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Japanese Food Offerings

Food offerings are one of the most interesting aspects of Shinto rituals. Some involve an enormous variety of foodstuff and constitute extraordinary examples of food preparation and presentation. Many of these offerings are based on ancient sources and are prepared according to protocols established at the imperial court in the Muromachi period, if not earlier. This article explores some features of Shinto food offerings, with special focus on the Upper and Lower Kamo Shrines, Iwashimizu Hachimangū shrine, and the Grand Shrines of Ise, and proposes some theoretical perspectives on how to study them from the perspectives of gift giving, sacrifice, and taboo.

keywords: food offerings (*shinsen* 神饌)—Kamo Shrines—ritual theory—Iwashimizu Hachimangū—Ise Shrines—taboo—Hollyhock Ritual Festivity

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Voltaire (1694–1778) wrote in his *Dictionary of Philosophy* the entry "Japanese Catechism," which reads: "The *kanusi* are the great cooks of our isles." In a footnote dated 1765, Voltaire added, "The *kanusi* are the ancient priests of Japan." He then offered a debate over the reasons why the Japanese people are highly tolerant and "the happiest people on earth," even though they have many schools of "thought" (that is, cuisine styles) (1964, 97–98).

Voltaire was, in some ways, correct. He communicated with Europeans, in this case probably Jesuit missionaries who lived in north Kyushu who must have reported that the leaders of shrine-temple complexes (the *kannushi* 神主 in question), some of whom were called *banchō* 番長 (executive official) at the time, were responsible for prodigal food offerings. These men were indeed powerful bosses responsible for the extravagant rites and massive food offerings the Jesuits must have witnessed. This was, prominently, the case at the Usa Hachiman 宇佐八幡 shrine-temple complex in Kyushu, where these much-feared *banchō* ruled with an iron fist and oversaw the food offerings for a city of temples and shrines. These offerings involved the participation of many areas of Kyushu and lasted for more than one thousand years.

The *Procedures of the Engi Era* codified the ritual procedures in shrines sponsored by the state at the time. One cannot but be stunned by the variety and quantity of offerings. Both food offerings and man-made objects required much work: the entire growing year for cereals and vegetables, as well as the gathering of herbs, flowers, fruit, and mushrooms in mountains and moors; the hunting and fishing expeditions; the all-important saké-brewing techniques; the lengthy cloth-making and dyeing processes; and the industrial preparation of dishes, tables, jewels, weapons, and other types of regalia. All this required power over producers who were expected to provide these offerings as tributes, but it also required coordination of transportation means and schedules and a prodigious outlay of special clothes and refinery for all participants. In other words, as soon as one thinks about the connections between food and ritual, one detects the presence and structure of what must be termed "a ritual economy of power."

A focus on food offerings alone provides us with a direct insight into the intricate symbols and practices that make up this economy. Offerings are stipu-

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lated in various parts of the *Procedures of the Engi Era*, first in kinds and amounts listed in book one, and second in the ritual chants (*norito* 祝詞) contained in book eight. One brief example regarding the Toshigoi 歳五位 Festival will suffice:

> In this second month of this year, at the beginning of the sowing of seed, with choice offerings from the divine descendant at this moment of the majestic and brilliant dawning of the morning light, we humbly raise our words of praise.
>
> Before the presence of the *kami* who govern the crops we do humbly speak, beseeching the mighty *kami* so they may vouchsafe to us the late-ripening harvest of grain—which foam on the water up to the elbows and muddy water up to the thighs as the rice is cultivated—may it grow into countless bundles of long-eared grain, of vigorous grain. If the mighty *kami* grant that it to ripen, the first-fruits of the grain, a thousand, yea, ten-thousand ears shall be offered up to them. Let the offering jars be filled to the brims, yea, let the full-bellied jars be arrayed in rows; the liquid and the grain shall we offer up with our words of praise. Of things that grow in the broad meadows and moors—sweet herbs and bitter herbs; of things that live in the blue sea-plain—those wide of fin and narrow of fin, even unto the seaweeds of the deep and seaweeds of the shore; and for divine raiment—bright cloth, shining cloth, soft cloth, and coarse cloth—all these we humbly offer up with our words of praise.
>
> Before the presence of the mighty *kami* of the crops we prepare to offer a white horse, a white boar, a white cock, and all manner and variety of things....
>
> If there be any [food] left over, may it grace the table of the divine descendant for the august morning food and august evening food, that he may partake of it for eternity. (Bock 1972, 66–70)

In this article, I present revelries of ritual food offerings dedicated to a number of kami, as well as buddhas and bodhisattvas, at the Upper and Lower Kamo 賀茂 Shrines in Kyoto, the Iwashimizu Hachimangū 石清水八幡宮 shrine-temple complex located midway between Kyoto and Nara, and the Grand Shrine of Ise (Ise Jingū 伊勢神宮).[1] I purposely focus on lists, as the amount and variety of foodstuff involved are astonishing, highlighting the amount of labor and care involved and the extension of the ritual economy behind Shinto food offerings.

The Kamo Shrines

Kyoto's ancient Kamo Shrines are comprised of the Kamo Mioya Jinja 加茂御祖神社, often referred to as the Lower Kamo Shrine, and the Kamo Wake Ikazuchi Jinja 加茂別雷神社, referred to as the Upper Kamo Shrine. Said to have been created in the sixth century, they bear the name of an ancient clan that used

1. The author describes the scrumptious food offerings at Kasuga-Kōfukuji 春日・興福寺 in Grapard (1992, 162–167). For a study of other sets of food offerings, such as the food offerings at Shitennōji, see Grapard (2021, 79–80). On ritual economy, see Grapard (2000).

to reside in the southwestern part of Yamato Province prior to moving to the northern basin, where Kyoto was established in the late eighth century.

