action or the need of action that controls or determines belief, rather than the other way about. The actions themselves are symbolic expressions of sentiments."⁴⁶⁾

We can conclude that in the absence of any explicit verbal instruction, it is not so much a continuity of doctrine which is obtained through the performance of the rites, as a continuity of the sentiments expressed through action. This communication or continuity of sentiments or attitudes would be ineffective if some of the people involved in the rites were merely onlookers. This seems to me clearly evident during the *segaki* ceremony at the temple. The whole ceremony leaves the parishioners very much uninvolved except for the one moment when they have to come forward and offer incense. In the household, however, everybody is in his own way participating in the offerings, the sharing of gifts, the building of the *shōrōdana*, the kindling of the welcome fire etc.

The continuity of ancestor worship to a great extent depends upon the composition of the family in the following way. Practically all households in Nagasawa are households of three generations. Values and practices connected with the ancestor cult are conveyed to the children mainly by the older generation of the grandparents. For each individual born, his family of orientation is made up of these three generations. Later when he will marry and found his own family, he will become member of procreation. In this respect the successor and the children who are non-successors find themselves in different situations. For the successor the location of his family of

orientation and of his family of procreation is the same: his native house. The other siblings, on the contrary, will leave the native house and enter another house (as bride or adopted husband) or start a branch house. The successor, even when he marries and creates his own family of procreation remains with respect to ancestor worship as a member of the family of orientation, because it is the older generation that usually takes care of the ancestor rites. This is clearly the case when the young generation is allowed to pray in private to the *Gohonzon* of Nichiren, as long as they do not interfere with the official worship in the house. Two such cases exist in Nagasawa. The successor is much more exposed than his siblings to the example and practice of ancestor worship, first by his grandparents, then by his parents. He might be well over fifty years of age and his wife might have been for some twenty years in the household when they incur the sole responsibility for the ancestor cult.

The situation of the sibling who established a new branch house is different. At the beginning there is a blank period during which the house is without ancestors. Other factors operate here for taking up the custom of ancestor worship. First there is the general social pressure of complying with the established customs. But still stronger is the personal stimulus of the continuity of the household. The prospect of future generations living on the same property and in the same house might be incentive enough for the second generation to guard against the ancestors falling into oblivion.

However, let us consider the following hypothetical case of a branch family which establishes itself in an apartment in

Tokyo. In modern Japanese society geographical mobility is high. An apartment dweller of the city does not have the stable perspective described above. The children, even before they marry, very often leave the home for long periods (boarding at student or worker dormitories), thus considerably shortening their exposure to their family of orientation. Since this family of orientation will also consist only of two generations (parents and children), the successor will probably leave the house like all the other children. Let us suppose that the third generation, the grandparents, are still alive but residing in a different locale. It is they who will be worshipping the ancestors and not the parents of the apartment. When the grandparents pass away, the parents may take over the practice, but at that time most of their children might have already left the house. As a result these children, as members of their orientation family did not have the chance to become familiar with the practice of ancestor worship. Furthermore if these parents take up the practice, they will not feel the bond with their ancestors and the property they inherited from them to the same degree as for instance the eldest son of an old stem family. Thus the practice might come very close to veneration of the recently departed and not go beyond the veneration of the deceased grandparents. If this were so, then ancestor worship would have fundamentally changed its character together with the composition of the household. At the present moment, however, this is only a hypothesis, and the urbanization process might not have proceeded enough to put it to the test.

The Functions of Ancestor Worship

Ancestor worship like any other cult or religion has certain effects upon its believer and upon the community at large. Sociologists, in discussing the integrating functions of religion, usually distinguish positive and negative, manifest and latent functions.⁴⁷⁾ In our overall consideration of the functions of ancestor worship we will follow this division.

Among the positive manifest functions, the most obvious one is the one of integrating the members of the household. "More than any other group, the family is integrated by common religious worship,"⁴⁸⁾ J. Wach wrote. In an intensive way, the members of the household are united among themselves and with the ancestors. They are all equal in front of the ancestors. They are all their descendants, and even the bride who is not a descendant, enjoys the same position. None of them enjoys the exclusive privilege of caring for them. The daily offerings occur when the whole family is united in the morning at breakfast. Thus integration is not such that everybody feels united *around* the ancestors. Instead they share the meal with everybody, and hardly any more attention is paid to the dead than to any other living member of the family.

Members who were born in the house but left it through marriage are associated with the ancestors periodically. From observation and oral information we know that the custom of homecoming and visiting the ancestral graves at *higan* and *o-bon* is still widespread in the village.

The integrative characteristics of ancestor worship for the

household will be clearer if we compare it with that of the *dōzoku*. The *dōzoku* are not established solely upon blood relationships,⁴⁹⁾ as is clear from the case of the XL house. Thus the Inari reunion is not an occasion on which only relatives meet. Formerly, ancestor worship was not exclusively based upon blood ties either: in former times servants who lived in the house were associated with the ancestor cult. More than a group of relatives tied by blood, the household was the smallest social and economic unit of society. Therefore, ancestor worship is not so much the religion of the family as of the household. With the change of the composition of the household increasingly limited to family members, however, ancestor worship will more and more follow kinship lines.

As for the positive latent social functions of ancestor worship, in our opinion, it constitutes an implicit link for the community (village). Not because everybody explicitly venerates common ancestors (which would create a manifest feeling of togetherness) but because people who are thought of as not venerating their ancestors, are believed to have broken with the community (cfr. the case of followers of Nichiren-shōshū). In the household itself there is a continuous reference to the former generations to whom one is indebted for the existence of this house. This creates in the members of the household a persuasive outward-directed awareness. It enforces the social value of thankfulness toward those to whom a *giri* relation exists.

The influence which ancestor worship has upon the everyday behavior of the individuals, however, is rather an indirect one. The ancestor cult does not have its own moral code. Its

ethical prescriptions are not clearly defined. We will come back to this point in our fourth chapter. Suffice it to say there seems to be an ill-defined but all-pervading imperative for devoting oneself to the continuity of one's household.

A complete treatment of all the functions of ancestor worship in one community, should require a more thorough knowledge of this community than we possess. We could not detect negative overt functions. One latent function however is worth mentioning. A household or a community in Japan can be split; not around the problem of the necessity of worshipping the ancestors, but around the problem of the way of worshipping them properly. This happens when a whole household or only the younger generation of the household are fervent followers of the Nichiren-shōshū. In such a case, the opposing factions — be it in the community at large or in the household — will not meet in the performance of the same rites, which by this very fact lose their community-shaping effects.

Ancestor worship, however, has other functions besides the ones of social integration: it has also a religious function. For the villagers, ancestor worship is one of the main modes of contact with the supernatural.

In this area, it seems impossible to speak of negative functions without taking theological positions; a value judgement of a theological nature is necessary to distinguish the positive from the negative. This would result in polemics or apologetics, as for instance in the work of Hashimoto Tatsumi.⁵⁰⁾ But it is obvious that this greatly hinders the understanding from within of the object of research.

Ancestor worship provides a means of meeting the problem

of death, an eminent function of every religion. (Yinger : “Everywhere, the ways in which men meet the problem of death is in the realm of the ‘sacred.’”⁵¹). At death, a member of the household does not lose his membership to the family. Furthermore, ancestor worship offers a framework in which the problem of suffering can be dealt with. If suffering occurs in the family, some people ascribe this to the *muenbotoke* of the ancestors. However, we should remark that this aspect of ancestor worship is not so widespread. It is also important to notice that from the whole possible range of suffering, only human suffering (sickness or death) and not natural disasters (droughts or storms) are taken up in the framework of ancestor worship. This seems to be true for the traditional and the new religions alike.

III. The Symbol System of Ancestor Worship

In the former chapter we isolated the social dimension from the socio-cultural complex that constitutes the ancestor cult. However, the ancestor cult is more than a mere system of action. As a religion it is also a cultural system and thus forms a symbolic system. This symbolic dimension of ancestor worship, having a structure of its own, is also theoretically abstractable and the possible object of analysis in the same way as the social dimension.⁵²⁾

Contrary to systems of action, which are structured through functional relationship, the components of symbolic systems have a meaningful—not necessarily logical—coherence.⁵³⁾ Any study concerning meaning has difficulties of its own because it involves philosophic problems. In the study of symbols the principal question concerns the signification, the referent of the symbol.⁵⁴⁾ We will, however, put these problems aside till the next chapter and concern ourselves in this chapter first with the structure of the symbol system and then try to formulate the world view of ancestor worship as expressed through it.

The Structure of the Symbol System of the Ancestor Cult

In treating the symbol system of ancestor worship, a triple division almost naturally imposes itself. Namely, there exists a clear distinction between symbols which express the way the

soul has to go in order to reach the state of ancestorhood, those which express the final state and those which symbolize the situation of the souls who never reach that stage.

Framework of analysis

These are the three main divisions of the analysis. For each of these three situations of the soul, the framework of analysis consists not only of the *symbols* and the *action* with the symbol but includes considerations about the *status* of the soul and the *roles* performed both by the souls and by the worshippers.

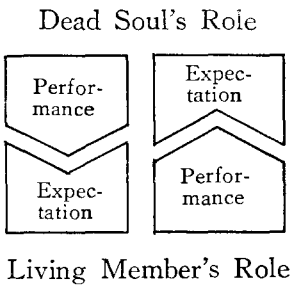
The main three axes of analysis are self-evident and a natural consequence from the description of the rites in the third section of the first chapter. The discussion of the symbol system in terms of status and roles, however, might need some explanation.

The souls of dead members of the family are still considered as members of the *ie*. However, each soul does not, in this community of the living and the dead, occupy a specific individual position: the soul of the great-grandfather does not differ in its relation with the household from that of the soul of the grandmother or of that of other souls some ten generations back. Each soul belongs to one of the three main groups of souls, and within each group there is no further differentiation.

Neither is there in the living half of the household a differentiation of attitudes according to the position of each member in the household. The housewife is, for instance, not bound by other rules toward the ancestors as, for instance, the siblings or the head of the household: as far as ancestor worship is

concerned, each family member acts as an equal member of the household. Therefore, in this community of the living and the dead, there are only two actors when the rites are performed: the living as a group, and the dead as a group (ancestors, souls in transition or *muenbotoke*). Generally the position of an actor is referred to as his status.⁵⁴⁾ For the soul, this status will change with the three different situations in which it can find itself, while the status of the living half of the *ie* remains fundamentally the same. Furthermore, the two halves of the *ie* act in a certain prescribed way to each other: certain actions are expected to occur; they are institutionalized. When an actor acts in this status, he is said to be acting out a *role*. Thus both halves of the *ie* perform some roles toward each other. There flows a crisscross of role expectations and role performances between the two actors. Their crossing point, the place where they meet, are the rites.

Rites performed by the living half are thus representative of the role performance of that half and, at the same time, of the role expectation of the dead half towards them. Conversely the living who perform the rites do this with a certain state of mind: they have expectations or fears toward the dead souls,



which at the same time reflect the role performance of the ancestors toward the living members of the *ie*. Graphically we can represent this as in the figure.

Since, however, role performances and role expectations are vertically complementary to each other, we

The way to ancestorhood

Thus we will first discuss, in the next three paragraphs, the symbols involved in the process of becoming an ancestor.

1. *Kaimyō*. Life in this world is growth to full adulthood. Life in the other world is growth to full ancestorhood. Any human being who starts this earthly journey receives a new name at his birth. In the same way, every soul who starts the other journey at his death, a new starting point, also receives a new name. He receives his first name (*zokumyō*—common name) when his body leaves the mother womb and starts an independent existence: this revelation of a “new power” is consecrated by the new name. He receives his second name (*kaimyō*—posthumous name)⁵⁶⁾ when his soul leaves his body and starts an independent existence (although like the child, he will be still highly dependent for some time upon the care of others): this new revelation of again a “new power” is symbolized by a new name.⁵⁷⁾ The soul receives a new name at the moment of death and not when it is supposed to reach ancestorhood, just as a man receives a name at birth and not when he reaches adulthood.

