

OF TALISMANS AND SHADOW BODIES
—ANNUAL PURIFICATION RITES AT A TOKYO SHRINE—

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I

Prelude: The Completion of the Circle

Ask an American or a Britisher what a “talisman” is, and he will probably tell you it has something to do with the insignia of knighthood or the tools of the conjuror. In Japan talismans are more commonplace and far removed from these heroic or occult connotations. In Japan we are closer to the original meaning of the English word, which comes to us from the ancient Greeks. *Telesma* meant simply a payment or a completion. The verb *telein* meant to complete or to initiate (given the recognition that every completion is an initiation, every end a beginning). A talisman seals a bargain, closes a deal, consecrates a covenant. The language of the priest often resembles the language of the merchant—an opportune discovery to have made at this early juncture, for in this essay we are concerned with a religious tradition that represents a harmonious marriage of priestly scrupulosity and mercantile enthusiasm, the tradition that has as its focus the neighborhood Shinto shrine. The neighborhood shopkeepers are its supporters, the priests its masters of ceremony, and the *matsuri* their concelebration. I refer, of course, to the

taisai, the major annual festival of the shrine and community. In my adoptive Tokyo neighborhood the *taisai* was celebrated early in September and had all the characteristics of an autumn festival, a rejoicing at the bringing in of the harvest—and this in a neighborhood where it sometimes seemed that the only harvest was the harvest of automobile exhaust.

How does the archaic agrarian festival survive in this atmosphere of pavement and pollution? It survives because its central principle, the principle of reciprocity, is still working: something is given, and something is received.

The priest opens the sanctuary doors and calls down the *kami*, the spirit who presides over the community (their “collective representation,” the French would say). The *kami* is carried through the streets and byways of each section of the shrine parish on a shoulder-borne ark by the young men. The spirit of the festival (a spirit of generosity, as any priest or merchant will tell you) enters every block. There is folk dancing in the evenings, on the school playground, in an empty lot, or in the street; parents gather their children and walk to the shrine, perhaps buying them sweets and balloons and a pet goldfish. They stop to watch that playful bit of solemnity, the *kagura* (mythic mime offered to the *kami* as a gift from his people). Finally, they pitch a coin or two into the collection box at the shrine’s porch. The *kami* has given to them, by emerging from the shrine and cleansing their homes and community. Now they in turn have given to him.

It would be logical for them now to pick up a talisman and carry it home to signify a new beginning, the sealing of bonds, the completion of the circle of *o-matsuri*. It would be logical,

but it will not happen that way. The talismans will be collected at the shrine shortly after midnight on New Year's Day. The circle of the *taisai* will not be completed until just after New Year's Eve, the time for the completion of all circles, all interchanges between man and the *kami*, all rounds of reciprocity.

II

December Purification Rites: A Field Report on Local Shrine Practices

Distribution, Use, and Return of the *Katashiro*

Examine the New Year rites themselves, and you will find the same principle of reciprocity operative. From the point of view of neighborhood shrine practices alone, the New Year cycle begins when the shrine priest (*kannushi*) and his family prepare the *katashiro*.

Katashiro are stylized paper cutouts, shaped more or less like a kimono spread flat. They are the sacramental substance, the outward and visible sign which will serve as the conveyance for the impurities of the individual parishioner (*ujiko*) in an expiation rite appropriate to the year's end—a rite in which one rids himself of all the accumulated pollutions and contaminations of the past year (really a half year, as we shall see) in preparation for being reborn into the new world of January, innocent and clean.

We cannot really call this action sacramental (Paul Tillich defined a sacrament as something tangible with the holy shining through), for what "shines through" the *katashiro* is something unholy. This is a negative sacrament, an effusion rather than an infusion. But the paper cutout is its receptacle. It will

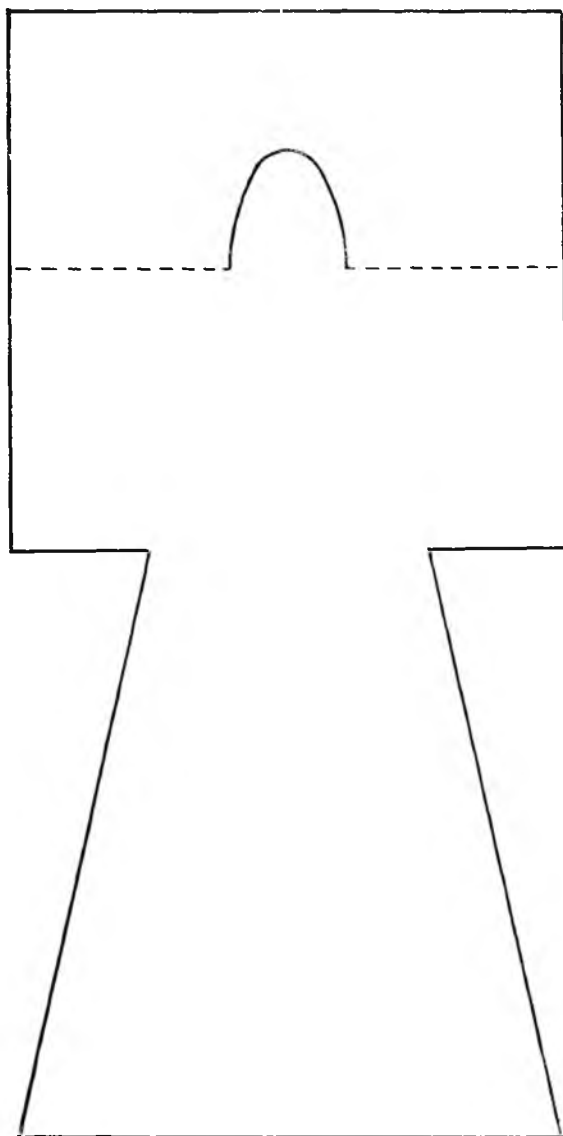


Fig. 1. Pattern for the man's *katashiro*, to be cut from white paper.
The solid lines are to be cut, the dotted lines to be folded.

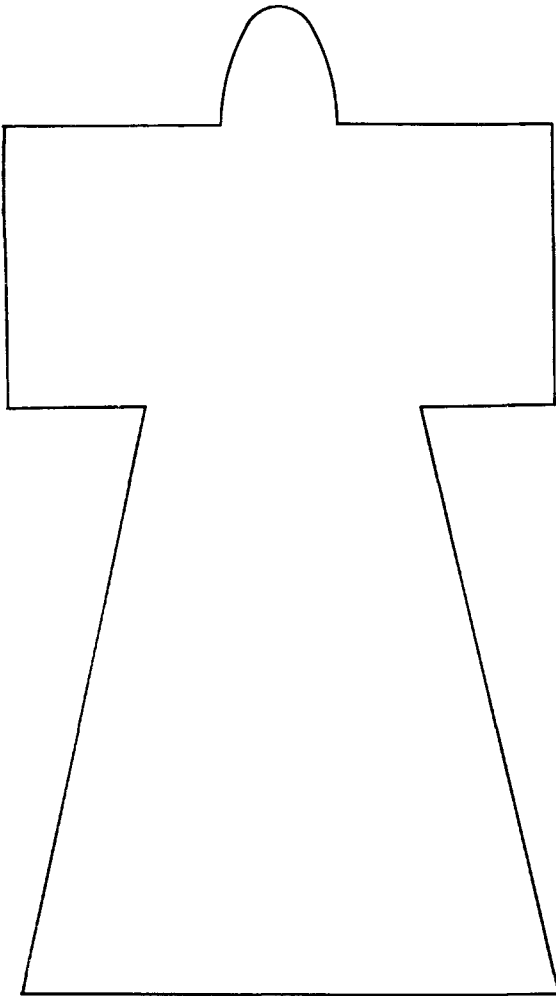


Fig. 2. The finished *katashiro* for men, actual size.

