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The Sea and Food Offerings for the Kami (*shinsen*)

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Shinsen, offerings of food and drink to the gods, are an indispensable element of kami festivals in Japan; they are an inevitable research subject in exploring the character of Shintō, in which ritual plays a major role. Rice (or sake made with rice) is normally seen as the most important component of *shinsen*. Japanese rituals dedicated to the gods (*jingi saishi*) are considered to be based on rice-farming culture, and the significance of rice as food offered to the kami has been emphasized in the folklore studies of Yanagita Kunio and others. Furthermore, for the last thirty to forty years, attention has also been paid to rituals related to dry-field crop farming or hunting culture in Japan, such as New Year's Day and animal sacrifice. Particularly important in this respect is the research conducted by Tsuboi Hirofumi (1979), Haruda Nobuo (1993, 2012, 2014), and Nakamura Ikuo (2001; Nakamura, Miura and Akasaka, eds., 2007), among others.

If we look at the constituent elements of *shinsen* as a whole, however, it turns out that marine products are essential as their main items. For example, we know from the section on kami ceremonies ("Jingi shiki") of the *Engishiki* (tenth century), the most complete source of information concerning ancient rituals, that together with rice (and rice sake) abalone, bonito, squid, salmon, seaweed, and other marine products were the main pillars of the *shinsen* of various court rituals. This was by no means limited to shrine rituals in coastal areas rich in marine products but was also true for Kasuga-sai and Chinkasai in Nara, and in the Ainame-sai performed in the home provinces (Kinai) near the capital, all inland areas.

Standard *shinsen* of present-day shrine rites also include water, raw fish such as sea bream, and dried marine products such as squid and kelp, in addition to rice, sake, vegetables, fruit, salt, and water. Moreover, these marine product offerings are to be placed in the upper row of the altar next to rice (including *mochi* rice cakes) and sake (made of rice).

Although there are many individual case studies concerning *shinsen* (Iwai and Hiwa 1981; Yano 1992; Koizumi 2001, esp. chapter 2; Nanri 2011; Yoshino 2015), and despite the importance of marine product offerings, not much progress has been made in terms of comprehensive studies since the seminal work by Shibusawa Keizō (1954). The meaning of marine products in *shinsen* is a major subject that is wide open to further investigation.

Shinsen in the *Engishiki*

It has already been pointed out that in Japanese court rituals, the sacrifice of domestic animals such as calves, sheep or pigs set in the *Ci ling* was not acceptable, despite the fact that the Laws on Divinities (*Jingiryō*) of Japan were modeled on the Tang *Ci ling* (Kikuchi 1971; Inoue 1984). As Shibusawa also points out, a characteristic of the food used as *shinsen*, according to the "Jingi shiki" of the *Engishiki*, is that meat (from wild animals or livestock) is not included.

However, it is not as if the Japanese at that time did not consume meat. For example, tax items from various parts of the country that appear in the *minbushōshiki* and the *shukeiryōshiki* and others include various kinds of meat from wild animals (deer, dried meat of wild boar, salted meat, pickled meat) and birds (dried pheasant meat), which thus seem to have been taken into everyday eating habits as well. These meat items, however, were not adopted in *Engishiki* rituals, which were under the jurisdiction of the Department of Divinities (Jingikan).

There are exceptional cases, as in *kinensai*, a festival of prayers for good crops, in which a white horse, white boar, and white chicken are offered at Mitoshi no yashiro (Katsuragi no mitoshi no yashiro), or at Ise Shrine, when chicken and chicken eggs are offered during the Yamaguchi-sai and various rituals related to the periodical rebuilding of the shrine (*sengū*). These have been interpreted as, originally, sacrifices offered at festivals (Yoshie 1995; Hirabayashi 2007, esp. part 1; Harada 2012, 2014), but Shibusawa noticed that in "Shiji saishiki" of the *Engishiki* there are records of divine horses (*shinme*) at Ise Shrine and offerings of divine horse at Yamaguchi and various water-dividing (*mikumari*) shrines, but these horses cannot be interpreted as having been supplied for the sake of sacrifice or as food offerings (*shinsen*). According to the *Toyukegū gishikichō*, which predates the *Engishiki*, divine horses are also listed as offerings next to food items and containers, but in current rituals as well horses are not offered as *shinsen*. Thus we can argue that, at least at the time the *Engishiki* was written, horses were not killed in sacrifice or offered as *shinsen* food to the gods. Now, Maekawa Akihisa argues that the offering of chicken and eggs at Ise Shrine draws on ancient Korean legends of oviparity as well as old folklore from the continent about sacrificing chickens for the purpose of exorcizing evil spirits, as seen in the *Jingchu suishi ji* (Jp. *Keiso saijiki*), a sixth-century Chinese account of annual festivals and customs. Okada Seishi criticized this interpretation, however, saying that there are not enough proofs explaining the factors that brought these two phenomena together in one ritual or the concrete path by which these continental beliefs arrived at Ise Shrine and came to be adopted there (Maekawa 1986, esp. Part 3, Chapter 4, and appendix).