This is because a name signifies, to the point of being identical with it, a self-contained entity: the name is the symbol for the continuity of the person and its constancy in form. Thus the transition of mere soul to ancestor soul does not involve the acquisition of a new identity. On the contrary, it signifies a loss of identity because upon becoming an ancestor, the name marking the individual soul is abandoned and forgotten, and at the same time the soul loses its individuality.⁵⁸⁾

The posthumous name is written on three objects : the *ihai*,⁵⁹⁾ the *tōba* and the so-called *kaimyō*. These *kaimyō* seem to be of no sacred value and are never the object of ritual attention. The matter, however, is different for *ihai* and *tōba*. They are moreover, as we noted before, the object of a *tama-shii ireru* ceremony (introduction of a soul).

2. *Ihai*. The uniqueness of the *ihai* as symbol of the deceased came out clearly by the following. In the first generation ZL branch family, we found the *ihai* of the father of the husband. The proper place of such an *ihai*, however, is normally the family shelf of the stem family ZE. The author was told that it was a reproduction of the real *ihai* which was in the ZE stem family. When we inquired there if the ZL *ihai* could not eventually be the real one, the reaction was almost one of indignation. The implication was that the author had not understood even the essentials of ancestor worship. In the ZE stem family, moreover, they had their *ihai* transcribed just one year ago on the small tablets which fit in the new styled *ihai* boxes. They had disposed of the old *ihai* by burning them. When I asked if they hadn't thought of passing it on to the branch family, since they were so interested in the *ihai*, the answer was a categorical "no," because theirs was the only real *ihai*.

At the funeral two *ihai* are always made : one will finally find its place in the family shelf and the other is brought to the grave at the time of the burial. This latter *ihai* seems to be exposed to the elements on purpose and is left there until it collapses, symbolizing thus, in a very concrete way the process which takes place underground. However non-Oriental

a clear distinction of body and soul may be, the *ihai* on the grave seems to symbolize the corpse and the one in the family shelf the soul.

The *ihai* which stays in the home is placed very often together with a photograph of the deceased on a low scaffold under the family shelf. On the 49th day, it is raised to the family shelf; from then on it will receive no differential treatment, except on the *niibon* and at memorial days. At the *tomurai-age*, the *ihai* should ideally be brought to the temple, but this never seems to happen. (In one house the old *ihai* were disposed of in such a way, not on the occasion of the *tomurai-age*, but on the occasion of moving into a new house). Ideally the *ie no senzodaidai ihai* (ancestral tablet inscribed with all generations of the ancestors of this house) should replace the individual *ihai* from then on.

According to Yanagita Kunio's theory⁶⁰⁾ the individual soul is then taken up into the anonymous world of the ancestors. However, it is customary in some houses to engrave the posthumous name of the deceased on the tombstone precisely at that moment. (There is, however, no general agreement in the village as to the proper time for erecting the tombstone or engraving the posthumous name.)

That the soul leaves the house on the 49th day and comes back at *o-bon* while at the same time residing somehow in the ancestral tablet seems logically inconsistent. When an informant told us that for him the ancestors resided in the family shelf and that he was aware of their presence throughout the day, we confronted him with this contradiction. After a long silence he admitted that he understood the problem, then he

smiled and without losing his self-assurance explained that he was by no means ready to deny either possibility merely for the sake of consistency, because he felt that this somehow was irrelevant for him. It is probably only intellectuals like Hirata Atsutane who try to dissolve the dilemma with a theory of the splitting of the soul.⁶¹⁾ The remark of B. Malinowski seems to apply here. He writes that "belief or dogmatic thinking does not obey the law of logic among savages any more than among ourselves," and that "any inconsistency is noted in a view which is not the informant's own standpoint, while similar contradictions are most blandly overlooked in his own theories."⁶²⁾

3. *Tōba*. The *tōba* manifests in a more precise way than the ancestral tablet the change occurring in the soul. In some areas of Japan, this change is indicated by a steady increase in the size of each new *tōba*, from a *sanjaku tōba* (0.90m.) to a *kyūshakutōba* (2.70m.), placed on the grave on the occasion of each commemorative anniversary.⁶³⁾ In Nagasawa all *tōbas* are of the same size (only a price difference results in big or small *tōbas*), but with each commemorative anniversary the inscription on it changes.

The first *tōba* is brought to the grave on the day of the burial. It carries the inscription: *kairenki kuyō tōba* (slat for the service at the opening of the lotus purification). Ideally *tōbas*, each carrying Buddhist inscriptions not easily understandable to the average person are planted on the following days: the 7th day, the 49th day, the 100th day, the 1st year the 3th year, the 7th year, the 13th year, the 23rd year, the 33rd year.

On the burial day a row of seven small *tōbas*, some 20cm.

long, are placed at the graveside to symbolize the 49 days or seven weeks of intense purification. Every seventh day a *tōba* is broken to indicate the completion of each seven-day period. On the last memorial service (normally the 33rd year) some families purchase a square *tōba* which is more resistant to rain and wind and seems to symbolize that the dead soul after a period of time, corresponding in this world to the time needed to reach full adulthood, is no longer subject to change. This last service also marks the final use of the scroll with 13 Buddhas which has up to now symbolized the soul's long transition period.

4. *Status of the souls.* From the customs surrounding the burial, it seems that the dead are treated with caution. It is hard to determine whether it is the corpse or the wandering soul which is the object of the precautionary measures; answers from the informants about this matter are uncertain and ambiguous. If we rely only on the observation of the customs, we must conclude that most of the practices are rather inspired by a fear of material pollution resulting from contact with the corpse (the custom of putting in the coffin those small objects which were most dear to the deceased: they may be a kindness to the deceased but also a way of disposing of objects which he had often touched thereby causing the danger of pollution; also the customs of closing the coffin with stones and the straw sandals, the fire at the grave, the sprinkling of the clothes of the deceased with water). But some seem more connected with the soul of the deceased: the throwing of the salt, the turning of the coffin, the continuous burning of incense, the daily offering of water during the 49 days. Again, although con-

cerned with the same soul, these customs may lack logical consistency: the former two seem to be motivated by a fear that the dead spirit may return, whereas the latter two suppose the spirit to be at home, where he must undergo some kind of purification and be placated. At any rate the first stage of purification seems to be reached on the first seventh day when the second *tōba* is provided and the purification of the clothes comes to a close. However, during the first 49 days, the status of the soul seems to be one of uncertainty: it wanders around the house or resides on the rooftop; distant relatives are in mourning until the soul settles down in the grave (close relatives who strictly follow the rules will observe mourning until the 100th day).

We can consider the funeral as the *rite de passage* which frees the soul from the body, and the ensuing period as one of uncertainty following the release of "power"; then we can recognize the service on the 49th day as bringing under control the new power: the soul leaves for the grave. The atmosphere of uncertainty disappears. If everything is done as prescribed, nothing will go wrong from now on. The soul will still be the individual object of all memorial services; it will keep its individuality but it will be subject to change in the course of time.

The mental process evolving from the memorial services contains something more than merely keeping the memory of the deceased alive. It is as much one of remembering as of forgetting. Forgetting, as R. Hertz remarks, is not a simple and purely negative process: it entails a whole reconstruction.⁶⁴⁾ While the personal ties (*en*) with the living members of the

ie are weakening, the impersonal ties (*en*) with the dead members, the ancestors of the *ie*, grow stronger.

Once the memory of the deceased is abolished, his individuality will have disappeared, but he will be a full member of the ancestor half of the *ie* and no more subject to change. This transition, however, moves smoothly and does not involve such an abrupt change as the one which occurs at the funeral or on the 49th day. That there is a marked difference between the status of the soul before and after the 49th day is clear from the following. Although the soul in a certain sense is believed to be in the house all the time (in the family shelf), the household members experience two periods of intense presence: the time until the 49th day and during *o-bon*. But the former is marked by a state of uncertainty and uneasiness while the latter is definitely one of joy and a cautious attitude is completely missing — notice that the 49th day and the first *o-bon* may follow each other closely. Both relate to the same soul but at a different time and at a different stage of development.

5. *Mutual roles of living and dead members of the household.* With the gradual change in the soul goes a shift in the attitude of the living members of the house. When death occurs, the reaction is always one of greater or less emotional dismay. The confusion may be great, especially when several deaths occur in a short period of time. It seems indeed to be hard for men to accept that “such irrationalities are characteristic of the world.”⁶⁵⁾ In such extreme cases man does not abide simply. A guaranty against further occurrence of such events will naturally be sought. Many householders make offerings

to the *muenbotoke*. One family in which the mother and the grandmother passed away in the span of a few months prepared a fake grave. In it they buried a piece of wood roughly in the form of a human doll in order to prevent a third death in the family because "things that happen twice, usually happen three times."

These are, however, extreme cases. On the average, the rites until the 49th day seem rather concerned with readjusting the household to the new situation created by the "birth" of a new soul. The vague assumption seems to be that this soul, if not made the object of frequent rites from the beginning, might be potentially malicious, which might involve bad consequences both for the family and for the soul itself. The role of the soul seems thus to be, in extreme cases, one of threatening the house, in lesser ones, one of wandering. The members of the house thus have to counter this threat by purification ceremonies which will result in the final separation ceremony when the soul sets out for its new abode.

Once this is done, the living have the responsibility, which they cannot delegate to anybody else, of making the soul rest in peace (*ukabareru*="to float") through memorial services and visits to the grave. This common expression like the *en* of *muenbotoke* uses a spatial symbol: the soul has to be set afloat from its former ties. *Muenbotoke* are also souls who have severed their ties with the *ie*, but they have done so in the wrong way: the negative side of the severing of the ties does not have its positive counterpart of *jōbutsu* (becoming a Buddha), establishing the *en* with the *ie* on a higher level, namely as ancestors. It is hard to define the role played at

this stage by the soul. It might be a mixture of anticipated protection, a role eminently played by the ancestors, and of a lingering threat of *tataru* (sending a curse), as was the soul's dominant characteristic before the 49th day when there was no connotation whatsoever of a protective role.

The influence of the ritual behavior of the household members upon the soul of the deceased virtually ceases once the soul reaches ancestorhood. However, the ancestors on their part now seem to increase their beneficent activity towards the *ie*, while the rites now take on more of a character of gratefulness generally aiming to keep in contact with the ancestors lest they lapse into *muenbotoke*.

Muenbotoke

1. *The symbols.* The *muenbotoke* again present a problem. First of all they are not acknowledged in every house. Even when they are the object of offerings at *o-bon*, in many cases they are irrelevant, and where they do have relevance, the meanings may vary.

When individual souls are considered to be *muenbotoke*, as is the case with deceased children, they may have their posthumous name written on a full-fledged *ihai*. The posthumous name may also be recorded on those paper slips called *kai-myō*. At the graveyard one sometimes finds a common stone *tōba* for the anonymous *muenbotoke*, or the names may be recorded on a marble plate. Generally speaking children are not as frequently honored with memorial services as other souls are.

2. *Status.* It is hard to say what exactly the effect of the

services or offerings for the *meunbotoke* is. Do they have the power of changing this unhappy state of the *muenbotoke* and turning them into *uenbotoke* (“*hotoke* with *en*,” namely, regular ancestors)? The general impression is that they do not. It seems that the status of the *muenbotoke* is unchangeable and intrinsically linked with the position they had, while still alive, in the *ie*: they are the souls of those members who were unable to join some line of ancestors or to start their own. From the moment of their death, these souls cannot change their position within the *ie*. If at this time they were still members of their family of orientation and had never established their family of procreation, they are condemned to become *muenbotoke*. They find themselves in the same situation as the souls who died a violent death. R. Hertz describes them: “The transitory period extends indefinitely for these victims of a special malediction, and their death has no end . . . souls without a last burial stay dead forever . . . death will be eternal because society will always maintain towards these accursed individuals the attitude of exclusion that it adopted from the first.”⁶⁶⁾ In other words, once *muenbotoke*, always *muenbotoke*.