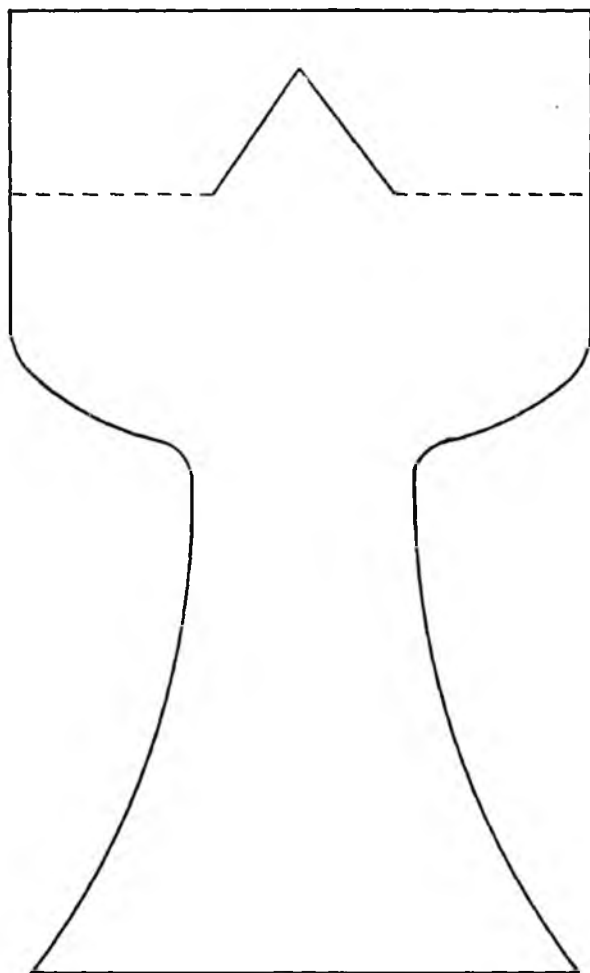


Fig. 3. Pattern for the woman's *katashiro*, to be cut from red paper.
The solid lines are to be cut, the dotted lines to be folded.

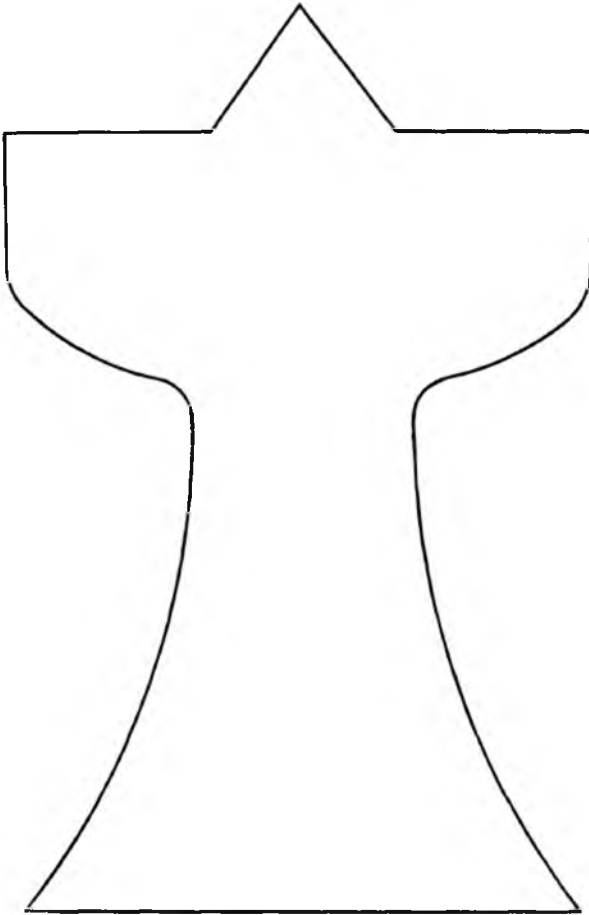


Fig. 4. The finished *katashiro* for women, actual size.

receive the bad spirits, the onerous essences, and will then be cast on the waters and floated off, as Izanagi and Izanami floated the leech child off, to oblivion.

The *katashiro* is a shadow body, which receives our shadow soul. When both are disposed of, we can begin again. The *katashiro* is our redeemer. It substitutes for us. It is destroyed that we may live. *Kata* means shape or form; *shiro* here means substitute, something that takes the place of something else. The *katashiro* is a form we substitute for our own. It is the shadow of our form.

Not all *katashiro* are handcut and homemade. Some priests buy them in packets of five, evidently stamped out by a machine and mass produced. In that case all *katashiro* are alike, and no distinctions are made as to sex. They are like those ill-fitting American "sox" for which the boast is made that "one size fits all." They are stamped from white paper and resemble in form the *katashiro* of figure 2, the male *katashiro*—but of course they lack the fold-over shown in figure 1.

Handcut *katashiro*, on the other hand, have a charming irregularity to them. The scissors cut a bit too far here and there, the lines are not mechanically straight, the fold is not quite even. They are craft products, not machine products. The handcut *katashiro* for men is a soft white, the *katashiro* for women a brilliant red. The head of the man's is rounded while that of the woman's is triangular and sharp-pointed. Finally, the man's *katashiro* is slightly larger than the woman's.

In the distribution of *katashiro* practices vary. Some priests visit the homes of their parishioners during December and deliver the *katashiro* directly. But most priests are simply too busy,

especially at this time of year, and either visit only a few homes (presumably those of the pillars of the community) or, more likely, none at all. In this case the *katashiro* are made available to parishioners at the shrine itself, and the *ujiko* can pick them up there and take them home.

Once home, the parishioner first communicates his identity to the *katashiro*. Again, customs vary, but in general this is done by inscribing it with his name and age, or simply the year and month of his birth, and (if he is using the unisex form) his sex. Then he breathes life into the form—or rather, he breathes anti-life into it. By breathing on this shadow form or rubbing it over his body, he passes all that is threatening to health and happiness and general well-being, all that is demonic, into the paper form.

He then returns the form to the shrine and deposits it in a box, similar to a ballot box with a slot in the top, which the priest previously affixed to the outside of the offertory bin at the outer entryway to the shrine building. He goes home, having washed his hands of his sins.¹ Nothing remains but for the priest to dispose of the alter egos in the approved ritual manner, without benefit of laity. The layman's part in the

1. An expulsion rite is a kind of elaborated liturgical sneeze. As W. G. Aston explains in a section headed "Breathing on" (*Shinto, the Way of the Gods*, London, 1905, p. 261), "Ritual impurity may...be conveyed away by the breath. The origin of this practice is the sudden expulsion of air from the mouth when some offensive odour or vapour has found an entrance. This instinctive action is represented onomatopoeically in English by Pooh! Faugh! Pshaw! and in other languages by similar words, which have come to express not only physical repulsion, but dislike and contempt generally." In a footnote he adds, "Hirata says that in books on magic *ibukite harafu* (clearing away by puffing) is a means adopted by men naturally, without teaching, for cleansing away evil influences."

proceedings is finished, and he can now look forward to the new year with a clean heart and a lightened soul.

Collection of Discarded Domestic Talismans

There are other tasks to be accomplished, other obligations to be met, before the citizen can say he is done with the old year and ready for the new. Only one other custom, however, has to do with his neighborhood shrine. A variety of talismans, protective charms and such, collected and used by the household over the past year, are now disposed of. Since they are in a sense holy objects (or at least semi-holy, in the sense that they are associated with personal, familial, or communal aspiration), they cannot simply be put out for the trash collector. Consequently, they are gathered up and delivered to the shrine so the priest can dispose of them in a respectful and uncontaminating manner.