By a grand ministerial edict (Dajō Kanpu 太政官符) dated to the twenty-fifth day of the eleventh moon 1018, the two Kamo Shrines were granted economic support in the form of funds coming from eight *gō* 郷 (villages counting a minimum of fifty households) located in the district of Atago 愛宕. The Upper Shrine originally received the Kamo, Ono 小野, Nishikibe 錦部, and Ōno 大野 *gō* funds, which were later subdivided into six *gō*: Kawakami 河上, Okamoto 岡本, Ono 小野, Nakamura 中村, Oyama 小山, and Ōmiya 大宮. Each *gō* then offered a multi-shelf stand laden with food offerings. As the Edo period *Kamo chūjin zōki* 賀茂注進雑記 indicates, the six *gō* simply provided funds for the offering of fish, fowl, and other viands, which were then placed on six portable, multi-shelf stands. It is also said that individuals from these villages made private offerings on a voluntary basis as well, and that these were added to the official viands. After the Meiji government prohibited shrines from relying on land domains for economic support, the rite was apparently abandoned. However, at some point the shrine authorities decided to recreate it, albeit with only one multi-shelf stand, which is how the rite is completed today (Iwai 1981, 28).

List 1: Food offerings on the upper shelf.

Nine courses arranged in one large (43.5 cm × 43.5 cm × 5 cm) wooden box with thick rounded chopsticks (*maruhashi* 丸箸) placed on a straw mat:

1. One sea pike (*kamasu* 梭魚)
2. One small jack (*koaji* 小鰺)
3. One kind of yellowtail (*burigo* 鰤子)
4. Rice called *aigome* 合米 placed in a small clay dish, grilled with popped glutinous rice (*haze* 爆), and topped with glutinous starch syrup (*mizuame* 水飴)
5. One yam (*yamaimo* 山芋)
6. Unpeeled chestnuts (*namakuri* 生栗)
7. Dried and pounded abalone strips (*noshi awabi* 熨斗鮑)
8. Skewered dry persimmons (*kushigaki* 串柿)
9. Small round mochi (*komochi* 小餅)

Ten courses wrapped and bound in thick ceremonial paper (*hōsho* 奉書):

1. Green laver (*aonori* 青海苔)
2. Asakusa sea-vegetable (*Asakusa nori* 浅草海苔)
3. Nutmeg (*kaya no mi* 榧の実)
4. Peeled chestnuts
5. Unpeeled chestnuts
6. Green laver
7. Popped glutinous rice
8. Roasted glutinous rice
9. Gulfweed or Sargasso weed (*honda-wara* 馬尾藻)
10. Yam

LIST 2: Food offerings on the lower shelf.

At the center	A single flat board on which has been placed a sea bream (*madai* 真鯛) wrapped in ceremonial paper and tied.
On the back side of the shelf	Six bamboo baskets hanging from a lateral pole, each about 30 CM high. Each basket contains a different offering: 1. Dried and pounded abalone strips 2. Ise spiny lobster (*Ise ebi* 伊勢海老) 3. Dried flying fish (*tobiuo* 飛魚) 4. Octopus (*tako* 蛸) 5. Sea pike (*kamasu* 梭魚) 6. Horse mackerel (*aji* 鯵)
On the front side of the shelf	Six flat wooden squares, from two sides of which jut three thin bamboo sticks (altogether, six sticks about 30 CM high), joined near the summit and hanging from the other lateral pole. Each contraption is 19 CM square and contains a different offering: 1. One female pheasant (*kiji* 雉), recently replaced by a quail (*uzura* 鶉) due to the pheasant's endangered status 2. One sea bream 3. One Japanese amberjack (*hamachi* 鰤) 4. One chum salmon (*sake* 鮭) 5. One sliced raw fish (*eso* 鱠 or *namasu* 膾); can also be sliced meat 6. One mackerel (*saba* 鯖)

FOOD OFFERINGS AT THE UPPER SHRINE

At dawn, fish and fowl are displayed in dishes and placed on the shelves, which consist of two layers of slatted boards made from square poles. Two large lower poles used to carry the stand are about three meters long, extending beyond the vertical posts, the height of which is 1.6 meters. The depth of the stand is 0.8 meters. One strip of white gauze crosses the upper part of the stand in its length, and a strip runs along the upper sides of the stand down to the upper shelf.

At about 10 AM, sacerdotal officiants assemble in front of the shrine office and go toward the main hall (*honden* 本殿). On the way, they stop in front of the sand cones (*tsuchinoya* 土舎) where they perform a purification rite (*shubatsu no gi* 修祓の儀), after which the shelf stand is picked up by four officiants, clad in white, and the procession begins led by an assistant (*hakuchō* 白丁) carrying a long purifying wand and a long *sakaki* 榊 branch to which a pheasant has been bound. The group then undergoes purification by the Katayamamiko 片山御子 auxiliary shrine, crosses the Tama Bridge and the two main gates, and places

the shelf stand in the court of the Norito Hall in front of the main shrines. The purifying wand and the *sakaki* branch with the pheasant are then placed atop the shelf stand.

Separately, there are offerings of a large jar of white rice brew (*omiki* お神酒), closed with blue and red ceremonial paper tied up with gold string and accompanied with a small bamboo scoop, as well as a branch to which a pheasant is tied; this branch is called "bird brushwood." Finally, the following offerings are made to eight auxiliary shrines: offerings of white rice brew, washed rice, dried squid (*surume* 鯣), kelp (*konbu* 昆布), and giant radish (*daikon* 大根).