3. *Roles*. Because rites seem to be unable to change the state of non-fulfillment (*ukabarenai*=“not floating”) of the *muenbotoke*, their meaning must be found somewhere else. They are performed in a spirit of compassion or fear, and aim thus at bringing consolation to these souls in their miserable state; in this case no activity seems to be assumed, no role seems to be ascribed to them. When fear is the prevailing feeling, the *muenbotoke* are thought of as active; this activity is always a negative one, contrary to the one exercised by the

ancestors. In this aspect they do not seem to differ much from the souls in the first stage before the 49th day on their way to ancestorhood.

The World View of Ancestor Worship

Until now we have tried to find a limited meaning for the phenomena as we observed them. Firth calls this stage of the study "an assignment of . . . limited meanings to a whole range of items of non-verbal behavior so that they can be understood in their immediate context."⁶⁷⁾ We shall now shift to another order of meaning: "The more general understanding of the major aspects and qualities of the religious system under consideration."

Ancestor worship, like any particular religion, affirms something about life in general. It carries with it a *Weltanschauung* (the cognitive aspect of the values inherent in ancestor worship). To use Geertz's expression, it is a system of symbols, which formulates conceptions of a general order of existence.⁶⁸⁾

The formulation of a general order of existence

According to Geertz, there are three issues which religions, however "primitive," must cope with: ignorance in the face of anomalous events (death, volcanic eruptions etc.), pain or suffering and the problem of evil. Within this triple domain the following findings were made. From the range of anomalous events, natural calamities are not ascribed to the ancestors or to the *muenbotoke* as punishment from a wrathful god. For this reason the villagers will not address themselves to

their ancestors for protection against drought or flood or earthquakes. Instead they rely upon *fuda* (amulets), loosely designated as relics of the *kami* (gods) in a general rather than in a particular way, which are supposed to protect the owner from danger. However, since the role of the *fuda* is merely preventive, it seems that these natural calamities are not placed in a larger framework of meaning, even outside ancestor worship. They are ascribed to nobody, they just happen. The Japanese worshipper reduces his concern for protection from these havocs of nature by the mere act of possessing the *fuda*; the idea of praying for supernatural assistance by means of the amulet does not occur to him as it does to his Christian counterpart who carries a medal of St. Christopher to remind him to pray directly to the saint for protection against accidents.

Death is dealt with in the framework of ancestor worship, but only at its fringes. Ancestor worship in the strict sense starts only when the situation of emotional stress, resulting from death, has been overcome. Veneration of an ancestor who died three generations ago cannot be motivated by the upheaval his death caused in the house and by the ensuing readjustment process. However, the living might be comforted to know they will some day become an ancestor and they will live on in the rites throughout the ensuing generation. Indeed the oldest informant said: "I also hope to leave this house, having received such a tablet, but one with golden letters, not just a plain wooden one."

The problem of suffering is dealt with only occasionally, but when suffering becomes severe, it is dealt with almost always

in the framework of ancestor worship. Conversions to a new religion are mostly motivated because these new religions claim to have a deeper insight in the causal relationship which link the ancestors with the occurring evil.

As can be seen readily, ancestor worship is rather faulty in its formulation of a "general order of existence," and it might be somehow misleading to use such a cosmic terminology for a religious phenomenon which has more modest ambitions. Because what is characteristic of ancestor worship is that its first and last preoccupation is the *ie*. And it is only within the confines of the existence of the *ie* that it touches upon the problem of death.

The spiritual community of the *ie*

From the analysis of the symbol system, it is clear that the main concern of ancestor worship is the *ie* and afterlife. Through ancestor worship the membership of the *ie* is enhanced to such an extent that true membership is never lost: it transcends death and lasts forever. The importance of the *ie* is even such that it is one's position in it that determines one's fate after death: it is one's position in relation to one's future line of descendants (thus to one's family of procreation) that decides if the individual joins the *uenbotoke* or *muenbotoke*. It is therefore possible that the belief in an afterlife — which Occidentals so naturally consider a necessary condition for ancestor worship — is only secondary to and highly dependent upon this consciousness of *ie* membership.

A comparison with the West might manifest more clearly the characteristics of the afterlife. In Christianity, too, the

afterlife is constituted of a tripartite division : heaven, hell and purgatory. Two of these states are unchangeable and have a positive and negative value, like the ancestors and the *muenbotoke* ; and the third, purgatory, is also a transitory period (of spiritual purification to the blessings of heaven in the West, to ancestorhood in Japan). The process of recruitment into one of these three states is, however, not linked up with the household. Where free will theology prevails, everyone is responsible for one's own fate : one is rewarded or punished according to one's deeds. In predestination theology, God's sovereign, completely inexplicable determination decides human destiny after death.⁶⁹⁾

The Christian family is strongly limited to this world. Beyond three generations, there is no consciousness among the believers that a part of the family is in heaven. Moreover heaven is not the reunion place for the family but the ultimate realization of the Christian community at large. In the world view of ancestor worship, the world of ancestors is not even considered as the far away and final reunion place of the whole family : the dead never cease to be members of the family. There is no other spiritual community besides the family of the living and the dead.

The tripartite division of the other world in Japanese ancestor worship seems to correspond rather closely to a tripartite composition of the family of this world. The position enjoying the highest esteem and incurring the greatest responsibility in the management of the house is the office of the househead and his wife. The highest position in the other world is no doubt held by the ancestors and it is their role

to protect the household. Second in importance is the successor: the one who is on his way to becoming head of the household. In the ranking of the souls, it is also the *uenbotoke* in the process of becoming ancestors who occupy the second position. Both these important roles in the household, together with the retired older generation form the direct line of succession. The siblings, except the successor, belong to the side line and form a third category. All are ideally destined to leave the house and start their own way to ancestorhood through marriage. If they fail to do so, they might be, as they were in earlier days, a real burden because the property of the house is not large enough to utilize such a labor force. At any rate it is clear that such members of the family do not have a proper structural place in the household and are relegated to the lowest position in the household. In death these members join the *muenbotoke*, which is indeed the least enjoyable state of the world beyond.

Thus the *ie* is a spiritual community, and ancestor worship is its religion. This, however, requires one more qualification. After all the death of a household member produces a real break in his family relation and the household must find a way to restore and rebuild the contact with its lost member. In this sense the process to ancestorhood can be looked upon as a ritual socialization process of the soul. This socialization process is indeed not without its parallels to the socialization process — at least on the level of ritual action — of the child and youth.

The double socialization process into the *ie*

We have already drawn attention to the parallel name giving ceremony and need not return to it. A further detail in connection with the name is that the posthumous name finds, after some time, 14 days, its place in the family shelf (*butsudan*), while the birthname is put in the Shinto shelf (*kamidana*). A second point is that both ritual periods (socialization process of the young family member and the process of becoming ancestor) are by and large of the same length: 23 or 33 years.

Thirdly, the two cycles start with an intensive short time span of almost one month with roughly the same characteristics. The keynote of this period is pollution, resulting from the newly released and unsettled "force." This new presence seems somehow to escape the control of man: the baby's first month of existence is probably the most perilous of his life, and man can really do little about it. The birth caused pollution to the child and to the mother. The soul's first 49 days of existence are certainly very precarious; the soul as well as the "womb" from which it freed itself — the *ie* — are negatively affected by them. At the end of this period, both new beings (the newborn child and the soul of the deceased) are purified, but not those who gave birth to them, the mother and the bereaved family.⁷⁰⁾ For the newborn, there follows the first visit to the village shrine (*shomiyamairi*) which is probably more significant religiously than subsequent visits such as *shichigosan* (an annual festival in November that beseeches the gods to bless children at the age of three, five and seven years). Similarly the 49th day for the soul of the deceased commemorates a

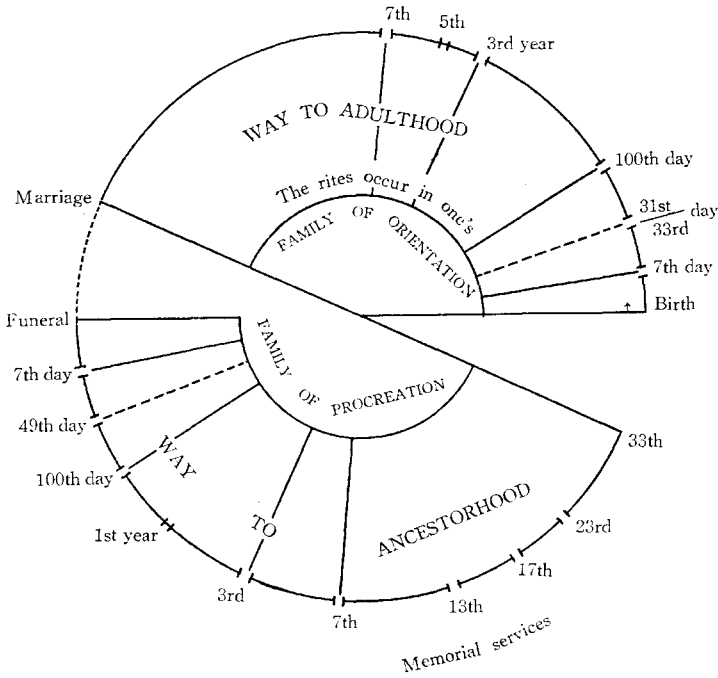
more significant change than subsequent memorial days.

Fourthly, within this period of one month, the seventh day seems an intermediary step of purification for the soul (the purification of the clothes ceases). Continuing the comparison, the mother on the seventh day after having given birth is permitted to approach the fire again; on the eleventh day she can ladle water. Fifthly, both the mother and the bereaved family are freed from pollution on the 100th day. Subsequent memorial days show only weak parallels to other *rites de passage* in the life of the child (*shichigosan*), but if we have to trace the parallel further, then the *tomuraiage* (last memorial service) would somehow find its equivalent in marriage. Both ceremonies lack the purification motive and are aimed at, in the latter case, establishing the transition of the individual into its new community or *ie*, while the former one means the entrance of a new soul into the world of ancestors.

Thus a man's existence seems to consist of two cycles, by and large, parallel to each other. Moreover, if the first cycle is brought successfully to its end, namely through marriage, this *ipso facto* opens the door to a successful completion of the second cycle because unmarried persons never join the ancestors. The intermediary period between marriage and death will be unable to change this pattern as long as marriage itself is not in danger (if, for instance, divorce occurs, and the wife goes back to her native home and does not remarry, then she will die as a *muenbotoke* in her native home). If the doctrine of rebirth were extant, the end of the second cycle (becoming an ancestor) would mean again the starting point of the first.

The Religion of the Household

However, the pattern is not perfect in this point, and it is also difficult to see how an ancestor, once reincarnated, could still keep his character of ancestor. Graphically the two cycles can be represented in the following way :



We should notice that the center around which the two life cycles spin is the *ie*. The first cycle meant to ritualize the growth of a human being into full manhood occurs for him in his family of orientation. The second cycle revolves around his family of procreation: as a dead member of the family, he is subject to the *rite de passage* which makes him become an ancestor.

IV. The Ethos of Ancestor Worship

The analysis of the symbol system thus far has disclosed to us the world view of ancestor worship. It has shown us how life within the perspective of the worshipper is imagined. However, symbols have besides a conceptual aspect a dispositional one; they induce to action. They not only express the world as imagined, they also express the world as it should be lived. Both aspects are spoken of in the following way by C. Geertz: "Symbols give meaning, i.e. objective conceptual form to social and psychological reality, both by shaping themselves to it (= *model of*) and by shaping it to themselves (= *model for*). They both express the world's climate and shape it."⁷¹⁾ In other words, the values enhanced by the symbols have a so-called "emotional charge" which makes them promote and guide conduct⁷²⁾: they give shape to the ethos of people.

One of the main channels through which the values inherent in the religious symbol system are interiorized is religious experience. Religious experience, however, may cover an exceedingly disparate array of events: "from the vaguest glimmerings of something sacred to rapturous mystical unions with the divine."⁷³⁾ In this context religious experience does not mean an exceptional psychological state, the privilege of some religious "virtuosi"; it points to religious experience as an institutionalized and widespread, commonly accepted phenomenon.