The year-end rites (properly called *ōbarai* rites) being explored here are disposal rites, and traditionally the two elements that dispose of contamination without spreading it are fire and pure, flowing water. As we shall see, fire is the common element of purification at the year-end *ōbarai* rites. When the same rites are repeated six months later, clear water will serve as the purifying medium. Winter is the fire season, summer the water season.

Towards the middle of December the shrine priest places a large crate-like wooden bin, open at the top, within the shrine precincts, and his people begin bringing their old *fuda* (the "name card" of the *kami*), *kumade* (wall ornaments resembling bamboo rakes, supposedly to rake in good fortune and prosperity; ordinary homes often display small ones, but ambitious and

optimistic shopkeepers display very large ones), *daruma* dolls of papier-mache (one eye still blank if the wish made over it did not come true), and above all *shimenawa*, braided rice-straw ropes of some breadth used at year's end to enclose and sanctify the home by barricading it against demonic spirits and contaminating influences.

Year's end is a threshold time and hence a dangerous time, when evil spirits as well as the spirit of renewal are abroad, when the life force and the forces that oppose it hang in precarious balance. But once the year-end rites, the cleansing rites, have been performed, it is important to clean house and rid the domestic world of all the charms that protected the home from the forces of evil but in so doing brushed close to the evil itself. All are deposited in the bin until it is stuffed to overflowing, spilling *daruma* faces and *okame* faces on the ground facing the shrine porch. There they will remain until January seventh when, at the same site, they will be ritually burned. If the priest is a little late in setting up the bin for this gathering of oddments, the *ujiko* will start bringing their armsful anyway and deposit them in the big bronze fire bucket (not used since Emperor Meiji's day) outside his front door—a quiet reminder to hurry up with the unfolding of the festive season.

Katashiro Purification Rite

On New Year's Eve, December thirty-first, at seven p.m., the shrine priest takes the box of *katashiro*, places it before the holy of holies inside the shrine, and performs a purification rite over it. At this time he recites the following prayer (modified from Donald Philippi's translation):²

2. *Norito: A New Translation of the Ancient Japanese Ritual Prayers* (Tokyo, 1959),

Of Talismans and Shadow Bodies

* By the command of the Sovereign Ancestral Gods and Goddesses,

Who divinely remain in the High Heavenly Plain,

The eight myriad deities were convoked in a divine convocation,

Consulted in a divine consultation,

And spoke these words of entrusting:

‘Our Sovereign Grandchild is to rule

‘The Land of the Plentiful Reed Plains of the Fresh Ears of Grain

‘Tranquilly as a peaceful land.’

Having thus entrusted the land,

They inquired with a divine inquiry

Of the unruly deities in the land,

And expelled them with a divine expulsion;

They silenced to the last leaf

The rocks and the stumps of the trees,

Which had been able to speak,

And caused him to descend from the heavens,

Leaving the heavenly rock-seat,

And pushing with an awesome pushing

Through the myriad layers of heavenly clouds—

Thus they entrusted (the land to him).

The lands of the four quarters thus entrusted,

Great Yamato, the Land of the Sun-Seen-on-High,

Was pacified and made a peaceful land;

The palace posts were firmly planted in the bed-rock below,

The cross-beams soaring high towards the High Heavenly Plain,

And the noble palace of the Sovereign Grandchild constructed,

Where, as a heavenly shelter, as a sun-shelter, he dwells hidden

pp. 45-49: “Great Exorcism of the Last Day of the Sixth Month.” The text offered here is simply a bowdlerized version of Philippi’s text, a translation of the ancient prayer as used in the imperial court. The modern version, used in every shrine in Japan, deletes three major portions, indicated in our text by one, two, or three asterisks:

* A preamble that begins, “Hear me, all of you assembled princes of the blood...,” directed specifically to the courtiers and therefore inappropriate to rites at a neighborhood shrine.

** An itemized list of the heavenly sins (committed for the most part by the obstreperous god Susano-o when he was on his rampage in Heaven: releasing the irrigation sluices, skinning backwards, etc.), and the earthly sins (incest, white leprosy, etc.).

*** A brief closing reference to court officials and court diviners.

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And rules (the kingdom) tranquilly as a peaceful land.

The various sins perpetrated and committed

By the heavenly ever-increasing people to come into existence

In this land which he is to rule tranquilly as a peaceful land:

** The heavenly sins,

The earthly sins,

Many sins shall appear.

When they thus appear,

By the heavenly shrine usage,

Let the great Nakatomi cut off the bottom and cut off the top

Of heavenly narrow pieces of wood,

And place them in abundance on a thousand tables;

Let him cut off the bottom and cut off the top

Of heavenly sedge reeds

And cut them up into myriad strips;

And let him pronounce the heavenly ritual, the solemn ritual words.

When he thus pronounces them,

The heavenly deities will push open the heavenly rock door,

And pushing with an awesome pushing

Through the myriad layers of heavenly clouds,

Will hear and receive (these words).

Then the earthly deities will climb up

To the summits of the high mountains and to the summits of the low
mountains,

And pushing aside the mists of the high mountains and the mists of the
low mountains,

Will hear and receive (these words).

When they thus hear and receive,

Then, beginning with the court of the Sovereign Grandchild,

In the lands of the four quarters under the heavens,

Each and every sin will be gone.

As the gusty wind blows apart the myriad layers of heavenly clouds;

As the morning mist, the evening mist is blown away by the morning wind,
the evening wind;

As the large ship anchored in the spacious port is untied at the prow and
untied at the stern

And pushed out into the great ocean;

As the luxuriant clump of trees on yonder (hill)

Is cut away at the base with a tempered sickle, a sharp sickle—

Of Talismans and Shadow Bodies

As a result of the exorcism and the purification,
There will be no sins left.
They will be taken into the great ocean
By the goddess called Se-ori-tu-hime,
Who dwells in the rapids of the rapid-running rivers
Which fall surging perpendicular
From the summits of the high mountains and the summits of the low
mountains,
When she thus takes them,
They will be swallowed with a gulp,
By the goddess called Haya-aki-tu-hime,
Who dwells in the wild brine, the myriad currents of the brine,
In the myriad meeting-place of the brine of the many briny cur-
rents.
When she thus swallows them with a gulp,
The deity called Ibuki-do-nusi,
Who dwells in the Ibuki-do (lit., Breath-blowing-entrance),
Will blow them away with his breath to the land of Hades, the under-
world.
When he thus blows them away,
The deity called Haya-sasura-hime,
Who dwells in the land of Hades, the under-world,
Will wander off with them and lose them.
***When she thus loses them,
Hear me, all of you;
Hear me, heavenly and earthly deities;
Hear me, eight myriad deities:
Know that (all the sins) have been exorcised and purified.
Thus I speak.

The reader will probably recognize, in this rather wordy recitation, an account of an archaic form of the *katashiro* customs we have described for modern Tokyo. The Nakatomi (a priestly family serving the imperial household), at the end of the sixth month and again at the end of the twelfth month, cut narrow pieces of wood which must have served as *katashiro*, as shadow bodies, and placed them "in abundance on a thousand tables."

