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EARTH-GODS IN MORIMACHI

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The ie-earth-god-community line.

In the following I will be concerned with the largely local cult of one kind of "earth-gods," called 地神 *ji-no-kami*, as I had the chance to study it in Morimachi, Shūchi-gun, Shizuoka-ken, located near the middle of Honshū in Japan. The worship of the *ji-no-kami* is part of a set of interrelated aspects of Japanese folk-religion that, as far as they are the products of a given society and its cultural history, can easily be seen as expressing a whole range of values and beliefs invested in the ideology of transcending individuality within the traditional Japanese "kinship-group" (the 家 *ie*). It will therefore be useful to begin by recalling the salient features of this social context, where these divinities played their traditional role.

Clan formations, such as in China and Korea, did not develop within the social structure of historical Japanese society. Rather social history in Japan is usually interpreted in terms of two different, successive but partly overlapping evolutionary processes, the structural principles of 氏 *uji* and 家 *ie* (Murakami 1979).

When studying village life in Japan, one constantly encounters customs and patterns of organization that have survived into modern times from the traditional *ie* society. The term "ie" signifies both a house, the physical object, and the sacrosanct social institution enveloping it, the property and the people managing it at any given moment in its history, as well as the succession of past generations of ancestors and future descendents. The *ie* principle indicates the procedure for assuring succession, normally through a line of fathers to eldest sons, i.e., primogeniture. Yet this succession to the officially recognized position of head of a

family through primogeniture is by no means the cornerstone of the *ie* complex, since occasionally different kinds of choices and motivations permit one to set it aside. The *ie* has, as a matter of fact, been depicted as a sort of enterprise organized according to kinship principles of stem-linearity. The responsibility for securing the backbone of the *ie*, the stem-linearity—which equals past, present, and future survival within the given (and whenever possible developing) means of production and relations to the natural surroundings—often took precedence over kinship considerations (Nakane 1967, p. 8). While the father-eldest son succession was the social norm under "normal" conditions, when that choice was judged contrary to the interests of the *ie*, or when there were no sons at all within the family, a developed alternative system of strategies for adoptions and continuity through fictive kinship was available to help straighten out the irregularities. Some of the dynamic of the *ie* system, such as the relative number in each locality of available candidates for adoption, has suffered a serious set-back in Japanese rural communities of today. But that aspect of cultural asphyxia (social change), even though in some ways it affects the "life expectancy" of the *ji-no-kami*, is beyond the scope of this paper.

This *ie* principle that historians trace back to the formation of the Japanese samurai-class passed through several historical changes in content and in extent of application. During the remarkably long era of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868) in cultural isolation and minimal social mobility, this so-called *ie*-principle was the blueprint for the samurai social and ideological superstructure of Japanese society, designed to govern the masses by organizing the productive forces of farmers on village bases and of artisans and merchants in the cities.

The Meiji Restoration and the ratification of its Civil Code in 1898 brought about a kind of "samuraization" of the common people. This was caused by the indiscriminate nature of the law incorporating some of the essentials of the *ie* principle. The concept of "the family" in a corresponding article in the new Civil Code was in fact a compromise between the samurai *ie* idea and

the modern notion of individual property rights. As Murakami explains:

> On the one hand, the family head (戸主 *koshu*) was granted substantial control and responsibility over family members and there was a hierarchy within each family according to the order of succession to the *koshu* status. The samurai notion of family was thus extended to farmers and merchants (Murakami 1984, p. 346).

Until that time the families of the common people did not have their own names for the sublimation of their individual identity. Murakami again explains:

> On the other hand, the Meiji version of the family did not guarantee any hereditary social position or source of income. In accord with the Western concept of property rights, the Meiji Civil Code granted property rights only to the individual. Each individual could dispose of his or her property. . . . For example, the second or the third son could have an occupation and property of his own and live an independent new life in a different place such as a big city. As industrialization as well as urbanization continued, this trend was strengthened, the result being that lateral lines became new independent families (Murakami 1984, p. 346).