Thus we have first of all to specify the quality of the most common religious experience of the community if we want to

understand which dispositions are induced in the worshipper and how these dispositions affect his activity.

Furthermore, the religious experience is always accompanied by some conviction or belief with varying degrees of intensity. Thus we will have to determine the place that belief occupies in the overall religious life of the worshipper, if we want to understand the nature and strength of the influence that religious practices may have upon behaviour.

Finally then, after having assessed the religious experience and after having situated the seriousness of the attention paid to it, we will be able to evaluate what Charles Y. Glock calls "the consequential dimension of religion."⁷⁴⁾ By this we mean the bearing ancestor worship has upon the profane world outside of ritual.

The Religious Experience of the Worshipper

The analogy with social encounter

In analyzing the ritual symbol system of ancestor worship, the two-actor scheme proved to be a useful device. The validity of such a scheme is founded upon the fact that the ancestors, or more generally the dead souls, are *de facto* considered as members of the *ie*, still active in their own way. Thus religious experience will take the form of an encounter with them. It seems therefore appropriate and not too farfetched to describe this experience in terms of human encounter.⁷⁵⁾

The axis along which social encounter can be diversified is the axis of the degree of intimacy. For our purpose we can distinguish three levels of encounter along the line of an in-

crease in intimacy. The first one is the one brought about by official contact. The contact established between two partners by the performance of some role is of a very official nature. The focus of such an encounter is less upon the partner ; the meeting is much more conditioned by the nature of the relationship set by the role definition than by the person at the end of the relationship. No real meeting takes place. The experience is one of official contact. With regard to ancestor worship, the experience of the worshipper is limited to a feeling of fulfillment of duty.⁷⁶⁾

A second level of encounter is the experience of the awareness of the partner's presence. Here, in contrast with the former case, the partner is the focus of the encounter, in the case of the ancestors, they are concretely experienced as "here" or "there."

Thirdly, the encounter may be one of mutual awareness of each others presence ; one experiences the partner noticing one's presence. The worshipper here is both aware or conscious of the existence of the ancestors and at the same time conscious that they notice and care about him. This experience may be of a general or of a particular nature and have positive or negative value. If the experience is a particular one, it might be the experience either of what the other does or of what the other says : an experience of deeds or of a message. Schematically, we can represent these different possibilities as follows :

- I. *Official contact* : the relation itself is more important than its object, the ancestors.
- II. *Experience of the other's presence* : a sense of the presence

of the ancestors.

III. *Experience of the other's attentive presence :*

- a) General beneficent : general feeling of protection
maleficent : general feeling of threat
- b) Specific beneficent : (through interventions or
maleficent : messages)

Types of encounter with the ancestors

The three types of possible encounter with the ancestors are not completely and adequately distinguished from each other. The latter stages include the former ones but add some elements to them ; all of the stages therefore maintain a continuity. For instance, it is impossible to experience the ancestors as a responding, reacting " other " without being aware of the contact that links one with them. Thus we speak only of a first and second category in as far as they lack elements present respectively in stage two and three.

The material we categorize thus consists of the testimonies of the informants. This, however, creates a methodological problem. Between the experience and the information stands the reflection of the informant. This power of reflection may be strong or weak or might have been applied for the first time in the life of the informant at the occasion of the interview. The interview thus might result in the creation of a novel and artificial situation and thus bias the answers. Therefore the danger exists that the answers reflect mainly a groping effort of the informant for a justification which was only latent and never expressed before. Thus they may be very imperfect indicators of the real experience. However, this justification

will be made along the lines of the religious sensibility of the informants and thus more or less compensate for the biases.

1. *Giri relation*. Different authors have already drawn attention to the importance of the *giri-ninjō* for a proper understanding of the relations between the Japanese and their gods or ancestors.⁷⁷⁾ Although this *giri-ninjō* may be present in all the relations with the divine, we reserve it here for the attitudes in which a *giri* relation seems prevalent without a concomitant awareness of the presence of the ancestors. In other words, one feels in debt towards one's ancestors without experiencing them particularly as "here" or "there."

A woman, 33-years-old, when asked if she would continue the daily offerings once the mother-in-law died, answered: "It is a bother and does not have any special meaning, but I probably will make the offerings. Doesn't one do these things naturally?" She admitted also that neither good nor bad effects result from the performance or negligence of the memorial services. A 70-year-old woman described her experience with the words, "My mind is not at peace when I do not make the offerings." When asked about the eventual unfortunate results if the rites are neglected, she said that there is no real obligation to make the offerings and that curses (*tatari*) don't exist. A man of 45 expressed the same feeling by saying that it was merely a question of custom: "We are deeply bound by custom; the meaning escapes us and neither good nor bad results follow from the veneration or neglect of the ancestors."

The practice of the ancestor cult is justified by the long-term link which binds the people with their ancestors or by a feeling of *giri* (indebtedness) for received *on* (obligation). "We do

this out of a feeling of gratitude because the ancestors have worked and cared for us," a 56-year-old woman said. Two other informants, after a lengthy deliberation, came to the conclusion that their attitude towards the ancestors was the same as the one towards their parents and brothers. "It is close to *on*; one could say that it is thanks to the ancestors that we are able to make a living today," a 69-year-old woman and a 54-year-old man agreed. Thus the thankfulness that is expressed here is not because of supernatural blessings and protection from the ancestors but because of their past endeavours and contributions to the family property when they were alive.

What is remarkable in these answers are the following two points. First, a clear set of principles or system of belief which would give a precise meaning to the practice of the ancestor cult is lacking. There is, however, a feeling (not exactly a conviction) that it is only natural that one's gratitude extends back to several generations of ancestors. Secondly, some of the informants give the impression that after all it does matter that much if one worships or not. This seems in contradiction with the rather severe way some people are regarded because they are thought to be neglecting the ancestors, for example, if they profess some non-traditional belief. Clear reasons for venerating the ancestors apparently are absent, but generally nobody seems to reject worship out of some principle, and the few who are thought to do so are stigmatized by the rest of the community.

Thus in the above testimonies, an experience of the ancestors in whatever form it might be, is absent. The received benefits

for which gratitude is expressed are solely accomplishments of the ancestors during their lifetime.

2. *Awareness of the presence of the ancestors.* The Japanese usually experience the presence of the ancestors through a strong consciousness that they are here.

We asked the question if the ancestors somehow, under one form or another, still lived on somewhere. The 67-year-old head of a first rank stem family, told us that he lived constantly in their presence. This same informant told us also that, every year at *o-bon*, he held the welcome fire as soon as possible and the sending-off fire as late as possible in order that the ancestors may stay longer. (Four months later at *o-bon*, when we checked this, it proved indeed to be true: he was at least two hours ahead of his neighbours for the welcome fire.)

The feeling of togetherness with the ancestors is generally preserved for the *o-bon*. For some people, the performance of memorial services offers the occasion for a similar experience. A woman of 63, asked if the dead soul was coming back on such a day, gave the rather blunt but clear answer, "They might come or not come, but in any case I feel as if they were here." To the question if there were also days that she did not offer rice and tea, the prompt answer of the same informant was, "People need food every day, don't they? So I offer every day and ring the little bell to notify the ancestors that everything is ready."

3. *Mutual awareness of ancestors and worshipper.* As soon as the feeling of their presence transcends the mere feeling of "they are there," we confront a new kind of experience: the ancestors are felt to take specific notice of the individual's

existence and are thus one step closer to him. In general the experience is one of protection or of threat.

An old man of 76 expressed this idea of general protection clearly in his own words. Asked if he made any requests to them in times of trouble, he said, "I do not ask them to do this or to do that, but still my attitude is one of supplication." Some respondents rejected the idea completely, "All this talk about the ancestors protecting us are but nice lies" (the same woman of 33 already quoted before). A straight rejection of the idea of protection is rare, but its wholehearted acceptance seems equally rare. The idea that the ancestors are merely interested in what is going on in the household (without extending protection) is not the object of strong belief either (the middle school graduate showing his certificate of graduation was the only instance we recorded). A young mother who had given birth to her first son some five months ago said that she had been told by her mother before her marriage to report the birth of the first son to the ancestors of her husband's family. She had, however, neglected to do so.

Two older informants recalled that during their youth they were told: "The *hotoke* are watching over you, don't be mischievous!" Today, however, the ancestors seem no more to play the general role of moral arbiters in the educational process of the children.

A general negative feeling towards the ancestors as distinguished from the *muenbotoke* was only expressed once. A woman reported that as a child she was afraid of the *hotoke* in the family shelf and that her own daughter of six years showed the same feelings.

Specific awareness of the activity of the ancestors (be it a beneficent or a maleficent one) can take the form of special interventions or special revelations. Never did we meet with the latter, although one adherent of the Nichiren-shū and his daughter (in separate interviews) admitted the possibility of communication with the spirits of the ancestors. They did, however, not speak about their own experiences, but about those of some people they knew. A very specific intervention was ascribed to the ancestors by a 79-year-old lady when she held them responsible for the safe return of her four sons from the second world war.

A rather sophisticated view of received benefits was expressed by the following reflection of a middle-aged woman who commented on the offerings of food, "The ancestors don't really eat food, but when one offers something, it is as if one were receiving." She considered the fact of giving as a kind of favor, so that she, while offering and feeling enriched by it, was really the beneficiary of the offerings.

Another astonishing benefit was reported in several places. The normal purpose of memorial services or visits to the grave is to acquire merits (*kudoku*) for the sake of the ancestors or, even better, for the dead souls. But the common view is that the recipients of the *kudoku* are the performers of the rite, not the souls. This view contrasted strongly with the conviction of the followers of Nichiren-shōshū that the recitation of their sutra is all-powerful for making the deceased rest in peace. Specific maleficent experiences with the ancestors were never reported. Several rejected the idea of a curse (*tatari*) or punishment from the ancestors or *muenbotoke* as a superstitious

belief.

Dispositions enhanced by ancestor worship

From the above testimonies, we can come to some conclusions as to which values are fostered and enforced by the practice of ancestor worship.

In general we can say that the people we meet, really do not expect either blessings or punishments from their ancestors. The main *leitmotiv* in their attitude is thankfulness and a feeling of obligation. This feeling extends as far as their consciousness of dependence upon the ancestors, mainly until the first generation of the house. This does not contradict Yanagita Kunito's theory that the possession of ancestors is accompanied by a feeling of independence:⁷⁸⁾ certain people one *must* depend upon, and thus the independence is a collective independence. In Japan the borderline of a man's dependencies extends beyond the living members of the family to include the dead ancestors, and it is only there that one's independence starts.

Those we depend upon are those who bestow *on* upon us; it is thus very important to be conscious of the web of vital *giri* relations; one has to try to pay them back. But the *on* towards the ancestors can not really be paid back. This might explain the impression the observer receives that the ancestors really do not need these offerings, but that nevertheless it is the right thing to make them and that it does not matter too much what the immediate meaning or effect of the deeds are since the main thing is in the act itself. This act shows namely that the actor is not forgetful of the ties that bind him with

his ancestors, that he is conscious of his indebtedness to them and attentive to and appreciative of what they have done for him. This disposition is also instilled in the child, even before he knows what he is in debt for to the ancestors when he is persuaded by his mother to share his gifts with them. The instilled disposition is such that the actor finds himself always in a low position at the lower end of the vertical relationship which links him with "the others." Although one can easily argue that people *must* not depend upon ancestors who died four, five or more generations ago — especially ancestors who maladministered the property as was the case in a stem family some 120 years ago — yet the value which is selectively acted out and stressed in the rites is not the independence from them, the reliance upon oneself, but the dependence upon the ancestors.

The disposition thus instilled is really a mood : it permeates and colors the whole character of the person. It is difficult to decide how far this disposition might also direct clearcut motivations ; in other words how far it might become a stimulus for the performance of precise tasks besides the one of the rites. Possibly in former times the felt presence of the ancestors was a great encouragement in urging household members to maintain the continuity of the house. It is difficult, however, to distinguish in this domain between the ancestors as a specific motivation and the mere weight of the tradition, which has in itself a demand for continuity.