When the *tsumi* (impurities or pollutions, here translated

“sins”) of the members of the household had been transferred to the shadow bodies, they were taken up and bound with reeds, the prayer of exorcism was said (causing the heavenly deities to descend and the earth-*kami* to ascend and attend upon the exorcism), the shadow bodies were placed aboard a large ship which delivered them to the ocean, whereupon they were swallowed “with a gulp” by the spirits of the briny deep, blown into the cavernous nether land of Yomi, and lost forever, thus cleansing the land of its impurities. All this, the opening stanzas of the prayer seem to tell us, is part of the order brought to the world *in illo tempore*, in the dreamtime, in the Age of the *kami* (when even trees and rocks and leaves could talk like men), when the gods of the high plain of Heaven were obliged to intervene in earthly affairs, tame the unruly earth gods, and found a monarchy, to see that order would be maintained (unhappily silencing the leaves in the process, the price we pay for divine guidance).

The priest recites this prayer from a printed text supplied by the Jinja Honchō, the national Association of Shinto Shrines. The text is crammed with ancient, obscure *kanji* but conveniently provided with *kana* notations that give the correct archaic pronunciations if not the meanings. Philippi notes, “The rituals are cast in antique language of the most flowery sort. Sentences are long and loosely-connected; the grammatical relationship of parts is difficult to determine; the meaning of many words is unclear; and everywhere semantic clarity is sacrificed to sonority.”³

What Philippi calls this “all-pervading sonority” can be heard

3. Ibid., p. 1.

in any Shinto shrine in Japan. At the shrine I knew best, there were two priests in attendance, an elderly man who was semi-retired, and his successor and son-in-law (his only son having defected to the world of commerce seeing no future in the life of a priest). The older priest had a manner that was a trifle military. His movements were abrupt and punctuated, as was his recitation of the *norito*. He almost seemed to be angry with the *kami*, so sternly and briskly did he address them. (His manner, I later discovered, was taken by many to be a sign of great respect for the *kami*.) His son-in-law and successor, by contrast, recited the *norito* not with the trumpet voice of the old gentleman but in a voice that sounded apologetic, almost ashamed in the presence of the *kami*.

But to explain the effect of his particular style of recitation of this prayer for purification of the *katashiro*, I must describe the circumstances of its recitation.

It is seven o'clock on New Year's Eve. The shrine grounds are completely deserted. The shrine building is in darkness, its doors closed tight. There is no one in sight. Suddenly the young priest emerges from his home next to the shrine, hurries across to the shrine, goes in, and turns on the lights at the far end of the hall. The rest of the hall is in pitch darkness. Still no one else has appeared.

The young priest must previously have emptied the collection box of the *katashiro*, for they appear now to be on offertory trays (*sanbō*) which he quickly places before the closed doors of the holy of holies. He claps, then begins to open those doors with painful slowness. The hinges creak exquisitely and the priest, from his kneeling position, utters a low and eerie moan

as the doors gradually open.

Now he whisks the *harai-gushi* (purification wand) over the *katashiro*, then over the rice cakes, oranges, and other food offerings piled on the offertory table in the middle hall, then over the two corners of the outer hall, finally passing through the outer doors into the shrine grounds which he also ritually purifies. Reentering the hall, he begins his rather long, sad, remorseful *norito*, his words haunting the otherwise vacant hall. After the prayer, the young priest again closes the sanctuary doors with an eerie slowness.

The ritual has been performed, the shadow bodies have been presented to the assembled *kami*, the community is cleansed of its *tsumi* for another year.

Why do the laity not attend this crucial rite? "Of course it all depends on the customs of the local shrine," a friend remarked, "but usually people just bring the *katashiro* to the shrine and let the priest take over from there."

Visiting the Shrine on New Year's Day

As part of his year-end preparations, the young priest has moved another wooden contraption onto the shrine grounds toward the end of December. It is a one-man booth, such as one might find at any outdoor bazaar, with a counter for display of goods to customers and a stool inside for the merchant to perch on. He places it just to the right of the outer porch of the shrine hall.

All is quiet on the shrine grounds until a few minutes before midnight, when the young priest again emerges from his home and climbs into his booth. He carries a pitcher of *sake* with him, which he places on the counter, together with saucers for

drinking it. He also has with him an odd assortment of talismans: *o-fuda* (the “calling cards” of the gods), *o-mamori* (protective charms to be carried on the person or in one’s automobile), and *hamaya* (stylized arrows that break up the onrushing forces of misfortune-causing demons, thus clearing the path for happiness).

At the stroke of midnight, a group of women, five or six in all, dressed in the *shitamachi* manner, present themselves in a row before the shrine hall, clap, bow, pray, and clap again, then troop off to the Inari shrine (a small shrine that serves as a satellite to the main hall), repeat the ritual and leave. Others follow. Some come alone, but most come in family groups. A few, after paying their respects to the *kami*, stop at the priest’s booth to receive communion *sake* (*o-miki*) from him, taking home an arrow as a souvenir.

It is a busy night for the priest, but all is done with grace and dignity, not mechanically or with artificial roistering.

After his busy season is over, we ask our young priest why some *ujiko* stop off at his booth while others do not. “Some come to the shrine just to pray,” he says, “to begin their year with a greeting to the *kami*. Others come mainly for the *o-mamori* to protect them against danger and accidents in the year to come.” He adds: “My father-in-law was able to visit many of the homes of the *ujiko* in mid-December and left *o-mamori* with them then. People who weren’t home when he called come to the shrine at the New Year to pick up their *o-mamori*.”

How much time did you spend in the booth? “On January first, from midnight until three or four in the afternoon of the

next day. Fifteen or sixteen hours! There is no other priest here to help me. My father-in-law is too old now. Then, on January second and third, I was there from about ten in the morning till about three in the afternoon.”

What sort of talismans did you have with you at the booth? “Well, first of all there are the *o-fuda*. This shrine has six or seven different kinds, but not all are for sale in the booth. There is, for example, a special *o-fuda* for big donors. It is mounted in a wooden frame and is delivered by the priest to the donors’ homes. It is for their health and prosperity. There is also a special *o-fuda* for *setsun* (the lunar New Year) and another for the June *ōbarai*. But in the first part of January I sell four kinds of *o-fuda*: the regular *o-fuda* of this shrine, the *o-fuda* of Ise Jingu, the *o-fuda* of the year-god (*toshigami sama*),⁴ and the *o-fuda* of the hearth-god (*kōjin sama*).⁵ The set of four goes for ¥250 [this was in January, 1966]. As for the *o-mamori* there are three kinds: *karada o-mamori* (literally, “body charms,” charms to be carried on one’s person), *o-mamori* for the car (very useful in Tokyo traffic), and a special *o-mamori* for sick people. This last is a little pouch, and inside the pouch is an anatomy chart with nine parts of the body marked with circled numbers. On the woman’s form, for example, the top of the head is number nine, the left shoulder is 5 and the right 7, the stomach is 4, the left side at the waist 6 and the right 2, the genitals are 8, the left knee 1, and the right knee 3. On the man’s form the central numbers (head, stomach, genitals) are

4. See Jean Herbert, *Shinto: The Fountainhead of Japan* (London, 1967), pp. 160, 499.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 498.

the same, but the left and right side numbers are reversed. Before the chart is placed inside the pouch and given to the parishioner, the magic number indicating the source of the illness is marked. If you know you are ill but your doctor can't locate the source of the malady, you simply take your age and divide by nine. The remainder indicates the source of the illness. For example, if you are 38, you divide by 9, giving 4; 4 times 9 is 36; 38 minus 36 leaves 2. The disease is lodged in number 2, your right side if you are a woman, your left if you are a man."

Are the *o-fuda* and *o-mamori* first offered at the sanctuary, to the *kami*, before they are given to the *ujiko*? "Oh, yes. I recite the *norito* of purification over them and inform the *kami* that I will give them to his people for their health and happiness. And of course the communion *sake* has also been consecrated before the holy of holies. In this manner the *kami* gives a gift to his people in return for their gifts to him."