These food offerings are called "shelf adornments" or "fish readings" (*uo yomi* 魚読み), the latter because an officiant is charged with carefully examining the quality, appearance, and freshness of the varied fish and other viands. It is obvious that this style of offerings was auspicious, since the rite took place on *koshōgatsu* 小正月 (on the first full moon of the new year), at which time food offerings are made in homes on a shelf called a "year shelf" (*toshidana* 年棚), or a "blessing shelf" (*ehō dana* 恵方棚).

THE HOLLYHOCK RITUAL FESTIVITY (AOI MATSURI 葵祭)

It is said that during the reign of Emperor Kinmei 金明 (d. 571) bad crops were attributed to a divine punishment (*tatari* 祟り) from the kami of Kamo, and that a splendid rite was then performed to placate the supranatural wrath. The rite was successful primarily due to an extravagant display of varied foods in generous amounts. This effort to placate the kami, we are told, is how the Hollyhock Ritual Festivity was performed on the middle day of the rooster (*naka no tori no hi* 中の酉の日), in the fourth lunar month, a date that was continued to the late nineteenth century when the solar calendar was adopted and the rite came to be performed on 15 May.

The Lower Shrine is dedicated to two kami: Tamayori hime no mikoto 玉依媛命 and her deified father, Kamo taketsonumi no mikoto 賀茂建角身命. According to the eighth-century *Yamashiro no kuni fudoki* 山城国風土記, Tamayori hime is said to have been impregnated by a red arrow as she was performing ablutions in the Semi River of Ishikawa (that is, the Kamo River) and to have given birth to the thunder kami, Kamo wake ikazuchi no mikoto 賀茂別雷命, who was then enshrined in the Upper Shrine (Yoshino 1969, 145).

The Hollyhock Ritual Festivity, so named because all participants wear hollyhock and cinnamon leaves (*katsura* 桂) in their attire, is perhaps the best preserved aristocratic ritual performance in existence today. At the Lower Shrine on 15 May, an offering of hollyhock and cinnamon leaves is placed on a red-lacquered plate, on a white wooden table located at the center, higher and in the back of four displays of food. To the right (facing), is a one-legged, red-lacquered

LIST 3: Offerings at the Lower Kamo Shrine on 15 May.

Hors d'oeuvre

- Five *buto* 餡餈: 7 parts barley and wheat flour, 3 parts rice flour, mixed in water and kneaded, flattened into a round shape, filled with ground soybean paste, then folded like a Chinese dumpling and deep-fried in sesame oil.
- Five *magari mochi* 糎餅 (kneaded wheat flour shaped in the form of a thick cord) shaped in a ring, twisted three times, and deep-fried in sesame oil.
- One bundle of kelp
- Five sweet potatoes
- Hexagonal chopsticks
- Rice brew

Main course

- One large mound of cooked rice
- Cod (*tara* 鱈) broth
- Salt
- One cup of rice brew
- Hexagonal chopsticks
- First fruit (*hatsuho* 御最花)
- Mochi
- Vegetables (*osai* 御菜)
- Raw viands:
  - Mounds of salted fish (*shiobiki* 塩引)
  - Mounds of Spanish mackerel (*sawara* 鰆)
  - Sliced cherry salmon (*masu* 鱒)
  - Bundle of prawns
- Dried seafood: all fish are cut in 3-*sun* 寸 length and 2-*bun* 分 width morsels. The fish must be shade-dried in its natural season in the previous year.
  - Mound of dried sea bream (*tai* 鯛)
  - Five dried young anchovies (*gomame* 五万米)
  - Bundle of dried abalone strips
  - Five river sweetfish (*ayu* 鮎)
- *Orosū* 下据 (fish in a tray placed below and in front of the main table):
  - One whole small sea bream (*kodai* 小鯛)
  - One whole chub mackerel
  - One whole crucian carp (*funa* 鮒)
  - One whole horse mackerel
  - Three bound dried bonito fish (*katsuo bushi* 鰹節)

Desserts

- Seven *suhama* 洲浜 (kneaded soybean paste cakes) sweetened with soybean powder
- Seven *okoshi* 粔籹 (cakes of mixed rice flour and glutinous rice flour) kneaded and sweetened with soybean powder
- Seven *fukiage* 吹上 (kneaded glutinous rice flour cakes) sweetened with soybean powder
- Seven *kachiguri* 搗栗 (polished chestnuts)

LIST 4: Offerings at the Inner Sanctuary at the Upper Kamo Shrine on 15 May.

- Two items (*niko* 二個), hollyhock and cinnamon leaves
- *Ichigu* or *hitozoroi* 一具 (thin chopsticks set on a golden container)
- Cooked rice in two boat-shaped boxes (*nisō* 二艘, wooden rectangular boxes with rounded corners, partly covered lengthwise by a rectangular slat of cypress bark that is fastened crosswise by means of green Indian rice stalks [*makomo* 真菰]).
- Mochi in two boat-shaped boxes with five red *azuki* beans are pressed in a star shape at the center of the mochi layers.
- One carp (*ikkō* 一喉) set on a bed of green oak leaf, resting on sprigs of Japanese cedar.
- A bird (traditionally, a pheasant), set on an oval red-lacquered tray.
- Five raw sea breams (*gobi* 五尾)
- Giant radish (two trays, each holding three radishes on a bed of cedar sprigs)
- One clay plate holding seven lily bulbs (*yurine* 百合根) resting on cedar sprigs
- One clay plate holding seven Japanese eggplants resting on cedar sprigs
- "Piled imperial estate offerings" (*tsumi goryō* 積御料): one wooden box holding fifty dried flying fish, arranged in a star formation, tails turned toward the center of the box.
- "Wrapped imperial estate offerings" (*tsutsumi goryō* 包御料), each set of items wrapped in Japanese paper:
  - Japanese oak acorns
  - Crushed dried chestnuts
  - Sea vegetable (*jinbasō* 神馬草)
  - Kneaded glutinous rice flour cakes, sweetened with soybean powder
  - Popped glutinous rice
  - Green laver
  - Purple laver
  - Red laver (*tosakanori* 鶏冠草)
  - Sixty fungi (*musō koge* 六十苔)
  - *Wakame* sea vegetable
  - Four stalks of young garlic including bulbs (*ōbiru* 大蒜)
- Thirty-two boiled mochi paste confections, each first pressed in a cone shape in bamboo leaves, then wrapped in cypress (*hinoki* 檜) bark and bound with young Indian rice stalks; these are known as *hiwada no chimaki* 檜皮粽.
- Five dried river sweetfish placed on a large green oak leaf, itself set on cypress sprigs, in a paulownia tray.
- Two sea breams known as *koma goryō* 狛御料 because they are offered to the "lion" statues that protect the sanctuary.
- Rice brew placed in a golden goblet engraved with hollyhock leaves and set on high gold-plated box-like trays, which is referred to as "medicine." It should be noted that prior to 1868 the alcohol content of saké was above 40 percent.