Our study of the earth-gods, *ji-no-kami* is contextualized within the boundaries of rice-growing farmer-families, organized and idealized according to the *ie* principle since the Meiji era. Furthermore everything that has to do exclusively with contemporary Japanese ancestor worship can be situated within these family limits, understood as *ie*. Whatever form the demarcation of the family domain took before or after Meiji, the boundaries not only gave meaning to the succession within the family, but also, and just as much, connected it with the wider surrounding world. As the family deepened its communal roots, there seems to have

been a general tendency through the different historical epochs for the ancestors of the common people to undergo a process of deification, in ever closer identification with the *kami*, the tutelary god of all the local community.

In this context, at its base level the *ji-no-kami* belongs to the biggest and maybe the oldest "family" of supernatural powers in Japan, commonly called 屋敷神 *yashikigami*. This term is a collective name used by Japanese folklorists for the earth/house-gods that have been worshipped all over Japan primarily as familial tutelary deities, although their secondary characteristics vary greatly with each different locality. The study of the most basic principles underlying the cult and the concept of *yashikigami* must be considered of primary importance, for they are pervasive in Japanese rural culture at the level of the most deep-rooted folk beliefs and practices. "If the significant problems concerning this deity could be solved, various aspects of the original beliefs among the Japanese people would be clarified" (Naoe 1977, p. 1). At least in some places, as in Morimachi, the aforementioned process of an apotheosis of passed generations in the stem-linearity of the *ie* family was manifested at two levels: within the boundaries of family-time/space and within the boundaries of community-time/space. The former manifested itself in the worship of *ji-no-kami* in Morimachi or in similar cultic practices elsewhere in the country ("We presume that there formerly existed a common belief among the Japanese people, that the purified spirits of the dead became *yashikigami*, family tutelary deities" [Naoe 1977, p. 8]). The latter is the community worship of a tutelary divinity of the locality. The former also appears in the traditional belief-system as a mediator between family and community levels of existence.

Our thesis, to be developed through a limited case study (*ji-no-kami*) is that, in spite of all the local particularities in customs and traditions relating to the *yashikigami*, certain fundamental, unifying factors can be extracted from its structural composition (analyzed below) and its general position within the traditional world view that still reigned in Japanese agricultural communities at least until the second world war. Briefly stated, beyond the heterogeneity of local variations in cultic practices, the *yashiki-*

gami appears everywhere as the focal point for ancestral deification and as a prime mediator with the higher supernatural *kami* powers. As such, in its most important and enduring aspects, *yashikigami* was a family tutelary deity in the broadest sense of the word. It not only protected the family and its house, but also its material subsistence, the fertility of its land and of its women-folk.

As one last note of introduction, it is worth recalling the wide variations in the actual names employed in different localities by the rural people for *yashikigami*. As demonstration of this fact (as an indicator for all the other surface-differences!), in Shizuoka alone, the prefecture of Morimachi, where I conducted field work over a period of two years from 1982 to 1983, over fifteen different names were used for deities worshipped by farmhouses, as shown in the results from a recent (1976-1977) research on local traditions carried out by the Prefectural Board of Education.

THE MODERN CULT OF THE JI-NO-KAMI IN MORIMACHI

Nearly every farmhouse in Morimachi has its own *ji-no-kami*. They constitute a host of supernatural family-protectors that normally include a highest god (a 掛け軸 *kakejiku* or an お札 *ofuda* with the name of a major Shinto divinity) in the 床の間 *tokonoma*, the place of honor in the house; a 高神様 *Takagami-sama*, who is a sacred protector of the farmhouse installed in a tiny shrine up under the roof top when the house was built; an 恵比須 *Ebisu* and a 大黒様 *Daikoku-sama*, the gods of wealth and prosperity; and a 荒神 *kōjin*, the god of fire. In the agricultural communities in Morimachi, the *ji-no-kami* are traditionally worshipped separately by each family, be it among rice cultivators down on the lowland along the banks of Odagawa, or up in the mountain valleys of forestry/tea-cultivators in Mikura. These divinities all have their place inside the farmhouse, in the kitchen or in or on the *tokonoma*, with one exception. Only The earth-god, the *ji-no-kami-sama* is to be found on the outside, behind the farmhouse, facing the North-East. He is said to protect the 鬼門 *kimon*, the most danger-