The principle of reciprocity. The *kami* has again sealed the covenant with communion wine and with talismans to keep his people's homes free of the forces that oppose life and purity. Another cycle has begun.

Burning of the Katashiro

For the priest, however, two tasks left over from the previous year remain to be performed. He must suitably dispose of his parishioners' shadow bodies (*katashiro*) and also of their domestic talismanic odds and ends. As we have seen from the venerable prayer of this purification liturgy, the proper way to dispose of the shadow bodies and the impurities that cling to them is to put them into a boat, take them out to sea, and dump them

overboard. My neighborhood priest, asked why he does not do so, replied that he simply does not have the time, so he burns them. In summer, when the *ōbarai* is repeated, he does take them out to sea, but life around the shrines is a little more leisurely in July than in January. In any event burning is the common method of disposal at this season, and fire seems the appropriate medium of purification.

The actual burning of the *katashiro* is done on January seventh, usually in the late morning or early afternoon, immediately prior to the *yubanasai*, a ceremony of considerable beauty which begins with the burning of the other artifacts the shrine has collected during the holiday season. At this particular shrine, the *katashiro* used to be burned in an old tree stump quite close to the front porch of the main hall. But on May 25, 1945, an American incendiary bomb struck a warehouse filled with drums of oil intended for domestic cooking. The warehouse was located at the foot of the hill on which the shrine stands, and the flames were swept up the hillside by strong, gusty winds. Everything was destroyed: the shrine hall, the subsidiary shrine buildings, the shrine office—even the old tree stump. In 1958 the whole shrine complex was rebuilt. The outbuildings are still of wood construction, but the main hall, the shrine office, and the priest's residence were done in ferro-concrete because of its strength against both fire and earth tremors. Even the old tree stump was restored—in concrete, and hollow inside, just as the old rotted stump must have been. It must be the world's only concrete tree stump. The *katashiro* are burned there without ceremony.

The Yubanasai

On the afternoon of January seventh, at about 1:30, the priest officiates at the *yubanasai*, a ceremony that has been performed at this shrine since Genroku times (1688-1703). *Yubanasai* means, literally, the festival (*sai*) of hot water (*yu*, suggesting "boiling hot" as in bath water) and flowers (*hana/bana*), but no one connected with the shrine seems to know why it bears this name. Something of the literal meaning is evident in the ritual, however, for discarded talismanic household articles are burned beneath a caldron filled with water which, when it has reached the boiling point, the priest uses as holy water to consecrate the "four corners" of the shrine grounds.

In olden times, I was told, the shrine *miko* (virgins in service to the *kami*) used to bathe in this holy water as part of the *yubanasai* rite. (Perhaps it was then that flowers were used, as in the iris-leaf baths for boys at the *tango no sekku*.)

As recently as the Taishō period (1912-1926), the laity gathered for this observance. One source told me that at the end of the rite the laity were sprinkled with the holy water; another said that only the *miko*, who stood next to the caldron, were sprinkled. At any rate, in modern Tokyo no one comes—no one but the priest and an attendant.

The shrine grounds do not look as they did before and after New Year's Eve. The collection bin for household articles is gone and most of its contents with it. The priest burns most of these articles in the concrete tree stump on January sixth; he saves only enough to stoke his fire for the preparation of the holy water. The bin is put back into storage for another year. Gone too is the small booth from which the priest dispensed

o-fuda, *o-mamori*, and magic arrows. In its place is the large cast-iron caldron, suspended over an area where the gravel has been swept clear to make way for the fire, a bit of corrugated metal at one side to control the draft and contain the fire. A shovel and broom are placed beside the big pot, as are several pails and tubs of water, ready for an emergency.

Beside the pot is a pile of *shimenawa* and *kumade* and one lone *daruma* doll. The immediate area is marked off by four bamboo poles, each perhaps ten feet high and connected at shoulder-height by a rope from which jagged paper strips (*shide*) are hung, the combination signifying a temporary sacred enclosure.

The priest stands by, waiting for his assistant (actually the shrine gardener and general handyman). The assistant arrives on his bicycle, puts one of the big *shimenawa* under the pot and starts the fire. As the fire burns with a high orange flame (this is the dry season in Tokyo, and things burn all too easily), he feeds it, continually bathing the thick wooden cover atop the caldron with water ladeled from a spare bucket by his side. The old caldron is cracked, he explains, and should be replaced, but it has the name of the shrine cast into its side and it would be expensive to have another made, so he must be careful not to overheat it. It is now only half full of water, as a precaution.

As we talk, the priest disappears, then swiftly reappears in full ceremonial regalia. In a twinkling the caldron lid is off. The priest removes a small amount of water from the caldron with a dipper and places it in a small bowl which he holds on an offertory tray. Quickly he vanishes into the shrine hall with the offertory tray, presents it before the holy of holies, recites a short *norito*, reemerges from the shrine, stands just out-

side the inner fence of the shrine grounds facing due north and, using a small branch of the *sakaki* bush, dips water from the bowl and sprinkles it in the northerly direction. Then he turns to his right, walks toward the *kagura den*, and sprinkles holy water toward the east. Turning again, he faces south, looking out through the main *torii*, and repeats his actions. Finally, he passes the parked cars (parking space on the shrine grounds has been rented out to bring in a little extra income), stands among the discarded roadside stone markers with traces of vaguely Hindu deities carved on their sides, and sprinkles holy water toward the west, where his residence is located. Again he disappears into the shrine, this time emerging with a bottle of *sake* and an empty saucer on his tray. He stands just outside the offertory bin, pours out a saucerful of communion wine, and offers it to his handyman assistant. The assistant seems grateful for this honor (he must represent the whole community, receiving the thanks of the gods) and drinks down the blessed wine with elegant formality.

The prayer the priest has recited this day is not one common to Shinto shrines generally but is part of the special traditions of this particular shrine. It is handwritten on what appears to be an old piece of paper, folded once. *Kana* keys to pronunciation are inscribed alongside the bold *kanji* of the prayer.

The purification of the four cardinal directions with which this ceremony concludes is understood to be a purification of the four corners of the shrine grounds, to keep them pure in the year to come. And, as one old priest told me, "The shrine precincts are where the *kami* works. And the *kami* of the shrine is the *kami* of the *uji*; he is the *ujigami*, the *kami* of the whole

village. Consequently, to purify the place where the *kami* works is to purify the whole village. You must also understand that in olden times people were not conscious of a distinction between their village and the world. Their village was their world. So that is the significance of this custom: the priest is ritually purifying the four corners of the world.”

The Circle of Completion

At the outset of this article I suggested that the shrine’s annual major autumn festival, when *kami* and community renew their mutual bonds of obligation, is circular in the sense that its forms presuppose a dual flow: from the *kami* (with his locus in the shrine sanctuary) to town or neighborhood, and from town or neighborhood back to the *kami*. The primal node of the circle seems to be at the sanctuary end, not the town end. *Kami*-force, which is nothing less than Life Force, surges forth from the holy of holies and bathes the town in its energy and strength, its power and vigor. Moved by this flood of gratuitously given Life Force, the townspeople surge toward the shrine in a spirit of celebration and thanksgiving, completing the circle—or nearly so, for the circle is not quite complete until the *kami* gives his talismans for the people to take back to their homes. The *matsuri* is thus an act or process of reciprocity and renewal.

For the yearly round of renewal to be complete, however, there must be another rite or ritual matrix, namely, the *ōbarai* or expulsion matrix under discussion, to clear the way for, and keep the way cleared for, the autumnal gift and thanksgiving. The year-end rites clear away the obstacles (*tsumi*), and the year-beginning rites make it possible to keep open the way between *kami* and man with fresh talismans for the new year. So

the circle of the *matsuri* is finally completed at the New Year rites.