LIST 5: Offerings at the Outer Sanctuary at the Upper Kamo Shrine on 15 May.

- Chopsticks
- Cooked rice
- One cup of salt with saké brew (*saké shio* 酒塩)
- Four trays of flying fish cut crosswise into three
- One carp on a tray (*otakamori* 御高盛)
- Pheasant on a tray
- Six trays of flying fish
- One tray of popped glutinous rice
- One tray of sweet balls (*dango* 団子)
- Two trays of glutinous rice sweet balls
- First serving of rice brew
- One tray of pheasant broth
- One tray of cold broth
- One tray of rice vinegar
- One tray of boiled flying fish (*ushio ni* 潮煮)
- One tray of raw, salted mackerel
- Two trays of straight cut (*hiragiri* 平切) flying fish
- One tray of salted, vinegared mackerel
- One tray of flying fish
- One tray of grilled flying fish (*mushirimono* むしり物)
- One tray of salted, grilled mackerel (*oyakimono* 御焼物)
- Rice brew
- One tray of popped glutinous rice
- One tray of sweetened rice paste balls (*maru dango* 丸団子)
- Two trays of glutinous rice balls (*maru mochi dango* 丸餅団子)

round stand for the "hors d'oeuvre" (*shokon* 初献); at the center, a rectangular red-lacquered table, adorned with gold, and standing on two rows of eight curved legs, holds the main courses (*shinsen* 神饌); to the left, another one-legged round stand holds the "dessert" (*kōkon* 後献); finally, a red-lacquered plate holding various fish is set on the ground, slightly in front of the central rectangular table. These offerings, like all others that are made at the Kamo sanctuaries, were prepared by sacerdotal officiants under strict rules of purity and secrecy in the sanctuary's kitchens, or caldron halls (*hetsui dono* 竈殿), and are not shown to the general public. Today, they are prepared by a catering service.

The Upper Shrine's food offerings, also held on 15 May, are piled several layers high in large portable boxes or displayed on tables in two sacred areas, the Outer Sanctuary (*gejin* 外陣) and Inner Sanctuary (*naijin* 内陣), and the Garden Court. In

total, there are one hundred and sixty containers. These offerings are made prior to the arrival of the imperial envoy (*chokushi* 勅使) and begin at the Inner Sanctuary.[2]

The Iwashimizu Hachimangū Temple-Shrine Complex

The divine entities referred to as Hachiman, often erroneously thought of as a single entity, are a unified object of cult in some forty-five thousand shrines around the country, the four most important of which are (in historical order) the Usa Hachiman shrine-temple complex located in Usa, Kyushu, the Tamukeyama 手向山 Hachiman shrine-temple complex located in Nara, the Iwashimizu shrine-temple complex located on a hill to the south of Kyoto, and the Tsurugaoka 鶴ヶ丘 shrine-temple complex located in the eastern city of Kamakura. If asked, most people today would refer to these sites of cult as "Shinto" shrines, but these answers merely reflect a modern illusion created by late-nineteenth-century and post-World War II ideologues. Throughout their long history, the variegated Hachiman cults developed along dominant Buddhist parameters, and nowhere is this more evident than in some of the food offerings made at Iwashimizu. Today considered a peripheral site of cult, it is reachable only by a private company whose trains typically zoom past the station named Yawata 八幡—another transliteration of the graphs usually read Hachiman—at the foot of the hill where the Iwashimizu shrine-temple complex is situated. Called Otokoyama 男山 ("Male Mountain"), this hill was in fact a major strategic point between Kyoto and Osaka, and its combined divine entities were supposed to protect Kyoto from military dangers coming from the south.

Its shrines and temples date back to 859, when Fujiwara aristocrats began to dominate the imperial court by placing one of their daughters as the main consort of an emperor, and then claiming regency powers over the son born of that union, a son who they put on the imperial throne at a very young age. In 859, the new emperor was eleven years old, and the entities called Hachiman were enlisted to protect him. The assertion that only a male child born from a union between an emperor and a Fujiwara-born consort remained true up to the twentieth century, when the emperor opted to marry a commoner.

For about one thousand years, the Iwashimizu Hachiman shrine-temple complex symbolized the Fujiwara clan's claim to dominance over the state, even if that clan lost political but not symbolic dominance some two hundred and fifty years after the creation of the Iwashimizu complex. Indeed, it seems that the Fujiwara enjoyed vicarious satisfaction in the fact that the Minamoto 源 warrior clan—issued from the Fujiwara blood line of the child enthroned in 859—came to govern Japan in the name of the emperor in 1186 and took Hachiman as its

2. Two scholars were allowed to see these offerings up-close in the late 1980s, but were allowed to take only two photographs. Ocular taboos are still in effect in many shrines.