ous of all the directions according to the ancient Taoist tradition, from where misfortune threatens to invade the family. Furthermore all the other gods cherished by the family have more or less a general character common to every household. The earth-god, by contrast, is originally an ancestral deification. It follows that, even though he is shaped by collective conceptions, he tends to be further diversified by family histories and traditions. This explains most of the different cultic practices described below, which are based on a study of 123 separate households (91 of which had a *ji-no-kami*) differing to a varying degree from the "norm." There is no image of the earth-god, no paraphernalia; only its shelter. It was traditionally made once a year, at the moment of the earth-god's celebration on the fifteenth of November. In its original form it is a small and a very simple construction. A little roof, about 30 x 30 cm in size is made out of braided 藁 *wara*, the straws of rice plants from the last harvest. Four sticks of wood, splinters of oak or pieces of young bamboo, are stuck into the ground and the roof is placed upon them. This "making of the earth-god," where it is still practiced, is the exclusive task and privilege of the head of the family. Today, this original form of the *ji-no-kami* has all but disappeared in Morimachi (7 out of 91 in the sample). Nowadays, most farmers do not "make their earth-gods" any more. In recent years, they buy themselves once and for all small prefabricated shrines in special shops in the nearby villages and towns. These new shrines for the earth-gods are made out of wood, ceramics, or stone. Inside there is a small space behind miniature doors. Traditionally, the earth-god was renewed every year by the head of the family out of elements symbolizing the earth's fertility; nowadays, the earth-god is normally renewed by the replacement of a talisman, a paper *ofuda* obtained from one of the major shrines or temples of the region.

If a new branch of a family was established in a hamlet by a second or a third son, normally they shared the *ji-no-kami* with the main family. It was not until the third generation of the branch family that it acquired its own earth-god. In one family I interviewed, when it established its earth-god generations ago a rock already present at the ritual purification of the farmhouse's

building site was used as a foundation. On it they raised a small shrine built out of wood. In several other cases, it was explained, families, who were third or fourth generation 分家 *bunke*, or branch families, had transported a stone from the land of the 本家 *honke*, the main family, on which they had raised their new *ji-no-kami*. Others recalled that the inauguration of a new *ji-no-kami* at a branch family was formerly ratified by transporting a shovelful of earth from the *honke*'s land and placing it behind the *bunke*'s house under the newly made miniature straw-roof. Nowadays, since the *ji-no-kami* has lost most of its former vigor, it is rarely taken to represent the ancestors (see Appendix). Its role has been reduced to that of an "ordinary" tutelary *kami*. People sometimes, in fidelity to this part of the tradition, install a new prefabricated *ji-no-kami* when they build a new house.

When asked about what the *ji-no-kami* represents, the few in Morimachi who did not answer that he was just a part of an old tradition handed down to them from the past (maintained because it is a 心の問題 *kokoro no mondai*, a sentimental thing), explained most often that he protected the family. Some added that he also assured the fertility of the family land and the succession of the family line. In this old, now disappearing, belief-system this relationship is seen as brought about by a reciprocal exchange: the family generates its god as the god maintains the family and its livelihood. When people died, as mentioned earlier, they were believed to be attached to the mountain sides or the family graves and to progress spiritually from one memorial service and death anniversary to another, but finally, after the last one, they were believed to be absorbed into the beneficial, tutelary *ji-no-kami*. In Morimachi, the belief in this passage has no known ritual manifestation, but elsewhere, as in Ino-chō in Miyazaki prefecture, after the last memorial service of an ancestor, his mortuary tablet, 位牌 *ihai*, is taken from the family altar, the 仏壇 *butsudan*, carried into the backyard and placed in a small shrine consecrated to *yashikigami*, protector of the family (Naoe 1977, p. 101).

In the small hamlet of Ōtamaru in Morimachi I came across one unique case where the Earth-deity was seconded in protecting the farmhouse by another god, 祝殿様 *Iwaiden-sama*. This latter

was particularly said to protect against burglars. When the house had twice been broken into in the time of my informant's grandfather, the old man went down to the riverside, found a rock, brought it up to the house, and placed it in the steep slope directly behind it, close to the *ji-no-kami-sama*. This was to be the abode of the *Iwaiden-sama*. From then on, it was worshipped at the moment of the 山の講 *yama-no-kō*, the mountain cult in November and January. *Sekihan* 赤飯 (rice with red beans) and a branch of 榊 *sakaki* are then offered to it on the stone.