But the New Year matrix can itself be viewed as circular. This ritual circle, however, involves distinctive features. First, the nodes of flow are not the community and the *kami* but *the individual* and the *kami*. Each person is given a *katashiro*, and each person must pass his own individual *tsumi*, his own private guilt and impurity, into that paper shadow-body. Second, the primary node of the circle is not the *kami* but the man. The observance begins not with the flow of spontaneous grace from the sanctuary toward the town, but with the flow of shadow-grace from the town to the sanctuary. Perhaps that is why it is such a quiet affair. The autumn festival is celebrated by jostling crowds and widespread merriment, but this cycle proceeds almost invisibly, unfolding silently, like a mystery. The principle of reciprocity is still at work : a man gives his *tsumi* to the *kami*, and the *kami* in return gives his blessings and talismans to the man. Shadow bodies laden with unwanted burdens have been exchanged for empty, uncontaminated tokens of the presence of the *kami*. It is a circle but an inverted circle, for now the impetus seems to come primarily from the "other" side, from the side of man, weighted down with obstacles that tend to block the free flow of Life Force.

Most surprising of all, since the transaction is between the *individual* and god, the whole matrix has a curiously Buddhistic quality to it. Shinto celebrations have a communal, corporate quality to them, but Buddhism has been concerned with private, personal matters, or at best with human fate in a familial setting. We die alone; our memory is kept alive for a time by our kin;

and the Buddhist priest, temple, and teachings help us with all that. But such matters are distasteful and inappropriate to a tradition that celebrates life and devotes its energies to calling down the Life Force to cleanse the world and brush all that is corrupt and corrupting out of its "four corners." The New Year matrix of rites caps the whole yearly round of Shinto rites, yet it is curiously out of place in that round, curiously foreign, curiously alien—too private, too personal, too negative, too much a mystery. Still, it is a necessary mystery—a mystery without which there would be no completion.

III

June Purification Rites

(Field Report, continued)

As noted earlier, in connection with these *ōbarai* or expulsion rites, we use the word "annual" with a touch of irony. For the essence of what is done in December and January is repeated in June and July. Yet the activities at the shrine in December and June are in a true sense year-end rites, just as what is done in early January and July are rites of annual inauguration.

So here we encounter a paradox: a year divided into two half-years, each of which constitutes, liturgically at least, a full year. When one writes and breathes on his *katashiro* in December, he is passing into that shadow body the accumulated *tsumi* of the past "year." But six months later, he will do exactly the same thing, again with the understanding that he is ridding himself of his "annual" accumulation of pollutions.

The Japanese year is a twelve-month period incorporating two six-month "years," each complete unto itself. In dealing

with these shadow-expelling rites we are dealing with inversions and paradoxes. But sometimes it is the upside-down and backwards that make possible the right-side-up. We clear away the shadows to get at the substance. We reverse our field to keep the currents of life flowing.

Katashiro and Chi no wa

December and June are opposites in every sense of the word. In December the sun is low but the air relatively clear and dry. The shrine grounds are an illumination of browns and greys—subdued colors, brightly illumined by contrasting sun and shadow. But if December is a Flemish landscape, June is pure French impressionism. The air is hazy, the days are long, the colors are greens and pinks made pastel by the pervasive diffusion of light. The shrine is again engaged in the collection of shadow bodies and the wafting away of imperfection and deformity, but it seems to stand on a different hill, bathed in a different light, a transformed citadel in a changed world. There is no bin standing beside the shrine for the collection of New Year decorations, for this is another kind of New Year. There is no priestly booth for the dispensation of arrows and whatnot. And there will be no caldron, no disposal by fire, no blessing of the world with a specially brewed holy water. What we will witness at this season is the *katashiro* ritual in its purest form, with a few rather beautiful amplifications but no complications. It is summer, and the elements of the season are freshly cut bamboos and grasses and clear, flowing water.

The *katashiro* have been distributed to the laity as they were before, and the laity have written name and age on them, breathed on them, and brought them back to the shrine.

But here at the shrine, there is a difference. You climb the steps from the town below, pass through the *torii*, then find that there is now another gateway to pass through—a woven ring of reed, supported on twin bamboo poles, a perfect circle about five feet in diameter, so designed that you must crouch slightly to pass through it. It is a ring of purification and is called a *chi no wa*. The parishioner, in taking his *katashiro* to the collection box on the shrine porch, goes through the *chi no wa* and is cleansed.

This too is a homemade artifact of the purification rites. On the hillside just outside the priest's residence and office building is a specially planted patch of bamboo and a specially planted patch of miscanthus grass (*kaya* in Japanese). This *kaya* grass grows tall, with a thick and sturdy stem. It is grown on the shrine hillside expressly for the June purification rites.

On the first clear day after June twentieth or thereabouts, the shrine gardener and handyman cut the *kaya* grass and a few stalks of bamboo. The basic loop is made by bending the bamboo into a large hoop, then wrapping the long grasses (the same as those used in thatching roofs, I was told) around the hoop and binding them to it.

The *chi no wa* is said by some folklorists to be a type of *hebi* or straw serpent, representative of the water snake, and a powerful amulet against the diseases that spread during the humid and rain-soaked days of the *tsuyu* (rainy season).⁶ As Jung and

6. See, e.g., Cornelius Ouwehand, "Some Notes on the God Susa-no-o," *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 14, nos. 3-4 (1958-59), p. 149. For sketches of the *chi no wa*, see Aston, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-267 and Geoffrey Bownas, *Japanese Rainmaking and Other Folk Practices* (London, 1963), p. 54.

others have pointed out, the serpent as a symbol of purification and healing, and as an amulet against disease, suggests homeopathy: using the source of the infection to cure the infection. The serpent thus has an ambivalent nature, symbolizing both illness and the power to cleanse, both death and life. When he appears coiled to form a hoop, he suggests the reconciliation of the opposites, the completion of the circle of life and death, and thus takes his place with the wheel of Buddhism and the flowingly bisected disc of the yin and the yang. The construction of the Japanese *chi no wa* is also reminiscent of the ancient Greek symbol of medicine, the serpent (in this case straw) coiled around the staff of life—not to mention the biblical theme of tree and serpent in the primeval garden.⁷ But a Japanese source cited by Aston says it all much more simply: The ring of reeds represents the round of the universe.⁸

Sanctuary Rite and Disposal of the Katashiro in the Far Waters

The central mystery of this cycle, the mystery of the destruction of the *tsumi* carried by the shadow bodies, is accomplished quietly at the shrine sanctuary on June thirtieth at seven o'clock in the evening—as it was exactly six months before. In sacrificial terms this would be the moment of consecration and destruction of the victim. All the events leading up to this climactic moment would constitute the entrance into the sacrifice, and all the events leading from it the exit from the sacrifice. The destruction does not take place when the physical objects we have here called “shadow bodies” are destroyed. It happens

7. See, e.g., J. E. Circlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York, 1962), pp. 272-277.

8. *Op. cit.*, p. 264.

when the *tsumi* (pollutions) these shadow bodies contain are annihilated. What follows, when the *katashiro* are burned or dumped into flowing water and carried out to sea, is simply a matter of disposing of already defused and nearly sterilized receptacles.

Evidently there was a time not long ago when each priest in Tokyo had his own little boat docked on the shores of the Sumida River or Tokyo Bay. Every July second, the priests went to their boats with the collected *katashiro* of their parishes, rowed to the middle of the river or bay, recited a short prayer, threw the *katashiro* overboard, and rowed back again. "You can imagine the confusion in Tokyo Bay," one informant told us, "with eighty or so small boats bobbing about in the harbor, scattered among all those tankers and freighters and garbage scows." The harbor authorities finally asked the priests to pool their *katashiro* and rent a single large boat.