Ancestor belief

In the first section of this chapter, we noticed several times

in the experiences related by the people apparent contradictions to the implicit meaning inherent in the rites as we elicited it in the former chapter. Indeed the deceased do not seem to be in need of the merits of the religious services, the ancestors do not seem to be conceived of as the protectors of the *ie*, and their existence does not seem to be taken too seriously. What does this encounter with the ancestors then finally mean? Do people believe in them or not? What does belief mean in the context of ancestor worship?

The meaning of belief

Only on three occasions did we really feel some positive belief reflected in the answers. One person so keenly aware of them at the time of the rites and even in everyday life, told us, "You cannot see them with your eyes, but they do exist."⁷⁹⁾ The other two cases where we met with a real conviction and not a mere feeling were the testimonies of the members of the Nichiren-shū and Nichiren-shōshū. In all the other cases the author met with a polite smile or a hesitant answer at the suggestion of the eventual survival of the soul in some way after death. After a thoughtful pause they usually replied, "Well, they might be alive, but . . ." If asked, for instance, about the soul leaving the house on the 49th day, very often the villagers responded, "Well, yes, that is the reason why we hold a service on that day, but we don't really know what happens."

However, the general impression is that the immortality of the soul is not so much looked upon as a superstitious belief or a fairy tale, as is the case with the idea of rebirth. In this

connection, I was told that the soul of a person will be reborn when one splits the rice offered at his burial. But in order to prevent any misunderstanding, the informant immediately added, "But that is a lie you know." Suggestions about the rebirth of the soul were met with statements like the following, "That is only talk, such a thing doesn't really exist.... We do not know what happens to the soul; I never met a man who was reborn!"

We should note here also that only very rarely did any of the vocabulary or ideas connected with afterlife, which we found in the *Nembutsu* hymns, turn up in the answers. This shows again that the theoretical knowledge among the villagers about religion is negligible. We mentioned already that the 13 Buddhas' symbolism was almost not understood. Another interesting example is the following. In many family shelves we found an image of a sitting or standing Buddha. (One woman explained to us her preference for the sitting Buddha. She felt the standing one looked too much in a hurry and "hasty people always get into trouble.") On two occasions we inquired who was represented on this image. The answers were, "It has the shape of Kannon but for us it really represents the ancestors," and "This is not the Buddha: it is a figurative image of the ancestors, while the tables represent them in a non-figurative way."

Do we have then to conclude that "belief is ignored, though apparently expressed in an institution?"⁸⁰⁾ As a broad generalization this might well characterize the situation, but it does not lead very far to its real understanding. Two important corrections should be made, it seems to me, in order to bring

this statement into its proper perspective.

First of all, it might be that religious belief in the midst of ritual and religious belief as the remembered reflection of that experience in the midst of everyday life are quite different realities.⁸¹⁾ C. Geertz argues that the two worlds of ritual and everyday life are not continuous, and that a real gap separates the two outlooks on life, that is the religious one and the common-sense one. Still there is only one way to obtain a glance at belief in the midst of ritual: asking people about it afterwards. The general attitude toward belief in everyday life is one of scepticism: the content of ritual action is not taken seriously. This leads us to presume that belief during the rites is very low.

But the rites must be performed with some conviction. That is the second correction we want to make. This conviction does not bear upon the content or objective effect of the rites, but upon the necessity or the property of the performance of the rites. The conviction exists that they must be performed but not in order to prevent eventual bad consequences for the deceased. The bad consequences are connected with the worshipper and are very this-worldly. Namely, he would by completely neglecting the cult stand out in the community as a reproachable person. Therefore the meaning of the rites is a highly subjective one: it is a question of feeling (*kimochi*). This word came up very often in conversation: "It really comes to feeling, on days that we don't make the offerings, the mind is not at peace." A similar comment was given by two middle aged women about rebirth, interpreting it as a mere desire: "I can understand that someone who dies in the

midst of misery desires to be reborn under better conditions." The author had the impression that the whole village knew about Malinowski's emotional adjustment theory of a ritual. (R. P. Dore reports a similar reflection after considering the statements of one informant.⁸²⁾)

Then, what happens in the rites, given the meaning designated by the people, if these people give another interpretation to the rites than the one which seems the most obvious to an observer? Are the rites then to a great extent not a kind of play? Isn't the performer of the cult taking an "as-if" attitude, isn't he only pretending to accept the values embodied in the cult?

The play element in the rites

Here we will interrupt the research data in order to introduce a short theoretical explanation of the relation between ritual and play. Johan Huizinga was not the first one to draw the attention to the play aspect of culture in general and cult in particular. But he did it with unequalled brilliance, and his insights are useful at this point of our study for a deeper understanding of the rites.

Huizinga wrote: "We find play everywhere as a well-defined quality of action, which is different from 'ordinary life.'"⁸³⁾ He precisions: "Play lies outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly, and equally outside those of truth and falsehood, good and evil."⁸⁴⁾ Play is only pretending but nevertheless serious in the sense that it absorbs its players: "Every child knows perfectly well that it is 'only pretending' but it proceeds with the utmost seriousness."⁸⁵⁾ Moreover, play is disinterested:

“The purposes it serves are external to immediate material interests or the individual satisfaction of biological needs . . . , and finally, it proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space.”⁸⁶⁾

It is easy to see that ritual bears all the formal characteristics of play. Huizinga also sees play as the fundamental dimension of ritual: “Ritual grafts itself upon it; but the primary thing is and remains play The ritual act has all the formal and essential characteristics of play.”⁸⁷⁾ However, common sense objects that the serious mood and earnest attitude prevalent in ritual are completely the opposite of the atmosphere that characterizes play. According to Huizinga this object is not valid since there is in both an underlying consciousness of things “not being real”:⁸⁸⁾ “the unity and indivisibility of belief and unbelief, the indissoluble connection between sacred earnest and ‘make-believe’ . . . are best understood in the concept of play itself . . . in play as we conceive it, the distinction between belief and ‘make-believe’ breaks down; archaic ritual is sacred play.”⁸⁹⁾ “This precarious balance between seriousness and pretence is an unmistakable and integral part of culture as such, and the play-factor lies at the heart of all ritual and religion.”⁹⁰⁾

Thus J. Huizinga skillfully demonstrates that ritual is a higher form of play and brings out their common characteristics. However, he is less precise when it comes to the problem of drawing the distinction between simple play and sacred play. Play cannot be the last word on ritual. We cannot just assume that the ancestor cult is just a sacred play because this would not take account of the particular form play takes in the case

of ancestor worship. Adolf E. Jensen and Robert Caillois criticize and complete Huizinga's insights in this respect. Jensen says that two points distinguish the sacred feast from other forms of play :

1. In sacred play, an *experience* and a *cognition* of a deeper and more fundamental relationship to reality occur ; quoting Karl Kerényi, Jensen says, "From something present, something still more present has arisen, from a reality, an even higher reality."⁹¹⁾ R. Caillois also stresses the point that, although sacred play and simple play are both opposed to life, they are in a different way : sacred play is more serious than life and life more serious than play.⁹²⁾
2. Sacred play or cult is an expression, the re-enactment of the above-mentioned deeper cognition : the cult re-enacts the true order, the order under which man lives and which shapes his image of reality ; and as long as that world view retains its validity, later repetitions will reverberate with a residuum of the original creativity ; it is this residuum which marks the sacred play, which distinguishes it from "mere play."⁹³⁾

Now we will take up the different theoretical points made by the above three scholars and see how they help us in the further understanding of our subject. The insight of Huizinga about the correspondence of play and ritual in their formal characteristics has become common place. A memorial service or *o-bon* marks a standstill in ordinary life. As we have seen people do not exactly expect material profit from their ancestors, and services and *o-bon* proceed within their own proper bounda-

ries of time and space. Huizinga's remarks about that particular combination of seriousness and make-believe are more pertinent. During the performance of the ritual, indeed everything happens as if it were all very true, as if the ancestors were still existing. But then in the interviews, very few informants seem really to take the belief part of ritual serious. According to Huizinga we really do not have to choose either one: "We must always fall back on this lasting ambiguity."⁹⁴

Jensen's first correction is a corroboration of what we called different levels of intensified presence. If the rites are accompanied by any experience, this is always the experience: "From something present, something more present has arisen." During the daily offering, the ancestors, although present in the shelf, become more present for the worshipper. The same holds true for the services and still more for *o-bon*. This might be one of the meanings of the ambiguous *kimochi*, which we met so often. The ancestors are felt as if they were present but they are rationally known as not existing. In everyday life this intense feeling is absent; thus in an interview we might be only left with the rational part of the ritual. We will examine Jensen's second correction later since our analysis now confronts a new problem.

By presenting an indicator to distinguish between secular play and sacred play (When does secular play become sacred play?), Jensen and Caillois have opened a path for interpreting the phenomenon of secularization (When and how does sacred ritual become mere play?).

Secularization or religious change ?

In Huizinga's theory, the mere presence of an element of disbelief in the religious system is not *ipso facto* an indication of secularization, since disbelief is to a certain extent a built-in factor in ritual behavior. However, secularization may be a matter of proportion of belief and disbelief. If disbelief is the prevalent attitude, then folk belief has become folklore. We might come to some clarity on this subject by proceeding from the two poles existing almost in their pure state: complete belief and utter disbelief accompanying the performance of the ancestor cult. This sketch will serve then as a scale for measuring religious belief in Nagasawa. The scale we will establish is not foreign to the culture under investigation but taken from Japan's religious tradition itself. We will take as representative of the first pole Hirata Atsutane; the second pole will be represented by the Confucianist stream of thought which Hirata violently attacked:

1. *Hirata Atsutane versus Confucianists.* Hirata Atsutane professed in an unambiguous language his belief in the real existence of the ancestors.

“The soul of mankind... is never ending through all of the ages of eternity... As there are boundaries between the seen and unseen, we cannot see their (the souls) forms —though we cannot usually see them, they have not become extinct.⁹⁵⁾ After death a person becomes a soul... there is not any doubt that souls exist. And as they are without any doubt in the shrine shelves of every house, it is best to treat them carefully and not carelessly.”⁹⁶⁾

He attacks the wavering attitude of Confucianists in this matter:

“Confucianists and such like say there is no such thing as the soul and that after death everything is dispersed and lost like wind and fire and cannot be known. Such sayings are spread and people’s minds became steeped in such false sayings. As they are not sure whether the soul exists or not though they make offerings before the souls, it is done in a careless way.”⁹⁷⁾

According to Hirata Atsutane, the Confucianists’ misconception stems from a wrong interpretation of Confucius’ attitude who really believed.

“In his Analects it is written how he worshipped as if his ancestors were actually present. ‘In worshipping he worshipped as if his ancestors were actually present. In worshipping gods, he worshipped as if the gods were present.’ This shows that Confucius, whether he worshipped the gods of heaven and earth, or worshipped the souls of his ancestors, behaved just as if the bodily presence of these gods was visible, showing thus that in the wise heart of Confucius there was sure knowledge that the gods existed, and he acted accordingly. With regard to this matter, some Confucians misunderstand Confucius and say that his doctrine was ‘worship as if the gods are present,’ since he said ‘In worshipping the gods, act as if they are present.’ But this is not so (he acted as if the gods were really present).”⁹⁸⁾

We set aside the question of the validity of Hirata’s interpretation of Confucius’ attitude. However, it is interesting to note that Hirata’s interpretation and the Confucianists’ inter-

pretation of symbolic behaviour coincide respectively with what P. Tillich calls the positive and negative interpretation of symbols.⁹⁹⁾

If a shift occurs within the first position — one theological explanation taking the place of another within the realm of positive interpretations — this is a phenomenon of religious change. Converts to Nichiren-shū, Nichiren-shōshū and the Risshōkōseikai are examples. For all of them, the reality of the ancestors has become loaded with more precise meanings. The Nichiren-shōshū followers, for instance, strongly believe that the ancestors cannot rest in peace as long as they suffer the evil influences of the “evil” religions to which they adhered during their life.