Ji-no-kami: Cult, myth, and customs

Traditionally, the cult of the earth-god takes place only twice a year (nowadays only once a year in most families): the fifteenth of November, its annual festival, and during the New Year celebration where it is included in the general worship of all the supernatural powers supplicated for yet another cycle of predictible seasons and family prosperity. The fifteenth of November, locally known as 地神祭 *ji-no-kami-no-matsuri*, is thus the focal point of the cult, concerning the family on two different levels of its existence. First and foremost, the families celebrate separately their private earth-god, protector of the fertility of their members and of their lands. This identity and meaning of the earth-god is still the most widely recognized and celebrated in Morimachi. But there is also a supplementary version, added as an extension to the first one by some of my older informants. This latter interpretation was reported by people in a detached, amused air, and was regarded as a 昔話 *mukashi-banashi*, a folk tale. When they were growing up, the old people explained, the month of November was called 神無月 *kannazuki*, or "the month without a god." At that time the celebration of the earth-god consisted in sending him away, 神送り *kamiokuri*. According to this belief, all the earth-gods of the different families in the district were said to assemble on the fifteenth of November, normally at the most conspicuous boundary in the hamlet, on the top of a hill, by the bridge-head, etc. and travel together to Izumo-taisha in Tottori Prefecture, one of the most sacred "cross-roads" of the *kami*-ways. Still other people said it was the first of November that used to be called

kamiokuri. In this version too all the Shinto divinities are said to be summoned once a year to Izumo for an assembly. On that occasion people prepared *sekihan* and placed it on a special *tsutokko* plate made out of braided straws of rice-plants from the last harvest. The *tsutokko* was then placed in front of the earth-deity's shelter.

In both of these versions of attending to the earth-god, during his supposed absence, the *Daikoku-Ebisu-sama*, the gods of wealth and prosperity, are said to take over his role as protectors of the family. When the *kamiokuri* occurred on the first of November, the *ji-no-kami* was said to return on the fifteenth of the same month for his own celebration. Then on the twentieth of November there was another traditional folk celebration for the *Ebisu*-god, called *Ebisukō*. That custom has now practically disappeared.

The god enshrined at Izumo is Okuni-nushi-no-kami, a descendant of Susa-no-Ō-no-mikoto, the brother of Amaterasu-Ō-mikami, the Sun-goddess. All the common earth-gods were said to take to the road for the purpose of participating in a yearly gathering of all the myriads of the *kami* pantheon. This seasonal, extraordinary event--a kind of mythological 忘年会 *bōnenkai* "year-end-party"--was believed to be held in commemoration of the most dramatic episode depicted in Shinto mythology, regenerating this event's life-giving impact upon the universe.

It is reported in the *Kojiki*, the oldest (A.C. 712) extant historical document in Japan, that Susa-no-Ō-no-mikoto in his youth had behaved so very badly and committed so many outrages, that the Sun-goddess, his sister, became angry and hid herself in a celestial cave, causing heaven and earth to become darkened. All the other gods, in utter desperation, labored to restore the luminous center of the universe. Then, after having tried everything else, the gods decided to put on a grand entertainment in front of the cave, with singing and dancing and all kind of merry-making. One of the goddesses performed the most astonishing, obscene dance: "Then she became divinely possessed, exposed her breasts, and pushed her skirt-band down to her genitals. The myriad assembly of attending gods burst out laughing, crying out: "Omoshiroi!" "Omoshiroi!" "Funny!" "Funny!" This was too much,

even for the outraged Sun-goddess. She came out and brought back the light to the world. For his misdemeanor the brother was banished to the lower world on earth, where his good behavior helped him to return to the favor of the *kami*. His descendant at Izumo became a very benevolent *kami* who ruled over the Great Eight Islands of Japan and blessed the people (Kojiki 1983, p. 85).

The earth-god who every year took part in this commemorial resurrection was said to bring back with him a divine blessing on his return home.

The Expressive Nature of the Offerings

If the culturally determined relationships among members of society are reflected in these ideologies and belief systems, the economical foundations of social life and the distinctive features of the ecosystem where social life is implanted find their expression in the language of offerings. As mentioned earlier, the worship of the earth-deity in Morimachi is normally limited to one or two occasions a year, the fifteenth of November and the New Year. The actual cult is thus very modest in its annual (nowadays disappearing) fabrications of a shelter and the following offerings. These latter, although varying widely from one community to another and even from one neighbor to another, indicate where to look for clues to an understanding of the complex nature of the earth-deity. In what follows, I will try to present some of my field-material relating to the subject and indicate some tentative conclusions.