While the harbor patrol was working out this compromise, partly out of concern for the safety of the priests and partly, no doubt, out of a desire to remove one minor nuisance from the complexities of modern urban life, the priests themselves were beginning to worry about the efficacy of a purification rite that required the use of the waters of Tokyo Bay with its sludge, floating garbage, and petroleum ooze. In 1964 they forsook Tokyo Bay and went to Aburatsubo, a coastal town on the Miura Peninsula, which stands at the gateway to Tokyo Bay, with Aburatsubo on the far side, the Sagami Bay side. In 1965 they went to a lake situated roughly between the resort town of Atami and Mt. Fuji, the lake Ashi-no-ko (Lake Hakone)—surely the purest water to swallow Tokyoites' *tsumi* in a long while.

A good many *ujiko* went along on that excursion, riding in a big sightseeing boat. The officiating priest, acting in behalf of the others, stood in a little boat towed by the big ship to perform the ritual and to throw the *katashiro* overboard.

The procedure is much the same regardless of location. When I observed the rite in 1966, Tokyo Bay was used. A sightseeing boat was hired for the occasion—the sort decorated all round with red paper lanterns saying “Drink Coca-Cola” in two languages. A large wooden chest was lashed to the foredeck, and all the *katashiro* brought by the assembled priests (of Bunkyo Ward in this case) were placed inside it. Offertory tables, laden with vegetables, cuttlefish, and fruits, were also lashed to the deck. This area of the ship was marked off by the usual four bamboo poles, connected by *shimenawa* with paper streamers, to signify the consecration of the place from which the *kami* would be addressed. The priests were seated aft on the lower deck, while an assortment of *ujiko*, representing the lay governing boards of their shrines, sat on the upper deck aft. The priests wore conservative business suits and ties; the laity, some of them, dressed in true *shitamachi* fashion, wearing undershirts, *zubonshita*, and waistband, a small towel wrapped about their brows, their wives beside them in crisp, prim *yukata* of dotted blues and whites.

When the priests go on board, they go forward and place the *katashiro* of their shrine in the big chest, exchanging greetings with the officiating priest (from a shrine in Tsukiji) and his two assistants. All participants, when they board ship, are given a printed map of the tour, a copy of the *ōbarai norito*, and a small packet containing four or five hundred little squares of rice

paper, each about three-quarters of an inch square. When all are aboard, the boat leaves the pier and heads for the middle of the bay. But this is still basically the regular sightseeing tour (with a bit of liturgical activity sandwiched in), complete with a girl guide who points out the sights over a public address system: "On your right you will see Tokyo Tower rising into the smog and near it the Tsukiji fish market and Hamarikyū garden, while in front of us a Soviet freighter is passing, and to the left a Panamanian cargo ship."

Once we are in the middle of the bay, the engines are shut off and the liturgy begins. The officiating priest and his two young assistants are joined on the foredeck by a few chosen priests (I recognized one from Suidōbashi, a kind of elder statesman among the priests of his area) and laymen. The chief priest swishes the *sakaki* branch that serves as a purification wand over the three tables of offerings, then over his two assistants, and finally over the small gathering of laity, while his assistants purify the box of shadow bodies in the same manner. His recitation of the *norito* is carried over the public address system, and all the priests and laymen aft are invited to follow their printed texts, the priests joining him in the chanting of the prayer.

The *katashiro* chest is then untied, lifted to the rail, and its paper images emptied out. The assembled clerics and laymen aft are at this time invited to empty their packets of confetti squares to the wind and sea in symbolic participation.

The rite is now over, and the engines (and tour girl) resume. Plastic cups are distributed and bottles of *sake* passed around (by the time we reach the dock, perhaps more will have been

consumed than was absolutely necessary for *o-miki*, but who can say for certain?). Slowly we make our way through the murky waters as priests of neighboring shrines hold friendly conversations and laymen look out over the waterfront scene puffing philosophically on a cigarette. We are treated to a narration concerning the sights of Harumi Pier, whereupon the boat docks and all disembark, the priests with empty briefcases earlier crammed with *tsumi*, all to partake of a festive banquet (¥1,500 per person) at a well-known dockside restaurant.

The whole ceremony at sea suggested something deliciously incongruous. There was the chief priest, in his full feudal regalia, standing within the four-cornered bamboo enclosure, with paper *shide* fluttering in the breeze alongside the Coca-Cola lanterns, wafting his leafy wand over the offertory trays. Just as he did so an immense cargo ship cut across our bow. Its grimy crew paused in their work long enough to look down at us in wonder, the hoists and derricks of industry to their backs—then they were gone. A brief encounter between the formalism of a bygone age and the brutishness of our modern age, between white brocaded robes and greasy overalls surmounted by hardhats, between paper and soot, bamboo and steel.

IV

Decline of the Custom

(Field Report, concluded)

How long can such customs survive? A hasty survey of neighborhood shrines one New Year's morn indicated that the shrine I have chosen to report on was neither the busiest nor

the quietest. At one shrine I found the priest leaning on his rake and chatting with a neighbor. Flames were lapping about his incinerator, and he was either burning off a few of the excess *shimenawa* or, more likely, finishing up a bit of last-minute housecleaning. Otherwise, all was peaceful. There were no booths, no bins, no handouts or communion wine, and above all no *ujiko*. Finally shortly after noon, a few people came, paid their respects to the *kami* and left.

Next I went to Nezu Shrine, and it was mobbed. Outside the main gate a vendor was selling *daruma* dolls. Within the gate a crowd had lined up before a booth to receive *o-miki*. The doors to the shrine hall were open and a *norito* could be heard. In front of the shrine were long tables where people, for a small fee, received *o-mamori*. Nearby, other people, again for a small sum, were drawing fortunes with an *o-mikuji*: shaking out a box of sticks and receiving a number, then receiving the corresponding slip of paper on which the fortune was printed. The *o-mikuji* was especially brisk, and nearby trees began to sprout little white bows of abandoned fortunes. Most visitors went first to the *o-mamori* tables, then to the shrine to pray, then into the line for communion wine. It was a busy night at this prosperous shrine.

Finally, I went to a shrine closer to home, a shrine of some historical importance, but I found it quiet, dark, and almost deserted. Only now and then did an occasional visitor straggle in. A tray of tiny folded paper *o-mamori* had been placed on the offertory bin, made available on a self-service basis. The shrine was unlit and the main doors all but closed. I took in the splendid view of the stars and the lights of the city beneath

from the desolate plateau, then started to leave by the winding path that led past the shrine office. I was greeted by two characters straight out of Hokusai, one carrying a lighted paper lantern, the other clacking the wooden blocks that announce the curfew (in this case the time to put out fires). Just finishing up their rounds, they were performing a useful service, for the town merchants had just finished burning their year-end rubbish in the streets, and there were embers to be watched.

In an equally informal survey of my neighbors I found that many had neglected to visit the shrine of their *ujigami* but had gone instead to Meiji Shrine. Going to the larger shrine was for the sake of the children, many said. One man told me he thought the tie to the tutelary deity was getting weaker, that people are no longer loyal to the local *kami*, that they feel no *giri* any more.

My neighborhood priest told me that in December he had collected 240 *katashiro* representing men and 330 representing women: a total of 570. Before the war, he collected *katashiro* from six thousand families. "How many households were there at that time?" I asked him. "About ten thousand," he responded, "and now of course there are many more." The shrine historian added that if the priest does not bring the *katashiro* to the homes of his parishioners, they simply do not bother with the rite. One layman active in shrine affairs, when asked if he had participated in the *katashiro* rites, replied: "I recall that some were delivered here, but I can't remember just where I put them." He added that he usually "doesn't bother with that." I asked him what he thought they were for. He said they had "something to do with the dead. I

think you put the name of a dead child on it, and it brings happiness to the child in the nether world.”