LIST 6: First courses at Iwashimizu.

Eleven courses placed on ten large plates lacquered in red inside and black on the exterior rim and bottom. Each plate contains two or more small white plates loaded with food. The eleventh course rests on a black and red lacquered stand.

1. To the front of the plate, a cup of rice brew is set on a small wooden stand, as are all food offerings here. In the middle, white chopsticks. In the back, cooked rice shaped as a tower, wrapped in paper, and tied with a single white strip knot, as are all other food offerings.
2. A dish of dried saury-pikes. In the back, a dish laden with five dried bonito fish.
3. A dish of salted salmon on a bed of kelp. In the back, a dish of dried sea slugs.
4. Three dishes: in the front, *wakame* sea vegetable; in the back, three rolls of dried kelp and a dish of dried squid slices.
5. Four plates: one with a dried red sea vegetable called *tōkanori* 鶏冠海苔 ("rooster's crest," normally called *tosakanori*); one with dried green laver; one with dried purple laver; and one filled with dried red and green layers of Mishima laver.
6. Four plates: in the back, one with thick-hair codium and one with five burdock roots; in the front, one with lotus roots and one with white muskmelon.
7. In the back: a plate containing parent taro standing over small yams; in the front, a plate holding a wax melon.
8. Three plates: in the front, three giant radishes; in the back, a plate holding wasabi roots, and a plate holding nuphar roots.
9. In the back, a plate holding rice paste shaped like a crouching rabbit, dyed brown and white; in the front, a plate of broiled chicken on bamboo skewers.
10. Three dishes: grapes, kaya nuts, and dried chestnuts.
11. The lacquered stand holds two plates in the front: one with washed rice, and one with salted water. In the back, a branch of the sacred evergreen *sakaki* rests on the high plate.

tutelary set of deities, which they enshrined in Kamakura, south of present-day Tokyo. Blood lines have determined more social and political conflicts that can be named in this study of food offerings, unless one understands the proposition that people who share the same "blood" are entitled to share the same "food." In contemporary Japan, should one replace the words "blood" with "local bonds," one may get an inkling of what goes on when people offer food to their deities or to each other. Food sharing is a bonding technology.

Indeed, at Iwashimizu you can today—if you like to be awake at 2 AM—witness a grand imperial procession from the top to the bottom of the hill. Back at the top, you may still see eleven types of food offerings (LIST 6), and then you can admire the twelve "plant" offerings (LIST 7) that are placed in front of the main sanctuary.

LIST 7: Twelve "plant" offerings at Iwashimizu.

West	East
1. Three bamboo trunks cut at the top; wads of cotton are placed here and there to look like snow; at the bottom, two bamboo shoots, gravel, a stone, and a metal phoenix.	7. A pine tree with drooping branches of flowers I cannot identify, with a butterfly at the top and what appears to be a wagtail at the bottom.
2. Red and white plum flowers with a parakeet at the top.	8. Pink, white, and red peonies with small red flowers below.
3. Yellow and white chrysanthemums with two cranes at the bottom.	9. A mandarin tree loaded with small fruit, and three roses at the bottom.
4. Nandina stands with yellow mums and two white rabbits.	10. A cherry tree in bloom with several yellow butterflies.
5. Camellias in red and white blossoms with low striped bamboo leaves, and shore birds.	11. Four bunches of irises with two shore birds, plovers.
6. Four bunches of narcissus with what appears to be pheasants on the ground.	12. A maple tree in its fall colors with two deer.

These offerings owe much, it appears, to quite a few offerings made in the countryside, for they retain a certain unaffected directness that speaks volumes about the poetic representations of seasons and nature in classical poetry and literature. All offerings of plants and animals are hand-made. Today, one can buy a variety of encyclopedias called "seasonal words dictionaries" (*kigo jiten* 季語辞典), consisting of keywords that are mostly used in poems, tea ceremonies, and flower arrangement occasions—and food gatherings—but they provide little help in understanding the order of the twelve plant offerings made at Iwashimizu, which do not seem to follow the yearly cycle. All offerings have the same height and are set on unfinished wood stands, where they are glued into drilled holes; each display includes either rocks or smaller plants and birds or animals, thus forming a single landscape tray. They are to be viewed from west to east, and they face south.

"Landscape trays" are a relatively common feature of festive offerings in Shinto-Buddhist festivities, which are known as *suhamadai* 洲浜臺 or *bonkei* 盆景 and still can be seen in a variety of ritual occasions. They originated in representations of Daoist and Buddhist ideal spaces such as the Land of the Immortals or a buddha's or bodhisattva's pure land.

The Twice-Daily Food Offerings at Ise's Outer Shrine

The Inner and Outer Shrines of Ise are symbolized, in my view, by the industrial amounts of food offerings prepared for the Ise shrines. These offerings used to be hidden from view for commoners prior to 1868. As is well known, the Inner Shrine is dedicated to Amaterasu Ōmikami, the ancestral spirit of the imperial house, while the Outer Shrine is dedicated to the kami of food.