Ninety-one out of 127 families in the three communities studied had a *ji-no-kami* at the North-East corner on the grounds of the family house. Fifty-seven out of these 91 (62.6%) celebrated it specifically at least once a year, the 15th of November. In all, the 57 families taken together, 105 items belonging to 11 different categories of offerings were mentioned in answers and when counted, their frequency and fundamental characteristics are seen to be arranged in a certain pattern:

Table 1

Kinds of offering	No. of families pr. kind	
Sekihan 赤飯	35	
Azukigohan 小豆御飯	8	Cooked/cultural
Mochi 餅	23	
Shirumochi 汁餅	7	
Sake/Water	6/2	Brewed/liminal
Senmai 洗米	7	
Vegetables	4	
Salt	3	Raw/natural
Fish	2	
Total	97	

Sekihan = rice (*mochigome*) and red beans (*azuki*) cooked together, "red-rice."

Azukigohan = red beans cooked with ordinary rice.

Mochi = cooked rice (糯米 *mochigome*) pounded into a homogeneous, sticky mass, shaped into small cubes or rounded cakes. When eaten in a pure form often fried before consumption. *Mochi* is also served in a soup made from soy-beans or red beans. In some cases these latter are made into a kind of a paste enveloping a *mochi* core.

Shirumochi = ordinary rice grounded and mixed with water to make rice cakes. These are then cooked or fried before eating. Normally served in soy sauce.

Sake/water = rice-wine is one of the principal offerings to *kami*, the traditional gods of Japan, but it is also offered to certain of the family dead, the *hotoke-sama*, at their death-anniversaries. For those who were known to have been fond of liquor during their lifetime, their descendants place cups of *sake* in front of the memorial tablets and even pour large quantities over their tomb-

stone. *Sake* is water magnified by the supernatural powers of rice. Water, on the other hand, being one of the elements, is equally apt for offering to *kami* or *hotoke*, either in a pure form or brewed as tea or *sake*.
Senmai = uncooked, washed rice. Another one of the main offerings for the *kami* in Shinto rituals.
Vegetables = fresh products of the earth all figure among traditional offerings to the (Shinto) *kami*.
Salt = a key element in Shinto tradition where it stands for ritual purity in a wide range of ritual context.
Fish = a whole, fresh fish, representing the products of the sea, is one of the usual offerings to the Shingo *kami* at the time of the yearly festival of the whole community.

In addition to this list of offerings, in eight families people decorate the place of worship with *sakaki* (Cleyera ochnacea). *Sakaki* is a mountain tree sacred in Shintoism. Sprigs from it have a multiple ritual importance in Shinto and folk tradition.

Among the 57 families respecting the tradition, 14 pay ritual respect to *ji-no-kami* as a part of the New Year festivities. Then they decorate his dwelling with 注連縄 *shimenawa* and 御幣 *gohei*, traditional rope prepared out of straws from the last harvest's rice plants and white zigzag-cut paper. These ropes are profoundly rooted in the Shinto tradition where they designate a sacred place or a person (e.g. *yokozuna*, a grand-master of Sumo wrestling), wherein *kami* is believed to present itself. Most of these 14 households also offer some *mochi* made for the occasion of New Year, *kagamimochi* or "mirror-mochi."

An old man explained that his father used to prepare special offerings for the *ji-no-kami* at the New Year. For that purpose he used a kind of container called お櫃 *ohitsu*. It was wooden with two interlocking parts, a bottom and a top piece. In the top piece he put washed rice, one *shō*, two *gō* (about two liters) and in the bottom piece he arranged some vegetables, radishes, potatoes, carrots, green leaves etc. and put it by the *ji-no-kami*.

In spite of these reported cases of worship of the earth-deity at the New Year, its primary importance is centered on the cele-

bration the fifteenth of November. Then are manifested all the nuances of its character through local variations in legends and cult.

Those who related the *ji-no-kami* to the *kamiokuri* mentioned earlier used to arrange the offerings into small rucksacks made out of rice-straws. It was said to be the お弁当 *obentō*, the travel-provisions for the earth-god. But this custom has completely disappeared from Morimachi after the second world war.