However, when the change takes place from the positive to the negative position, when belief is followed by disbelief, the religious change takes the form of secularization. To locate this phenomenon, and still more, to measure it is difficult because religious change is usually a latent process, carried on beneath symbols of non-change.¹⁰⁰⁾

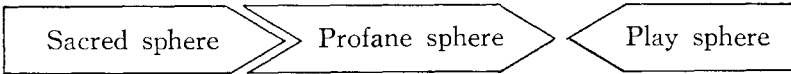
2. *The process of secularization.* Theoretically the conditions of the process can be spelled out even in the case of folk religion. Let us return for that to R. Caillois' triple division of life: sacred — profane — play.

“The sacred and the play dimension both are outside the realm of daily life . . . Play, however, is free activity in its purest form, it does not have a content and does not have effects on another plane besides its own. In relation to life, play is pleasure and entertainment. But life, on the contrary, in its relation to the sacred is itself but vanity

and diversion Play must avoid real life : categories of real life brought into the realm of play destroy life on first impact. Life, on the contrary, is depending upon, suspended at the sacred."¹⁰¹⁾

Graphically this may be expressed as follows :

Utter Seriousness > Seriousness > Diversion

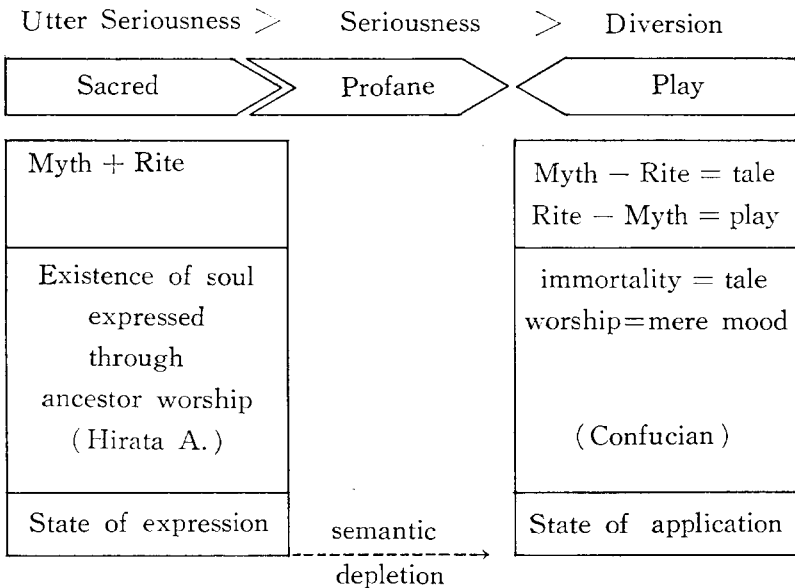


The relation of irreconcilability between the play sphere and real life is clear. But related to ancestor worship, what is meant by stating that the sacred is such a necessity and so indispensable for normal life ? Jensen gives the answer in his first point where he speaks about experience and cognition. We will simply apply it to our case. Ancestor worship in its cognitive aspect is an answer to a fundamental human problem : death. It gives a meaning to mortality which in itself is merely disruptive and meaningless. Therefore profane life depends upon the sacred for a meaningful answer to this problem. By this a deeper and more fundamental relationship to the reality of death is established.

Thus ancestor worship in its religious aspect provides man with a frame through which he is able to face a mortal existence.¹⁰²⁾ This insight (that is the myth) finds then a more or less exhaustive representation in rite or ceremony.¹⁰³⁾ With its repetition the rite becomes custom, and thus can this insight be communicated and transmitted : through participation in the rites, everyone is able to partake and make the myth his own. But "Like all other cultural phenomena, customs

relentlessly move from the 'expressive' stage into that of an 'application.' According to an inescapable law, anything that culture has created must grow more distant from the content of the creative idea ; finally it will be only a pale reflection of this original 'expression.'"¹⁰⁴) This process is a process of semantic depletion — namely, of the waning of the original meaning, a kind of spiritual entropy.

When the meaning of the insight expressed in the myth has thus passed away, the myth loses its relevance, its importance for daily life. The rite also loses its relevance: "Without the myth, the rite becomes a mere ineffective action, empty gestures, a powerless reproduction of the ceremony, a mere play. And myth without rite becomes a mere play of words, without content or import, just empty words."¹⁰⁵) We can represent this as follows :



What has happened is that the play element, the non-serious element and the formal element, present from the beginning in the rite (since the rite is only an *inadequate* acting out of the original insight) has taken the upperhand at the expense of the serious, the belief element, the original insight, the experience. Huizinga expresses this in the following way :

“Living myth knows no distinction between play and seriousness. Only when myth has become mythology, that is, literature, borne along as traditional lore by a culture which has in the meantime more or less outgrown the primitive imagination, only then will the contrast between play and seriousness apply to myth and to its detriment. There is a curious intermediate phase, which the Greeks knew, when the myth is still sacred, and consequently ought to be serious, but is well understood to speak the language of the past. . . . To the degree that belief in the literal truth of the myth diminishes, the play element, which had been proper to it from the beginning, will re-assert itself with increasing force.”¹⁰⁶⁾

3. *The survival.* Once arrived at its final stage of semantic depletion, the cultural phenomenon might not fit very well any more in the overall cultural system. Then the cultural phenomenon has become a survival. “Survivals,” says Jensen, “having their origin in earlier culture strata, make statements about reality which are no longer experienced as true. Even where they are still comprehensible, they often contradict the central idea of the newer world view.”¹⁰⁷⁾ However, no cultural phenomenon, however much it may be drained from its semantic content, dies a natural death. The strengthened play

element in itself may be of significance for its continuance or the fact simply that “our fathers did so” might be a sufficient reason for the respectful observance of it. Moreover, without a special stimulus, man does not think of jolting that which is established or of re-examining its intellectual foundation. If the custom does not gain new life by acquiring a new meaning or if it is not eliminated by opposing forces — it will continue to exist in spite of its semantic deficiency.¹⁰⁸⁾

Before a cultural phenomenon reaches this final state, it will have passed through different stages of semantic depletion. It is therefore necessary to examine any cultural configuration in order to see the extent to which it has maintained contact with its original and proper meaning.

4. *Evaluation of the situation in Nagasawa.* What we would call the Hirata-type of belief is definitely a small minority. From the 20 families we investigated more closely, some five might approach this belief. The old man who felt himself continuously in the presence of the ancestors, the old woman whose four sons returned safely from the war and the Nichiren followers seemed to believe almost literally in the truth of the myth and in the efficiency of the rite. A Risshōkōseikai member can also be placed in this first group. For these people the ancestors are active and alive and maintain particular relationships with the living. This group corresponds to the third variety of religious experience.

Most of the other informants would find themselves somewhere along the road of the process of semantic depletion. A more refined framework of analysis and a deeper acquaintance with the informants would make possible a more detailed dif-

ferentiation. However, we can say at least the following :

Ancestor worship seems for this group — mostly older people and traditional Buddhists — to have been stripped from its other-worldly or supernatural aspects. For them belief in the intervening power of the ancestors is on the way out. It seems to me that Hirata Atsutane would have considered many of the villagers as victims of the pernicious influence of Confucianism.

Huizinga spoke about an intermediary phase when the myth was still sacred but at the same time was commonly understood to speak the language of the past. We have the impression that the myth of the ancestors is not sacred any more and definitely a language of the past for traditional Buddhism in the village. The rite on the contrary is still considered sacred in a certain sense and is not given up: not even the rather elaborate rites of the building of the *shōrōdana* or of the welcome and sending-off fires. The new family shelves and the new boxes for the ancestral tablets are another proof of this. By the younger generation, this might be looked upon as mere play and doomed to disappear very soon, like the *kagura* performance did at the yearly autumn festival of the village. But still, when the young grow up, the motive that “our fathers did so” might be strong enough to prevent the custom from falling into disuse.

The strongest dissociation from the practice of ancestor worship we met was the opinion of the woman in her thirties who made it clear that it was all meaningless and rather a burden, but one she would eventually have to take over at the proper time. In this case the evidence indicates that we are dealing with a mere survival...and that the survival will

indeed persist, if no stronger forces will act upon it in the future.

Ancestor worship and the style of culture

We have seen how, through participation in ritual, certain dispositions are instilled in the participant. Their impact, however, transcends the boundaries of ritual and colors the individual's everyday activity. It gives a certain stamp to a wide range of experience and molds it into a certain form.¹⁰⁹⁾ R. Firth calls the examination of this aspect of religion the investigation of the fourth order of meaning: the relation of the most general characteristics of the religious system to major issues of the social life and individual participation.¹¹⁰⁾

This relation between society and religion can be conceived in two ways: the society influences religion or religion affects society. When we speak about the relation between ancestor worship and the surrounding society, we do not assume that this relationship is necessarily such a unilinear causal relationship.¹¹¹⁾ For Hirata Atsutane, a causal relation of religion upon society is evident: "The man who understands and treats the gods and his parents with care is one who is strong in the right and he will of course behave loyally in his heart towards his lord and will be true to his friends and loving and charitable towards his wife and children."¹¹²⁾ But he also implicitly admits the influence of society upon religion since he holds the Confucianists responsible for the decay of the ancestor cult. The relationship between ancestor worship and society is complex: ancestor worship reflects the society, is determined by it and at the same time shapes it. Thus we do not think

it possible to come to any conclusive statements about specific correlations between certain ritual acts and particular social ties.¹¹³⁾ We would rather concentrate upon what Tillich calls the “style” of a whole culture¹¹⁴⁾ in as far as it corresponds to the values present in a part of that culture, in the present case, ancestor worship. It is thus on a rather abstract level that we want to indicate the congruence of those values of the part with the whole as our conclusion.

The ancestor cult creates order in the passing of time as experienced in the household. It gives order to the inevitable fact of death and by the same token orders life: everybody is destined to become an ancestor. The order is structured as a process where the stages leading to this final purpose of life are clearly outlined (memorial services, steps on the path to ancestorhood). Everybody finds himself in due time on the appropriate stage. The shift from one stage to the next and the acquisition of this new status are not the result of individual endeavour or personal achievement of the subject himself. The outsiders have a certain power over him, because it is thanks to their loyalty that one can become an ancestor. But their power of intervention is limited; the order is fixed and only when the time is ripe will the change occur almost as the result of a natural growth.

Life, however, is capricious and cannot but incompletely be brought into an ideal order; provisions for anomalies have to be made (*muenbotoke*); disorder resulting from irregularities is allotted a special place (*tatari*), *en marge* of the main body of order. This localized disorder, however, entertains only dim relations with the main body of order. It does not stand in

a dialectical tension with it, is not a threat to it, is not of equal importance.

The order thus created is but the inner order of one group (the *ie*), not between two or more of such groups. Within this group, however, there is not an order of unchangeable objects; it is one of a living organism, and its main purpose is thus to provide for orderly change, development and normal growth.

A newcomer into the group will only be gradually introduced: a certain assimilation period is necessary (in the world of ritual this period will be provided for a child, a bride or a dead soul). The process of assimilation is smoothed by a third party (for the soul the priest at the funeral), whose role will lessen gradually but whose influence won't disappear completely. Inside the group every member is dependent upon the others so that the main theme of relationship is acknowledging one's dependency. This feeling of dependency extends even to the new member who will thus spontaneously be welcomed in such a way that the others seem to be dependent upon him. However, the more the new member becomes assimilated, the more he will grow dependent upon the others.

It is not always possible to even out the *giri*, resulting from the dependency upon the others; besides, it is not necessary. The symbolic effort, however, is necessary to manifest that one is aware of one's indebtedness. Gifts or offerings are thus important. However, the giving itself is what counts more than the gift. This might seem pure formalism if one misses the point that what matters is not the content of the act but the dependence and gratitude expressed by it, the acknowledgement

of a link.