At the Outer Shrine, food is offered twice daily: at 8 AM and 4 PM in the summer schedule and at 9 AM and 3 PM in the winter schedule. The day before the offerings are made, they are prepared in the ritual office (*saikan* 斎館) by high-ranked sacerdotal officiants who purify themselves with salt, prepare sanctified fire by rubbing sticks in the Observance Fire Hall (Imibiyaden 忌火屋殿), and sleep in the ritual office. At 3:30 PM, the vice head officiant (*gonnegi* 権禰宜) followed by two officiants—one of whom holds the key to the eating hall of the kami (*mikeden* 御饌殿) in the Outer Shrine—head for the Observance Fire Hall, where they pick up a large box containing six layers of food offerings, one for each of the six kami enshrined there. At 4 PM, they cross over to the Outer Shrine, and with a great screeching sound, open the wooden doors of the eating hall, and make the offerings, starting with Amaterasu. They then wait and remove the offerings, keeping those presented to Amaterasu until the end, and carry them back to the Observance Fire Hall. They then return to the ritual office. The offerings will be shared among the officiants, who add some of them to their daily fare. All this takes place under a strict veil of secrecy. Except for the crossing point between two paths, where people are allowed to stand and see the three officiants go from the ritual office to the Observance Fire Hall and from which they can faintly see the officiants carry on their shoulders a large box containing the offerings from the hall to the Outer Shrine and back, nothing can be seen.

Silence must be observed; it is broken only by the slow screeching sound made while opening the large doors of the eating hall, the recitation of a *norito*, and hand clapping by the officiants. The food offerings themselves may not be touched by the eyes and are described by guides only in the vaguest terms; prior to the Meiji period, such descriptions included only water, rice, and salt. Two famous chefs, however, Tsuji Kaichi 辻 嘉一 and Takahashi Tadayuki 高橋忠之, were invited in 1985 to write a book on food at Ise, and they describe the current offerings in some detail. According to their account, there are six layers of offerings: one each for the main kami (Amaterasu and Toyouke ō mikami 豊受大御神), and one for each of four separate shrines (*betsugū* 別宮). Each shrine receives roughly the same offerings: three servings of pure rice brew, three dishes of cooked rice, one dish of baked salt, one dish of water taken from the shrine's sacred spring, one whole raw fish (between April and October, this is replaced with dried fish), one fillet of dried bonito fish, one dish of sea vegetables, one

dish of fresh vegetables, and one dish of fruit. To describe all shrines and their offerings—some of which are extravagant—is simply impossible in the present context, but it is clear that we are dealing with a central aspect of the Japanese cultic-cultural systems. Many foods are grown, fished, or caught in the Ise region, and salt (in huge amounts) is prepared near the shore and then baked at the shrines.

Food, Violence, and Sacrifice

Toyouke ō mikami, the central object of cult of the Outer Shrine complex of Ise, is also known in the *Kojiki* as Toyouke himegami 豊宇気比読神 (Philippi 1968, 140). She is said to have been born as a child of Wakumusubi no kami 和久産巣日神, himself born in the urine released by Izanami no mikoto 伊邪那美命 when she died after giving birth to fire. The *Kojiki* states that she also escorted Ninigi no mikoto 邇邇芸命 holding Amaterasu's mirror, when he descended from Takamagahara 高天原 to earth. Seen early on as a deity presiding over food production, she is also known under different names, probably as the result of accretions with other food-related entities or of mergers that often occur in myths: Ukemochi no kami 保食神, Oogetsuhime no kami 大気都比売神, Ukanomitama no kami 宇迦之御魂神, and Toyoukanome no mikoto 豊宇賀能売命, terms that suggest a constellation of symbols and legends such as those surrounding Ugajin 宇賀神 and food. We are also told that she served Amaterasu under the name Miketsugami 御饌都神, which means kami of food, and that this is the name under which she became the object of a cult in Watarai 度会, the site of the Ise Outer Shrine, upon reception of an oracle ordering her to attend to Amaterasu and leave her current place of residence at Tanbo no kuni hiji no manai 丹波国比治真名井. It so happens that this place had a shrine called Nagu 奈具 dedicated to a kami called Toyoukanome, which, some say, suggests that Miketsugami may be Toyoukanome, or Toyouke. Whatever the case may be, Toyouke is the kami of food, no doubt, and this sends us back to mythology:

> Tsuki-yomi no mikoto, on receiving this command, descended and went to the place where Uke-mochi no Kami was. Thereupon Uke-mochi no Kami turned her head towards the land, and forthwith from her mouth there came boiled rice: she faced the sea, and again there came from her mouth things broad of fin and things narrow of fin. She faced the mountains and again there came from her mouth things rough of hair and things soft of hair. These things were all prepared and set out on one hundred tables for [the visitor's] entertainment. Then Tsuki-yomi no mikoto became flushed with anger, and said: "Filthy! Nasty! That thou shouldst dare to feed me with things disgorged from thy mouth." So he drew his sword and slew her.…

> At this time Uke-mochi was truly dead already. But on the crown of her head there had been produced the ox and the horse; on the top of her forehead there had been produced millet; over her eyebrows there had been produced the silkworm; within her eyes there had been produced panic; in her belly there had been produced rice; in her genitals there had been produced wheat, large beans, and small beans….
>
> Ama-terasu no Oho-kami was rejoiced and said: "These are the things which the race of visible men will eat and live"…. She forthwith sowed for the first time the rice in the narrow fields and in the long fields of Heaven. That autumn, drooping ears bent down, eight span long, and were exceedingly pleasant to look on. Moreover she took the silkworms in her mouth, and succeeded in reeling thread from them. (Aston 1972, 32–33)

Well, this is quite a mouthful. Such are the terrifying lessons of life and death, growth and decay, ingestion, digestion and excretion, anger and violence, set out on one hundred tables for the visitor's philosophical consideration. There is simply no food without some sort of violence, even if it is claimed that food-sharing lubricates human relationships. All humans are world-eaters, consumers of somebody else's work, and they have to assign meanings to everything they touch, to all elements they ingurgitate. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1983) has written memorable pages on beans in America and Japan, and I wish his deep love for Japan had driven him to write about offerings, about these poisonous gifts (as Jacques Derrida's knowledge of German would have it), and about questions that must be raised concerning why such displays and arrangements are accompanied by court music and ancient dances: the kami eat with their eyes. This needs to be discussed in depth, if only because there are ocular taboos—and because food has been treated mostly from the point of view of taste. Most Western books on food have fallen into that trap!