Today, the offerings are laid either on special plates, *tsuto*, prepared specially from rice-straws as most other things concerning this cult, or arranged on ordinary kitchen-plates. Then the offerings are placed under the roof of the earth-god. If the shrine is made out of wood or stone, before making the offerings, the tiny doors of the shrine are opened and the plates put in front of it.

Two short descriptions of *ji-no-kami-sama-no-matsuri*, the celebration of the earth-deity, given by two persons living in the same village as next-door neighbors, will suffice here as an example.

Tomida Toyoko, now 80 years old, is the only person left of her (husband's) *ie* family still living in the village. Her husband died 10 years ago. They had no child of their own so they adopted one girl from the family of a relative. To assure the succession of the family name, the minimum respect for the ancestors, when she got married, her husband had to be adopted. In other words, she got married to somebody who was ready to give up his own family name for the "benefits" of becoming a successor, *atotsugi*, in his "adoptive" family. All the same, the young couple went to live in the big city of Hamamatsu about 50 km away. Tomida Toyoko's place of birth was in a neighboring village. When she came as a young bride into her husband's family she had to get used to many new ways of doing things. As an example she recalled that as long as her parents-in-law lived, on the 14th of November, they made 12 cakes of *shirumochi* from grained, ordinary rice. When they were ready, they were brought into the main room of the house and put on the *tokonoma*, the place of honor where they waited until the following day, the 15th. Then at daybreak one of these

was placed into a soup made from soy-sauce and was offered to the *ji-no-kami-sama*. The other 11 *mochi* were used for offerings in front of the family-altar for the ancestors and the *Ebisu-Daikoku-sama* in the kitchen. Furthermore, the family prepared dishes with *shiru-mochi* and *sekihan* on a low table-tray, お膳 *ozen*, and carried it over to the related family living next-door. Later the same day, that same family sent somebody over with a similar tray laid out with identical offerings. This custom of symbolic reciprocity was common in the village at that time among the old families, giving expression to their *honke-bunke* relationship.

When Tomida Toyoko's parents-in-law had both passed away, she and her husband talked it over with the neighbors and they decided to give up this custom, since little by little everybody else was doing so in the village.

In the house of Toyoko's neighbors, also Tomidas, the family still prepares 12 *shirumochi* rice-cakes the day before the celebration of the *ji-no-kami*. As before, they are made out of powdered raw rice mixed with water. Three or four of these are placed in a small wooden box, 枡 *masu*, normally used for drinking rice-wine and as a unit of measurement for rice, one cup one *gō*, ten *gō* one *sho*. The *shirumochi* is thus carried to the earth-deity's shrine behind the house. There, with the help of chop sticks specially made for this occasion from oak, the head of the family cuts a little bit from each *shirumochi* and places it under the straw roof on a *tsuto*-plate. Then the rest of the *mochi* is carried back into the house where it is prepared, cooked or fried, to be consumed by all the members of the family.

Finally there is one remarkable case revealing the farmers' conception of their relationship with the earth-god. Several informants recalled that, until the post-war period, when children were born and their mothers were still breast-feeding them, if they produced more milk than needed, they emptied their breasts in a bowl and put it in front of the *ji-no-kami-sama*.

Looking at Table I above, one remarks immediately that the offerings presented to *ji-no-kami* in modern times in Morimachi belong mainly to two different classes as if meant for the appreciation of non-identical spiritual powers.

On the one hand, we have in the lower half important examples of the general tradition of offerings presented to Shinto deities at their shrines. The *kami* is here a life-force and it is celebrated and worshipped by offering life-sustaining products of the earth together with those representing its purity: *sakaki*, washed rice, vegetables, salt and fish. In the annual festivals that flourish all over Japan, these are the ritual offerings to the *kami* that express a communal gratitude for divine generosity. They exhibit natural riches as they are, before they are transformed and further "translated" through cuisine into innumerable combinations of cultural meanings. The rice-wine is the single exception from the rule that only fresh, natural products be offered to the Shinto god, but *sake*, because of its unique capacity to elevate the spirits beyond the state of everyday life, has been considered to be a godly substance in Japan as in so many other places.

Thus these offerings situated in the second part of Table I seem to point to a certain degree of identification of the *ji-no-kami* with a Shinto-like conception of a super-natural agency.