If the neighborhood shrines fall into disuse, dwindle, and perhaps eventually vanish, the *katashiro* will probably disappear with them. For the visitor to Meiji Shrine is just that: a visitor. He may pay his respects to the *kami* (a national rather than a local deity), have his fortune told, and bring home an *ema*, *hamaya*, or *o-mamori*, but the custom of cleansing people of their *tsumi* is not likely to flourish in the mammoth context of national shrines. It is a custom that is likely to be maintained locally or not at all.

The alternative, I suppose, would be some sort of “rationalization” of the purification process—a rationalization in the Weberian sense. Certainly one religious group, Seichō no Ie, has already accomplished this step. At their Tokyo headquarters you can obtain, at any time of the year, a slip of paper called a *hitogata*. On it is printed the familiar outline of the *katashiro* figure. (The legs are divided, as though clad in trousers, and the head, perfectly rounded, is more distinctly separated from the body; but the intent, like the derivation, is clear.) It carries the motto “Our Divine Nature is Perfect” and bears the imprint of the Divine Healing Department. If you are ill, you simply send for one of these slips of paper, write your name and age on it, and send it back to the mother church. There the purification rite, in the form of a corporate prayer (with suggestions of the encounter group), will be performed. The point is that where the old *katashiro* rites are observed at climactic and critical times of the year—at the nodes of the traditional calendar in fact—the rationalized rite is performed

without reference either to the calendar or to the world view it bespoke.

V

Postlude: The Dual Year Calendar

In traditional societies the calendar sets the dates for planting and harvesting as indeed for all human activities of a public and social nature. The calendar is a sort of mandala that represents and depicts the perfect order of the cosmos and the flow of the seasons so that man can regulate his activities by, and keep himself in harmony with, that perfect order.

All calendars are circular, for they end where they begin. The yearly wheel, with its march of months and seasons, is time perceived spatially. The traditional calendar is a map, a map of time, the time that is ever flowing forward yet ever returning to itself. Cosmic time, cyclic time, not the time known to historians and credit managers.

I have read that ancient mariners possessed two kinds of maps. One was the ordinary map such as we use today, showing the configuration of coastlines and the locations of inlets and estuaries. But the other kind of map, long since lost to our civilization, brought together dreams of cosmic order and nightmares of cosmic terror. In the center are the continents, often forming perfect quadrants of a perfect circle. Around the edge of the map are the fearful places, the places where the world ends, the seas drop off, and the winds have their source. There sea monsters lurk in the deep—a warning of dangers unknown.

This second kind of map was called the *mappa mundi*, map of

the world. It showed not bits and pieces of the world, as a navigational chart might. It showed the world whole, the world entire. It showed the meaning of the world—perhaps of life itself. For in showing the plan of the world, it showed the world's very soul with all its dark recesses as well as its illumined plateaus. In exploring this world the mariner explored his own soul, a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosmic world soul.

Calendars are spatial representations of the ordering of cosmic time. They are maps of time. And they are in the nature of *mappae mundi*. They reveal the soul of a people. They reveal the seasons of man, in harmony with the seasons of nature. And in the tiny spaces between the seasons, in the interstices, they reveal the demons that lie in wait for man, seeking to cause disease, distortion, deformity and disorder. For the times between seasons constitute a *terra incognita*, an unknown land, a limbo. Festivals are devised often for this specific purpose: to transport us safely across the boundary between seasons, the dangerous place where demons dwell.

Hallowe'en is such a festival in America. It is perhaps our only surviving festival. Children dress as ghosts and goblins, pirates and fairy princesses, and go out at night to challenge the dark spirits that venture abroad that night. In Celtic times it was the last night in October when the spirits of the dead took their last look around before departing this earth. Six months later, on the last night of April, continental Europeans observed the night of the witches. Each occasion marked the end of one year and the beginning of another. November first and May first are the dual New Years of the ancient European calendar—and dairy farmers in sections of the American north-

east, though ostensibly following the Christian calendar, still follow that calendar. Their cows come into the barns for the winter on November first and return to pasture on May first. Rents come due on May first and November first, and a 'hired man' who has not been 'let go' by November first must be provided with food and shelter until May first by the landowner who hires him. This is a classic case of what Radcliffe-Brown called the 'bisected year' or bisected calendar. The year is divided into two equal halves, and each in a sense constitutes a year unto itself, a complete season, a year within a year. The year is like a round pod growing on some giant old tree; open it up and you find two chambers, each with its shiny nut, two perfect twins, snugly nested back to back, with the thinnest of membranes between them.

What is the shape of the traditional calendar of Japan? At first glance, it is a quadrisected calendar, one with four seasons. On closer examination, however, one finds that special emphasis is placed on two periods, each of which is divided triadically. In winter there is first the "little cold" (January 6-20), then the "great cold" (January 20-February 5), and finally the "night cold" or "beginning of spring" (February 5-20). The year-end purification rites and the New Year rites prepare the way for this triad—and may even extend into it in the form of the *dondonyaki* and *setsubun*. It is a dry season, and fire is a great danger, especially during the first two of the three segments. It is, I think, no coincidence that fire is also the usual medium of purification during this season.

The winter triad is followed by a rather whimsical season, much of it cloudy, chilly, and damp, but much of it simply

changeable and highly unpredictable. Its beginning is marked by blossom festivals, ranging from the *ume* festivals at Tenjin shrines in late February and highlighted by the *sakura* blossoms of early April, then giving way to the May fifth *tango no sekku* and a variety of festivals having their source in planting observances, and finally leading to the opening of the rainy season in the second week of June.

Here the June *ōbarai* rites mark the entry into another critical season, marked by a second “New Year” at the beginning of July. But now the land is soaked with rain. The danger is not from fire but from epidemic disease. The instrument of purification is now water—pure, flowing water.

Another seasonal triad follows: the “little heat” of summer (July 7-23) followed by the “great heat” (July 23-August 8) and finally by the “beginning of autumn” (August 8-23). Festivals like *tanabata*, *o-bon*, and the Hozuki Fair in Asakusa are sprinkled through this triad—festivals of lights and lanterns, summer fairs and dancing under the stars. Then come the autumn festivals (including many shrine *taisai* celebrations of the sort described at the beginning of this paper): festivals of harvest and thanksgiving, offered by townsmen to their local *kami* in a spirit of sharing the fruits of a year’s labor. Tokyo’s last autumnal gesture is perhaps the *tori no ichi*. A few days later winter begins. (According to the traditional calendar, winter begins on November 7, summer on May 6). Preparations for the year’s end will soon be under way. There will be fairs for *shimenawa* and for doorway decorations of bamboo, pine, and plum, and finally a Battledore Fair.

The December *ōbarai* mirrors the June *ōbarai*, the winter triad

the summer. Plot the festivals on a clock dial, and you will see that the autumn festivals stand opposite the blossom festivals, the lantern festivals opposite the fire festivals. You may even begin to wonder about certain similarities between *tanabata* decorations and the *saito* erected for *dondonyaki* observances in coastal towns south of Tokyo.

In any event the traditional calendar of Japan is a dual calendar, its year a bisected year. The year begins twice, once on the first of January, the second time on the first of July. Each date marks a node in time, a gap that must be carefully stepped over. And each date marks a time for separating the real man from the shadow man—a time when, talisman firmly in hand, we do well to shed the shadow man and invite the priest to perform the mysteries of dissolution.