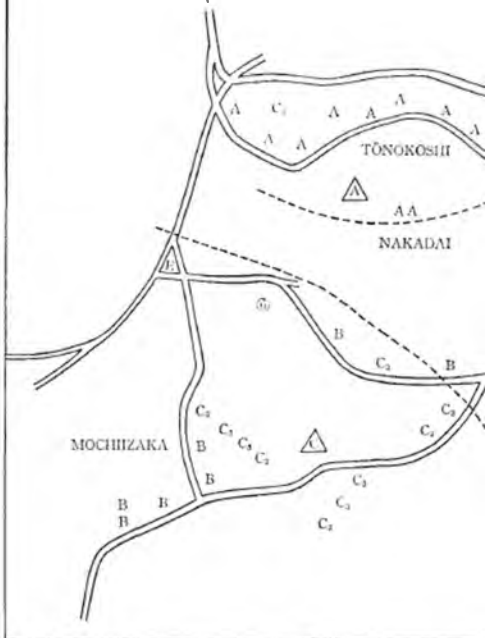
Any new member of a group has to sever his links (*en*) with the former group of his allegiance, but this also happens gradually and in an established way (ancestors come back home, brides pay regular visits to their native home). Since the ties with the group are so important, any breaking of them causes loneliness. Thus any remedy to this isolation is cast in forms that take away this loneliness within the framework of ancestor worship (the victory over death is a victory over the loneliness caused by the breaking of the ties).¹¹⁵⁾ Finally, the one who severs his ties with the established order in an undue manner stands really alone, and this is really death (*muenbotoke* and outcasts).

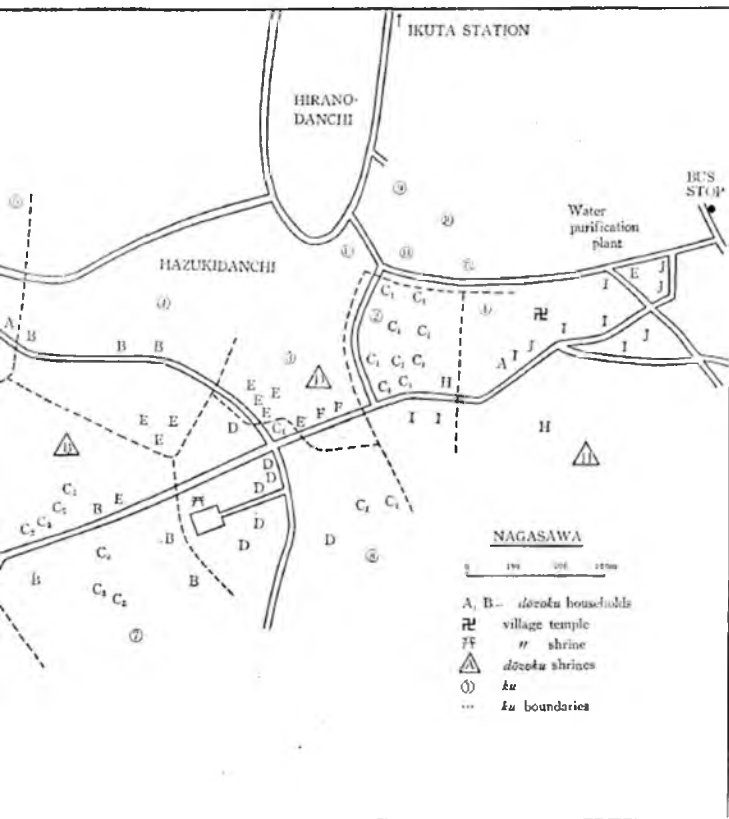
The present paper has made an attempt at a multifaceted study of an old, familiar subject. We thought indeed that an anthropological study of a phenomenon such as ancestor worship, which has a religious dimension, should not be limited to a mere analysis of its social elements or its legal aspects, both of which have lost much of their importance in a modernized society like Japan. A structural analysis of the symbol system and a behavioral approach to the examination of the belief component are necessary for a fuller understanding and for further fruitful comparative studies of ancestor worship.

Appendix 1



YOMURI
RANDOMAI
STATION





Herman Ooms

Appendix 2

Population of Nagasawa

C. 1815: Nagasawa+3 other hamlets : 112 households

1918: id. : 147

Nagasawa :		Farming households	Non-farming	Total
1918		47	—	47
1927		87	—	87
1949		97	48	145
1960		90	53(1)	142
1962		89	237	326
1965		89	536	625

(1) From these 53 households 37 could be located and all were found to be situated at the outskirts of the village territory.

<i>ku</i>	Farming households	Non-farming households 1965 (1963)	Total (1965)
1	9	20 (7)	27
2	10	20 (10)	30
3	7	9 (2)	16
4	7	1 (1)	8
5	14	12 (8)	26
6 Upper	9	11 (2)	20
Lower	9	31 (5)	40
7 Upper	7	8 (14)	15
Lower	7	9	16
8	10	2 (1)	12
9	—	18 (13)	18
10	—	16 (16)	16
11	—	23 (19)	23
12	—	12 (—)	12
13	—	26 (—)	26
Nakadai	—	70 (—)	70
Hirano	—	136 (?)	136
Hazuki	—	114 (?)	114

Grand Total 625

Appendix 3

Buddhist Affiliation of the Dozoku

(In numbers of households)

Sect	<i>Dōzoku</i>											
	Temple	A	B	C ₁	C ₂	C ₃	D	E	F	H	J	K
Sōtō	Seigen (Nagasaki)	10	12				6	9		2	5	2
	Shukō				7	9						
Shingi-Shingon, Tōzan	Ōzen			8								
	Kōfuku		1 ^c				1 ^j	1 ^l	2			2
Shinshū, Hongan	Chōnen	2 ^a										
	Saishō			2 ^f								
Nichiren	Mikai		1 ^d	1 ^g								
Nichiren-shōshū		1 ^b				1 ⁱ	1 ^k					1 ^m
Risshōkōseikai			1 ^e	1 ^h								

The majority of the households of one *dōzoku* belong to the same temple. The reasons for the exceptions are as follows:

- a. These two households relate to each other as stem and branch family. Some generations back a different family occupied the stem house. This family belonged to the Chōnen temple and when the first generation of A *dōzoku* took over the farm, the temple affiliation was taken over also.
- b. The successor to one house of A was introduced by his friends into the Nichiren-shōshū.
- c. Unclear.
- d. Because of numerous cases of sickness in the family, they joined Nichiren-shū.
- e. A non-farming household. The housewife became a member of the Risshōkōseikai, upon recommendation of some friends. Family temple is the Seigen temple.
- f. Unclear.
- g. Two children died and the third fell sick. Out of fear that the family line might die out and in order to prevent that, the family religion was changed to the Nichiren-shū.

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- h.* Unclear.
- i.* The housewife was ill for three years and was healed after having joined the Nichiren-shōshū.
- j.* The stem family of this house, four generations ago, was the one family of B *dōzoku* which also belongs to the Kōfuku temple.
- k.* The housewife was a member of the Nichiren-shōshū from before her marriage.
- l.* The oldest household and general stem family (*sōhonke*) of the B *dōzoku*
- m.* Same case as *k.*

Notes

- 1) G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (1933), New York, Harper and Row, 1963, 312.
- 2) W. Crooke, "Ancestor Worship" in *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1917, Vol. I, 427.
- 3) M. Fortes, *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion*, Cambridge U. Press, 1959.
J. Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors: A study of the mortuary customs of the Lodagaa of West Africa*. Stanford U. Press, 1962.
J. Middleton, *Lugbara Religion: Ritual and Authority among an East African People*, Oxford U. Press, 1960.
- 4) Rober J. Smith, "Ihai: Mortuary tablets, the household and kin in Japanese ancestor worship" in *The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Third Series, Vol. 9 (May, 1966), 83.
- 5) Cf. *Nihon Minzokugaku Taikei*, Heibonsha, Vol. 3, 277—278.
- 6) John F. Embree, *Suye Mura, A Japanese Village*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1939.
- 7) Kitano Seiichi, "'Dōzoku' and 'ie' in Japan: the meaning of family genealogical relationship" in Robert J. Smith and Richard K. Beardsley eds., *Japanese Culture: its development and characteristics*, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, no. 34, 1962.
- 8) R. P. Dore, *City Life in Japan, A Study of a Tokyo Ward* (1958), U. of California Press, 1965.
- 9) David W. Plath, "Where the Family of God is the Family: The Role of Dead in Japanese Households" in *American Anthropologist*, 66 (1964),
- 10) R. J. Smith, op. cit.
- 11) Hozumi Nobushige, *Ancestor Worship and Japanese Law*, Tokyo, Maruzen, 1901.
- 12) Yanagita Kunio, *Senzo no hanashi* (Comments on Ancestor Worship), Yanagita Kunio Shū Vol. 10, Chikuma Shobō, 1964, 7—8.
- 13) Ariga Kizaemon, *Nihon no Kazoku* (The Family in Japan), Shibundō, 1965, Ch. 5 "Senzo no Kannen (Ancestral Concepts)".
- 14) Takeda Chōshū, *Sosen sūhai: Minzoku to Rekishi* (Ancestor worship — Its folklore and history), Kyoto, Heirakujishoten, 1957.
- 15) 1. *Nihonjin no Kokuminsei* (National Character of the Japanese), Tōkei-sūri Kenkyūjo, Kokuminsei Chōsaiinkai, Shiseidō, 1961.
In the national survey of 1953, the question was asked of 2254 people: "Do you venerate the ancestors or don't you venerate them?" 77% gave a

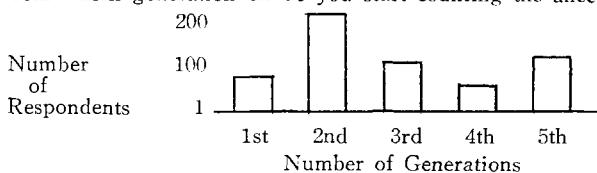
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positive answer, and only 5% responded negatively. People in their fifties and up, however, showed a higher positive percentage: 87% (p.422). It is unfortunate that the same informants were not asked about their belief in the afterlife, since some meaningful correlation might have appeared. In 1958, however, 920 people were asked: "Do you believe in an afterlife?" The answers were 20% positive and 59% negative. For people over 50 the positive answers rose to 35%, the negative dropped to 41% (p.412). Thus rejection out of principle is much stronger in this case than in the former. From this survey, we can only conjecture that there is no positive correlation between ancestor worship and belief in the afterlife. As far as ancestor worship itself is concerned, we are left completely in the dark as to the content of this "veneration": some respondents, as the commentators of the survey remark, will have answered positively because they make their yearly *hakamairi* (visit to the grave), others will answer negatively because they limit themselves to this yearly *hakamairi*.

2. NHK TV Channel 1 presented in the program *Seikatsu no Chie, Gosenzosama* (Wisdom of Life—The Ancestors) of 21 September, 1966, the results of interviews with 500 apartment dwellers from Tokyo and Sendai:

1. Visit to the grave — Sendai: 99% (3 times a year)
— Tokyo 80% (2 times a year)
2. Possession of family shelf:

	Two generation households	Three generation households
Sendai	56%	91%
Tokyo	38%	50%
3. Have spoken in a certain way with the ancestors: 97%
4. From which generation on do you start counting the ancestors?