On the other hand we have the four categories of offerings in the first half of Table I. All of them are products of rice, rice cultivated and transformed by farmers. What we have in this instance--still the most common and in all likelihood the most original form of the practice of the cult of the *ji-no-kami*--is a highly developed, multiple symbolic expression of life in communities that once, not so long ago, conceived of the rice-plant as the prime value in society, the measure of heaven and earth. And what is more, here we are faced with a traditional Japanese symbolism wherein the celebration of the earth-deity constitutes but one of its multiple applications. But in fact this symbolism is central and indispensable in most festivals, all rites of passage, and at the New Year celebrations. The symbolism in question is made possible by a binary and supplementary opposition between two extremely important constituents of the Japanese age-old traditional mode of subsistence: rice (*mochi*) and beans (*azuki*). The rice is the pivot emphasized symbolically by combining it with another important agricultural product, beans. Beans are not "just another important element in the Japanese diet," they are also in this floral marriage

its "colorant." In being united with rice, or *mochi*, the purest form of rice, they give it a festive red color.

The multiple combinations in the preparations and presentations in Japan of these two signifiers--in themselves a priori the very life-sustaining material--for the expression of extraordinary meanings at certain moments in societal life perserves a much more detailed analysis than the brief sketch of this present paper.

First of all, there are three main combinations, or classes of variables:

- rice = red beans ⟶ mixed
- mochi + azuki ⟶ juxtaposed
- mochi x - ⟶ pure

At every rite of passage celebrating the growth of life, at the moment of birth, at the first presentation of a baby to the tutelary deity at the local shrine, at the first feeling of an infant with people's food (rice), at its first anniversary, at the first time a girl has her period, at the first time a boy wears the clothes of adult men, at marriages--to give a far from exhaustive number of examples--people prepare "red rice," *sekihan*, a cooked mixture of *mochigome* and *azuki*. When these two elements, (it should be remembered, that in pre-modern times, even ordinary rice was a rare luxury in the diet of the common farmers, producers of rice) representing two phases, before and after, are combined, they express a happy colorful continuity. Then at the midsummer festival for the dead and at 彼岸 *higan*, the spring and autumn traditional celebrations also for the family dead, in many families people prepare お萩 *ohagi*, balls of *mochi* enveloped in a red paste of *azuki* beans. The *mochi* as a core and the *azuki* as a covering form two distinct layers. Finally at the New Year, the Japanese engage in the most generalized *mochi* fiesta. Around that time all over Japan, people, older and younger, can be seen ceremoniously but joyfully tapping the *mochigome*, making their cherished glutinous *mochi*, then often called 鏡餅 *kagamimochi* or 団子餅 *dango-mochi*. It is offered to the ancestors at the family-altar, to the Shinto-god worshipped in the home, and then consumed as it is, pure and unmixed, by all the family members together. New Year's rituals in Japan are characterized by supplication for continuity,

for the absence of rupture. The invocation, "May the cycle of the seasons and the fruits of the earth follow their natural course during the year to come as during the one that just passed" seems to be implied in the Japanese New Year's prayers. The examples just noted should give an idea of the extensive application of this kind of symbolism in Japanese culture.

Without attempting a deeper analysis of the color symbolism of "white-red" opposition in Japanese culture, we can state that in general white is associated with spiritual purity, as can best be observed in all Shinto rituals, and in the black and white decoration of Japanese funerals. Precisely because they mark the very height of the pollution that begins with death (black), funerals evoke the beginning of a future purification exceeding all earthly manifestations (white). Red, on the other hand, symbolizes the cheerful irresponsibility of youth; it designates ideally the two "happy" periods in life, before the coming of age and after the retirement into "idle authority" or a "second childhood." In between, the essence of life should be hard work, excluded from all agitating association with red. This symbolism is then most strikingly expressed in the Japanese national flag: a red rebellious drop floating in a peaceful sea of white.

While on the subject, it is worth recalling a short article in a recent collection of essays by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1983, p. 263) where he develops briefly but convincingly the cross-cultural symbolism relating to the semantic combination of "beans-cereals." There we learn that beans have been symbolically conceived in their relation to cereals (such as rice or maize) as testicles are to the penis. These latter, taken separately, tend to be assigned a relative male and female attributes:

One of Lévi-Strauss's arguments for this supposition is based on a personal communication from Professor Yoshida Teigo of Tokyo

University recalling that in Japan *mame*, which means "beans" commonly designates also "clitoris." In the course of this same article Lévi-Strauss then draws up a second semantic model of binary oppositions supported by Japanese as well as other ethnographic material:

Both these symbolic patterns appear in the cult of *ji-no-kami* as I have had the privilege to observe it in Morimachi. The earth-deity protects the fertility of the soil and of the women-folk, for traditionally he was at the other end of the 33 or 50 years it took to die in the Japanese world view: he represented life/death as two sides of the same coin. His nature is thus reflected in the offerings deployed before him.