The word "gift," ever since Marcel Mauss (1990), has become a cornerstone of anthropology and, indeed, has been applied to food offerings. But is it really the case that we are looking at gifts? That we simply offer fine dishes while proffering beautiful words of praise? Are we saying thank you, or please, depending on the time of the year? Is an exchange taking place between interested individuals who can see what they give, but cannot see the entities they thus engage, while the entities in question are offered spectacles they are supposed to appreciate? Asking different questions may prove useful: What about the nature of sacrifice, which has been the focus of so many historians of religions?

Violence it definitely is. Food offerings at shrines such as Suwa 諏訪 or Kamo, among many others across the country, involved a lot of bloody sacrifice. So, the question remains: why so much violence? It is not merely a matter of atonement such as is seen in the Buddhist context of release of life ritual (*hōjōe* 放生会) assemblies taking place in what are today Shinto shrines, such as Usa

Hachimangū, or Kamakura's Tsurugaoka Hachimangū. It may be a tad too violent to be explained away as a gesture of gratitude or of hope for good crops. Maybe, then, it is a matter of debt that needs to be repaid in kind, even though it can never be fully repaid. Maybe one is not repenting, or atoning for the death of founders of religions, or of Zen masters who created major temples, or atoning for one's transgressions as I am sure is often the case. One must repay the existential debt: the fact that humans have been given life still causes an indelible debt, but we must push the hypothesis further.

A good reason why work was held to be sacred is that it was precisely what made surplus production possible, and it is the surplus that is offered and, eventually, shared, or, as is often enough the case, thrown away, interred, or burnt. Furthermore, one should not forget the instances in which elaborate food offerings are made to young girls but not eaten by anyone, as is the case, say, of the planting (*taue* 田植) rites at Sumiyoshi Taisha 住吉大社 in Osaka. There is a debt to be repaid all right, but not everybody could, unless forced to do so: that is why special taxes were levied to provide food, cloth, silk, gold, and other riches for shrines and temples ritual festivities around the country. Rituals were *shiki* 式, that is, they were based on the ancient equivalent of laws and norms presented in great detail in the *Ritual Procedures of the Engi Era* and many other ritual rule books thereafter, all of which prove that food offerings are an economic fact (Grapard 2000).

While I cannot emphasize enough this legal/economic feature, I do not wish to overplay the hand while obfuscating the aesthetics that make these quasi-orgies palatable to reason. There is a world of difference between a village where only one fish is offered, only to be grilled a few moments later and shared by a hungry community with the help of a lot of saké, and the elegant, classy world of the court, where aesthetics ruled supreme, such as *hōchōshiki* 包丁式, the cutting of fish or poultry by specialists who have transmitted their knowledge and techniques for generations, like the members of the Shijō 四条 school and its subbranch, the Ikamaryū 生間流, who are still active today. It is regrettable that this practice has been belittled by reducing it to "stunt cuisine," but in his fascinating book, Eric Rath (2010, 47–51) offers a discussion of Shijō school techniques and of the Buddhist esoteric contents of "knife" ceremonies.

I now consider another example of Shijō ritualized cutting: it may be a common error to consider these rites as Shinto, since Shinto shrines seem to be common venues for fish-cutting. But here is a radically different case. The first of Shinran's 親鸞 (1173–1262) twelve disciples was a certain Shōshin 性信 (1187–1275). Shōshin went on to create a temple called Hōonji 報恩寺, in what is today Jōsō 常総 City in Ibaraki Prefecture. This temple was destroyed several times due to military conflicts, but it was eventually rebuilt in 1602 in Edo, where one of its "knife" rites was included in Edo lists of famous events (*nenjū gyōji* 年中

行事): this rite is the *manaita hiraki* 俎板開き in which Shijō ritualists, in an elegant dance of arms, cut two carp, then rearrange the pieces to form the two graphs meaning "long life" (*chōmei* 長命) and offer them to the Buddha. This ritual is still performed every 12 January at a temple located just east of Ueno Park in Tokyo. A few days earlier (8 January), the Tenmangū Shrine of Jōsō City offers these carp, as it does every year, in another ceremonial occasion for the shrine and the temple.

This ritual, then, should be studied in the context of the Buddhist ban on taking life and in the context of animal symbolism at large. Eric Rath (2010, 40–42) offers a somewhat convoluted Buddhist rationale that is not quite convincing, for it does not mention that animals in general belong to a lower level of existence and, therefore, do not merit consideration. Knives are surrounded by a medley of esoteric Buddhist terms and symbols, but the assumptions concerning the status of animal life, either in the case of these cutting rites or in the case of ceremonies for releasing life, require further study and discussion.

Food and Taboo

The Buddhism-inspired government edicts against killing animals are less a reflection of complex taboos than of a will to control certain social practices. First of all, tamed animals were targeted more often than wild animals in these edicts. The only wild animal treated at some length is the monkey, because of its likeness to human beings, particularly so after it is skinned because it then resembles a human child.

The Japanese terminology corresponding most closely to the word taboo is fairly elaborate. The native generic term *imi*, written with the graphs 忌 and 斎, is usually translated as "abstinence," but matters get complicated when one looks at classical texts from which one receives the impression that the term *imi* must be broken down into various interrelated concepts and sets of practices, as is implied by the use of these two different graphs. The *Daikanwa Dictionary* proposes the following terms to define the graph pronounced *kin* 忌: 憎悪也, 恐也, 畏, 敬, 戒, and 禁. The second term, pronounced *ki* 斎, is glossed 戒潔也, 荘也, 啓, 戒, and 恭.