- 16) The observation of the general life of the village was carried out during a period of 15 months: from June, 1965, till September, 1966. The author did not take up residence in the village during this period but paid about 25 visits, some of them taking up several days in the community. During this time he observed the *o-bon*, *segaki* and *higan* etc. and engaged in long conversations with the villagers. Some households were visited three to four times. The average time per household for the 20 households of the two *dōzoku* investigated more intensively was two hours.
- 17) See for a parallel case in Horace Miner, *St. Denis, A French-Canadian*

- Parish*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, (1939), Third impression 1963, 234—235.
- 18) R. Firth, "Problem and Assumption in an Anthropological Study of Religion" in R. Firth, *Essays on Social Organization and Values*, London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology, University of London, The Athlone Press, 1964, 256.
 - 19) Hashimoto, "Ōmi no Muenbotoke (The *Muenbotoke* of Ōmi)" in *Seigō Minzoku*, 13 (1960), "Muenbotoke," 48.
 - 20) These three parts of the ceremony are not without resemblance to those parts of the Catholic Mass where the assembly feels itself associated with what happens at the altar: the sermon, the offering (pecuniary offering, not incense) and the reception of the sacred gift (communion).
 - 21) Miura Hideyū, "Bisaku no Muenbotoke (The *Muenbotoke* of Bisaku)," *Seigō Minzoku* op. cit. 51, Oshima Takehiko, "Senzo to Muenbotoke (Ancestors and *Muenbotoke*)," *ibid.* p. 14.
 - 22) In the Catholic Church such memorial masses for the dead are customary also. It seems that masses have replaced earlier memorial banquets. Around 170 A.D. a mass was said on the 3rd day after the funeral, symbolizing the resurrection of Christ three days after his death, and at the anniversary. In the 4th century the 7th and 30th day (or the 9th and 40th day) after the funeral were customary. Cf. Buchberger Michael, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. 2. Auflage. Freiburg, Herder, Vol. X, 271, "Totengedächtnis."
 - 23) R. J. Kirby, "Ancestral Worship in Japan," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* Vol. 38 (1910—22), 258.
 - 24) Laurence Wylie, *Village in the Vaucluse*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Press, (1957) 4th edit. 1961, 338.
 - 25) D. W. Plath, op. cit. 301—304.
 - 26) R. J. Kirby, op. cit. 234.
 - 27) Yanagita Kunio, op. cit. 7.
 - 28) Ariga Kizaemon, op. cit. 255.
 - 29) This precludes us from calling them *dōzokudan*; cf. Nakane Chie, "Nippon Dōzoku Kōzō no Bunseki (Structural Analysis of the Dōzoku of Japan)," *Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo Kiyō*, 28 (1962), 149.
 - 30) *Ibid.* 143.
 - 31) In his study of a French-Canadian parish, Horace Miner relates that eight farming families, all bearing the same name as descendants from the first settlers and living next to each other, do not consider themselves relatives beyond the fourth generation.

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- 32) Yanagita Kunio, op. cit. 22.
- 33) Sojun Moroto, *Ancestor Worship in China*, in *Proceedings of the IXth International Congress for the History of Religions*, Tokyo, Maruzen, 1960, 147.
- 34) Ariga Kizaemon, op. cit. 22, 72; Takeda Chōshū, op. cit. 20, 87; Hozumi Nobushige, op. cit. 121, 150.
- 35) Cf. p. 40.
- 36) Yanagita Kunio, op. cit. 45.
- 37) This practice of putting in a soul (*tamashi-ireru*) is customary with Jizō, *Bosatsu*, (in this case it is called *kaigan* 開眼), *tōba* and *ihai* (called *tengan* 点眼) — not however with *kaimyō*. The fact that neither *ihai* nor *tōba* can be disposed of in the same way as old *kaimyō* or the little horses at *o-bon* are, might come from the belief that the souls of the ancestors reside in them. Berthold Laufer also speaks about what he calls a “punctuation ceremony” of the *ihai* in China, cf. Berthold Laufer, “The Development of Ancestral Images in China” in W. A. Lessa, E. Z. Vogt, *Reader in Comparative Religion, An Anthropological Approach*, New York, Harper and Row, Sec. Ed. 1965, 447.
- 38) Yanagita Kunio, op. cit. 72; cf. other cases in *Seigō Minzoku* op. cit. 8.
- 39) We started to list the kinship relations of the deceased whose names were recorded on *kaimyō*. This however proved useless in different ways. First of all, it seemed to put the patience of the informants to too big a test to justify the presence of each *kaimyō*, and moreover it puts them too often to shame when they are unable to answer, which might be a hindrance for further collaboration in other matters. Moreover these *kaimyō* are only stacked in the *butsudan* and are never looked at again, so that they are irrelevant if their name is not recorded afterwards in the *kakochō* and if the *kakochō* is not used in the daily worship.
- 40) R. J. Smith, op. cit. 89.
- 41) Ibid. 100.
- 42) This was also true in a house where the (younger) housewife was native of Nagasawa, and could thus have a greater knowledge of the background of the family where she married in, than a wife who married into the village.
- 43) R. J. Kirby, op. cit. 239.
- 44) Ibid. 248.
- 45) Francis L. K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestors' Shadow, Chinese Culture and Personality*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1948, 215—217.
- 46) Radcliffe-Brown, op. cit. 155.

- 47) J. Milton Yinger, *Religion, Society and the Individual, An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, New York, Macmillan, 1957, 59.
- 48) J. Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, The University of Chicago Press (1944), 1962, 60.
- 49) Nakane Chie, op. cit. 143.
- 50) Hashimoto Tatsumi, *Sosen sūhai to nichijō seikatsu* (Ancestor Worship and Everyday Life), Shinkō Ryōshosen, 1958.
- 51) J. M. Yinger, op. cit. 76.
- 52) C. Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural Symtax" in W. A. Lessa and E. Z. Vogt, op. cit. 206: "The symbolic dimension of social events is, like the psychological, itself theoretically abstractable from those events as empirical totalities."
- 53) Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils, "Values, Motives and Systems of Action" in Talcott Parsons and E. A. Shils, ed., *Toward a General Theory of Action*, New York, Harper and Row (1951), 1962, 173: "Systems of action are functional systems; cultural systems are systems in which the components have logical or meaningful rather than functional relationships with one another ... in cultural systems the systematic feature is coherence; the components of the cultural system are either logically consistent or meaningfully congruous."
- 54) R. Firth, op. cit. 236—237.
- 55) Richard C. Sheldon, "Some Observations on a Theory in Social Science" in T. Parsons and E. A. Shils, ed., op. cit. 40.
- 56) The practice of giving a posthumous name (called *imyō* 異名) is also customary at Shinto funerals. Cf. Yanagita Kunio, op. cit. 77.
- 57) G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, New York, Harper and Row (1933), 194: "Birth and death pertain to each other, and rites at birth are often exactly similar to the customs to be observed at death."
- 58) *Ibid.*, 183: "We found that uniformity of the person and constancy in form were dependent on the Name; we need hardly be suprised, therefore, that the abandonment of will and form implies also a loss of the name of the power."
- 59) There exist three ranks in the posthumous names, besides the one preserved for children. The plainest *kaimyō* is that which adds *koji* 居士 for men, *daishi* 大姉 for women. The second rank adds *in* 院 before the former two endings. The first rank adds *inden* 院殿 before the endings. Nowadays this ranking seems of little importance.
- 60) Yanagita Kunio, op. cit. 95.

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- 61 Kirby, op. cit. 256: "His soul is divided into many like the flame. It is naturally in the cemetery and should he have ten children who worship it is in each of their houses. The soul is divided into many, and going to the burial place is necessary."
- 62) B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, New York, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955, 273, 219.
- 63) Sakaguchi Kazuo, "Soreika no shoso to sono shisaisha (Different aspects of the process of becoming an ancestral soul and the officiant)" in *Nihon Minzokugaku*, Vol. 3 (1955), 3.
- 64) Robert Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*, Glencoe, Free Press (1907), 1960, 150.
- 65) C. Geertz, op. cit. 212.
- 66) R. Hertz, op. cit. 85.
- 67) R. Firth, op. cit. 231.
- 68) C. Geertz, op. cit. 209.
- 69) Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, (1922), Boston, Beacon Press, 1964, 142—143.
- 70) This *hiaki* 日開 (opening day) differs for boys and girls. The one of the girls (33rd day after birth) is later than the one of the boys (31st day after birth) because girls seem to suffer more from blood pollution (*chiboku*); the purification is called *bokuyoke*. The *Sōgō Nihon Minzoku Goi* (General Dictionary of Japanese Folklore), Heibonsha, 1955, Vol. 2, 923, "chibuku", Vol. 3, 1351, "bukudane," explains the word *boku* as a deformation of *fuku*, dress worn at times of pollution at childbirth (*chiboku*) or at times of mourning (*shiboku*).
- 71) C. Geertz, op. cit. 207—208.
- 72) R. Firth, "Study of Values by Social Anthropologists," op. cit. 221.
- 73) Rodney Stark, "A Taxonomy of Religious Experience" in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, V (1965), 1, 97—116.
- 74) Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*, Chicago, Rand McNally, 1965.
- 75) The framework of analysis for the diversification of religious experience is inspired by Rodney Stark's taxonomy, referred to earlier.
- 76) R. Firth (op. cit. 245) urges differentiations between levels of religious contact and levels of religious experience: "In using a symbol carrier, people do not necessarily use the symbol."
- 77) Hashimoto Tatsumi, op. cit., introduction to the 3rd edition. R.P. Dore, op. cit. 330, 337.

- 78) Yanagita Kunio, op. cit. 11.
- 79) Cf. Hirata's statement: "though we cannot usually see them, they have not become extinct," in Kirby, op. cit. 236.
- 80) B. Malinowski op. cit. 11.
- 81) C. Geertz, op. cit. 214.
- 82) Cf. R. P. Dore, op. cit. 308.
- 83) Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens, A study of the play element in culture*, (1938), London, The Beacon Press, 1964, 4.
- 84) Ibid. 6.
- 85) Ibid. 8.
- 86) Ibid. 9; cf. definitions of play, pp. 13, 132.
- 87) Ibid. 18.
- 88) Ibid. 22.
- 89) Ibid. 24, 25.
- 90) Ibid. 191; see also Roger Caillois, *L'Homme et le Sacré* (1939), Paris, Gallimard, 3me ed., 1950, p. 213. "Intense religious emotion goes always together with a representation that we know is simulated, with a spectacle that we are aware of as a mere play, yet do not regard as dupery or mere diversion." (All quotations from R. Caillois are translations made by the author.)
- 91) A. E. Jensen, op. cit. 52—53.
- 92) R. Caillois, op. cit. 217, 221.
- 93) A. E. Jensen, op. cit. 53, 58.
- 94) J. Huizinga, op. cit. 191.
- 95) Kirby, op. cit. 236.
- 96) Ibid. 252—53.
- 97) Ibid. 251.
- 98) Ibid. 239—40.
- 99) P. Tillich, "The Religious Symbol" in Rollo May, ed., *Symbolism in Religion and Literature*, New York, George Braziller, 1961, p. 78—81.
- 100) J. Milton Yinger, *Sociology Looks at Religion*, New York, Macmillan, 1963, p. 70; A. N. Whitehead notes that "symbolic elements in life have a tendency to run wild, like the vegetation in a tropical forest ... It seems probably that in any ceremonial which has lasted through many epochs, the symbolic interpretation, so far as we can obtain it, varies much more rapidly than does the actual ceremonial. Also in its flux, a symbol will have different meanings for different people." (A. N. Whitehead, "Uses of

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Symbolism," in Rollo May ed., op. cit. 233, 235).

- 101) R. Caillois, op. cit. 221.
- 102) A. E. Jensen, op. cit. 66.
- 103) Ibid. 194.
- 104) Ibid. 193.
- 105) R. Caillois, op. cit. 221—22.
- 106) J. Huizinga, op. cit. 129—30. Cf. also Rollo May ed., Rollo May, "The Significance of Symbols," 17, and Paul Tillich, op. cit. 95.
- 107) A. E. Jensen, op. cit. 37.
- 108) Ibid. 77.
- 109) C. Geertz, op. cit. 214—215.
- 110) The three other orders of meaning are:
 1. The assignment of limited meanings to a whole range of items of non-verbal behaviour so that they can be understood in their immediate context.
 2. The more general understanding of the major aspects and qualities of the religious system.
 3. The relation of the religious system to other features of the social system (R. Firth, op. cit. 231—232).

Cf. also A. R. Radcliffe Brown, op. cit. 169: "We must study religions *in action*: we must try to discover the effects of active participation in a particular cult, first the direct effects on the individual and then the further effects on the society of which these individuals are members."
- 111) Gerhard Lenski, *The Religious Factor* (1961), Double Day, New York, Rev. Ed., 1963, 24, note 29, pp. 26—28.
- 112) Kirby, op. cit. 240.
- 113) C. Geertz, op. cit. 215.
- 114) P. Tillich, op. cit. 81.
- 115) Cf. also Hirata Atsutane (Kirby, op. cit. 239): "The descendants are the staves they can lean upon, and if these descendants are absent, we know their ancestors' souls must be lonely."