The upper half of Table I shows four classes of offerings that belong to the popular Japanese tradition of celebrating events in social life. The fundamental cultural readings of events is invested in the combinations/separations of their constituent elements: passages between stages in the life-cycles within the family (dying to one and being reborn to another) or the passage between one imperturbable round to another in the life-death generating cycles in nature. In the analysis of the offerings for the *ji-no-kami*, first we distinguished the two elements and their respective features apprehended simultaneously in nature and in culture:

rice-plant	beans
oblong	round
white	red
mochi	azuki

Secondly we noted their different combinations as observed in three separate places in Morimachi, Shizuoka-ken:

Offerings	Compositions	Number of families-officiants: *November 15*	*New Years*
Sekihan	mixed	35	-
Azukigohan	mixed	8	-
Mochi	pure (rice-cakes/-)	6	17
Shirumochi	juxta-posed (mochi-soy sauce)	7	-

Azukigohan and *shirumochi* are offered to the *ji-no-kami* by 13 out of the 35 families living in the small hamlet of Otomaru to the North-West of Morimachi. There, lowland for rice cultivation is very limited, barely sufficient for satisfying local consumption. *Mochigome*, the festive kind of rice that gives the glutinous base to *sekihan* has traditionally never been produced in the hamlet and is consequently inappropriate for the celebration of its earth-deities. *Azukigohan* and *shirumochi* are therefore prepared from ordinary rice.

The *ji-no-kami*, because of his mediating position between nature and culture, because he represents both at the same time, is ideally worshipped with offerings representing his double nature: with *sekihan* (or *azukigohan*) at his yearly festival, since then he is growing in both the dead and the living members of the family, and with pure *mochi* at New Year, since then he should represent the desired imperturbability in nature.

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APPENDIX

From a questionnaire taken to some 127 families in three places in Morimachi, two agricultural hamlets (Nakagawa-Shimo and Otomaru) and one neighborhood (Amenomiya-Honchō in Mori, the small city, center of the region), the following results can be seen as directly relevant to the subject of this article:

C-1
Which of the following things are to be found in your house?

Cult	Nakagawa	Amenomiya	Otomaru	Total
	53	39	35	127
Kamidana	50	32	35	117
Butsudan	34	27	28	89
Ji-no-kami	46	19	26	91
Ebisu/Daikoku	49	31	32	112
Inari	6	6	6	18

Other places of cult	10	4	10	24

D-5
Do you believe in the existence of ancestral spirits?

	Nakagawa	Amenomiya	Otomaru	Total
	53	39	35	127
Yes	39	20	21	80
No	3	6	5	14
Don't know	11	13	8	32

D-6
If you believe in the existence of ancestral spirits, when do you think a dead person becomes an ancestor?

	Nakagawa	Amenomiya	Otomaru	Total
	39	20	21	80
Immediately after death	21	6	13	40
Little by little	15	4	5	24
Don't know	3	10	3	16

D-9
If the souls or the spirits of the dead were to be situated somewhere, where would you expect to find them?

	Nakagawa	Amenomiya	Otomaru	Total
	53	39	35	127
In the mountains	2	-	-	2
On the other side of the sea	2	-	-	2
In the sky	13	4	1	18
In the under-world	3	2	1	6
In their graves	30	17	22	69
In the butsudan	28	11	11	50

With the Earth-god	6	1	1	8
In the Buddhist temple	5	3	3	11
With the uchigami	10	–	2	12
Elsewhere*	+	+	+	27
Don't know	+	+	+	12

Total: 217

* Everywhere:

Part of the universe/non-localized	8
In our children	1
In the hearts of living people	9
In the family-house and on its land	3
With God in Heaven (a Christian)	1
There are no souls or spirits	2
Wherever people go they are surrounded by their guardian spirits	1
With the kami-sama (Tenri-kyō)	2