While these terms are Chinese, Okada Shigekiyo (1989) writes that they point to the fundamental and characteristic features of ritual festivity, which is to purify oneself in order to become sacred and thereby make contact with the divine possible, and to make food offerings to, or partake of food with, the kami in order to be entrusted with their pure life force. None of this, he proposes, can take place without a plethora of precautionary rites of purification, atonement, abstinence, or expressions of respect, awe, fear, and reverence, the definitional terms found in the *Daikanwa Dictionary*. In other words, reverence and fear set

the stage for the establishment of the ritual attitudes and observances the term *imi* refers to. Indeed, this term is often glossed in classical texts as *itsuku* 斎く or *iwau* 祝う. It soon becomes obvious that the term *imi* is a fundamental aspect of Japanese cultic and cultural systems, and that it cannot be separated from food offerings. Abstinence is a fundamental term with regard to the cultural systems of food anywhere in the world, but the Japanese specificities remain to be elucidated. Furthermore, food ranks so high on the list of human activities that are governed by taboos that it is probably absurd to focus on it alone, without dealing with clearly or opaquely related taboos in the domains of sexuality, vestments, or housing, among others.

Furthermore, *imi* can serve as an evasive tactic people engage in when they are confronted with a perceived danger (real or imagined) or in other types of crisis. Typically, pollution (*kegare* けがれ) is thought of as a major danger, and purification is the recommended palliative. Purification means, first and foremost, abstinence (of certain foodstuff, sex, clothing, and the like), and it is, typically, achieved by lustration. The same type of attitudes and practices can be observed in the case of approaching sacred spaces and objects, in the case of engaging in rites of devotion, such as the systematic avoidance of pollution, a general feeling of awe and fear, and the observance of abstinence.

It is impossible, however, to reduce *imi* to the binary opposition between sacred and profane or between purity and pollution, because there are so many types of crises that require different countermeasures. Nonetheless, the features described above remain present in all because the desired result is the return of an individual or group to ordered life and normalcy, which is the case of the communal sharing of food offerings (*naorai* 直会) in which lay participants in the ritual are invited to eat special dishes. Some preventive measures can also be taken with a view to avoiding specific dangers. Indeed, abstinence and ritual purity are the conditions of contact with divine or supranatural powers and are conceived of as keys to the survival of an individual or group; such is the reason for writing *imi* with the two graphs mentioned earlier. The dangers in question are always of a transcendental or cosmic character, such as the divine entities whose presence or role is suspected in the conduct of human affairs and in death. That is, abstinence is concerned with supranatural powers, trans-rational effects, polar oppositions, and value systems. Since it is usually performed on behalf of a group, abstinence is an eminently social activity; as a consequence, it is submitted to a number of rules and regulations that are institutionalized and routinized. The regularity inherent to ritual is thought to be able to fight sudden intrusions or unexpected irregularities. Abstinence, thus, helps to placate threats and stabilize activities, and may be thought of as a mechanism that can be broken down into five steps and effects.

1. Objectification and identification of a danger
2. Setting up avoidance measures
3. Preternatural sanctions against intruders or violators
4. Removal of intruders or violators
5. Purification (also referred to as sacralization)

Needless to say, a vast amount of work needs to be done.

What To Do if Your Curiosity is Now Piqued

The discussion of these terms requires lengthy analyses steeped in research "on the ground." Then, open the discussion by way of problematizing the context within which food is offered after laudatory words are proffered. Next, go from types of realities to types of conceptualization. From the tangible through the visual, move on to consider the inescapable philosophical, ethical, social, and economic dimensions. There is more to food offerings than meets the eye alone: what one sees is aesthetically pleasing (*le beau*), which naturally generates moral and philosophical considerations (*le bon*). One is therefore invited to think food, a practice that inevitably suggests that what is visible must be treated as legible.

Furthermore, the production of surplus food inevitably opens questions concerning the ritual economy of power. The complex of all sorts of laws and social norms lends itself to a consideration of food offerings as a central part of the conceptions and practices that together form a large part of the cultic and cultural systems of Japan. A cursory reading of the *Yūsoku kojitsu daijiten* (Suzuki 1996) should support my use of the term "cultic and cultural system" and impresses on one the need to dive into the mesmerizing world of a highly ritualized universe, even if only in its modern echoes. The aesthetic dimension (food displays, music, dance, clothing, shrine and temple architecture, and so on), the philosophical dimensions (how offerings encourage reflection), the spiritual materialities and esoteric rituals (such as those discussed by Rambelli [2007], Rath [2010], and Grapard [2000]), the semantic dimension ("reading food" questions and how meanings are constituted and transmitted), and the moral dimensions that open onto an understanding of gratitude (or the discovery that gratitude for life does enlarge the mind and reveals the conditions for, and the rewards of, becoming a member of society).

Most importantly, at the present we must tread beyond the narrow limits of academic specializations and enlarge our field of vision through fieldwork. Research on Lake Biwa is an example of work that needs urgent attention that should be rewarding. There are two small but fascinating books on rituals and food offerings surrounding the lunar new year around Lake Biwa (Nakajima and Uno, 1999; Nakajima, Ueda, and Harada 2008). Naturally, there are many more temples and shrines in that area, and this fieldwork approach toward food

offerings could be applied to research in other regions as well. Each shrine and temple has its own history and, not surprisingly, each has different food offerings. Or take the example of the Kakitsusai 嘉吉祭 at Tanzan 談山 Shrine in Nara Prefecture, in which the portable shrines are made of nothing but vegetables and fruit…

And Now, Back to Voltaire!

Later in his entry on the Japanese Catechism, Voltaire wrote that the Japanese hold that "Dinner is meant to be a pious and honest joy, and throwing glasses at each other's heads is not to be tolerated" (Voltaire 1964, 101).

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