A survey of the entire set of rituals included in the *Engishiki* shows cases of meat *shinsen* in rituals other than those performed for the kami (listed in the "Jingi shiki"). One such case is the offering of three sacrifices in the *sekiten*, a Confucian ritual, during the Great Learning Ceremony (Daigaku shiki). In Chinese imperial rituals, the three sacrifices are calf, sheep, and pig, but in the Great Learning Ceremony they are defined as large deer, small dear, and pig (boar) or rabbit. Among ceremonies at the Bureau for Yin and Yang (Onmyōryō shiki), dried meat (*hojishi*) and pickled meat (*hishio*), in addition to skipjack tuna, abalone, and dried fish, are also offered in *nasai* (an exorcism

ritual) and *sangensai*. Furthermore, the "Oribe no tsukasa shiki" (Rules of the Weavers' Office), says that dried meat (*hojishi*) was offered on Tanabata (seventh day of the seventh month) in the *Orime matsuri* (the festival for the weaver girl, one of the two protagonists of the Tanabata legend, corresponding to the star Vega). The term *hojishi* means dried food, and *hishio* refers to foodstuff pickled in salt or seasoning derived from it, but there is a good possibility that these foods were in fact meat.[1] Be that as it may, since these festivals all derived from rituals and annual events in China were under the jurisdiction of the University Bureau (Daigaku ryō), Bureau of Ying and Yang (Onmyō ryō), and the Weavers' Office (Oribe no tsukasa), they were not ceremonies to the Japanese kami in which the Department of Divinities participated. In addition, at the festival of the eight kitchen gods (Kamadogami yaza) described in the Rules of the Bureau of the Imperial Palace Kitchens (Ōiryō [also, Ōinozukasa] shiki) and the festival of the four kitchen gods (Shiza kamadogami) in the Rules of the Office of Imperial Brewery (Miki [also, Sake] no tsukasa shiki), boar meat (*ikan*) was offered along with eastern abalone, skipjack tuna, seaweed, and so forth. This probably shows that the kitchen gods were imported from the continent (see Mizuno 1969a). In any case, these were also rituals in which the Department of Divinities did not participate.

References to offering animal meat and performing rituals of animal sacrifice of continental origin in ancient Japan appear here and there in documents such as the national histories, which mentions the rite of killing cows and horses,[2] and the story in *Nihon Ryōiki* "How the ritual slaughtering of cows due to the curse of a Chinese god and practicing the virtue of animal release results in positive or negative karmic retribution in the present life"; traces of these practices can also be found in archeological remains of ritual sites (see Sasō 1985; Matsui 2000). It seems that such customs remained in government ceremonies and regional, popular rituals outside the jurisdiction of the Department of Divinities. In the "Jingi shiki," which prescribed rituals at the court level, there is no provision of meat offerings in the Kamanari wo shizumuru sai, Mikamado sai, Mii narabini mikamado sai, and the Chūgū mikamado sai, which were rituals also dedicated to the tutelary gods of the hearth. Thus, features of continental rituals such as meat offering were wiped out from the rituals managed by the Department of Divinities. This could mean that the court at that time was aware of a clear difference between Chinese imperial rituals, which were accompanied by livestock sacrifice, and the Japanese court rituals for the kami, and intentionally organized a ritual system different from that on the continent.

Of course, the food items listed in the *Engishiki* are not necessarily all *shinsen*. For example, while the *kinensai norito* in the "Norito shiki" describes the *shinsen* offered at the *kinensai* as "things grown in the vast fields such as sweet vegetables and bitter vegetables, things that live in the blue sea such as broad-finned fishes and narrow-finned fishes, seaweed of the interior and seaweed of the shores," among the 737 deities receiving state offerings (*kanpei*) from the Department of Divinities mentioned in the "Shiji saishiki," for 539 of them it is not listed which foodstuff should be offered as *shinsen*, and for the remaining 198 there are no items corresponding to "sweet vegetables and bitter vegetables." This shows that foodstuffs that could not be procured by the Department of Divinities were sourced locally.

In addition, the *norito* of the Hirose Ōimi-sai (from the "Norito shiki") mentions "as for animals living in the mountains, there are animals with soft hair and those with rough hair" (a similar passage also appears in the *norito* of the Fūjin-sai at Tatsuta shrine). This probably refers to birds and beasts living in the mountains, but birds or beasts are not to be found among the items of the same festival's offerings (*heihaku*) in the "Shiji saishiki." Regarding this discrepancy, one could argue that wild animals were originally offered to the kami but that this custom eventually disappeared and there was a time gap between the definition of rules in the "Norito shiki" (composed earlier, with traces of older practices) and those in the "Shiji saishiki," but there is also a good possibility that wild animals were indeed offered at those rituals, in which case they were not procured by the Department of Divinities but locally sourced.

As we have already mentioned, rice occupies an important place in the *shinsen* of the *Engishiki*, and the tradition of adding offerings of abundant marine products as well might be traced as far as the Yangtze civilization of China, where wet-rice agriculture originated. In ancient China, the northern regions combined field-crop production and livestock farming, whereas in the Yangtze River basin wet-rice agriculture prospered; there, people lived off rice cultivation in the marshlands together with collecting seafood in the wetlands, and fishing was inseparably related to rice cultivation. Seafaring people carrying out wet-rice cultivation, who had reached the coastal areas from the Yangtze middle river basin, came to Japan and came to be known as the Yayoi people (Torigoe 2000; Yasuda 2009). It appears that this kind of cultural lineage lies behind the fact that marine products are indispensable to the *shinsen* of Japanese shrines.

We should also add that, for example, freshwater fish such as carp (*koi*) and sweetfish (*ayu*), and sea fish widely consumed today such as mackerel (*saba*) and pilchard (*iwashi*), are not mentioned in "Jingi shiki," in which special fish such as abalone (*awabi*), bonito (*katsuo*), squid (*ika*), and salmon (*sake*) are selectively chosen.[3] In reality, there are many examples of freshwater fish, mackerel, pilchard and other diverse marine products being used as *shinsen* in shrine festivals throughout the country; this may be due to factors such as taste and nutritional value of fish, stability of supply, convenience of preservation.

In other words, the list of foodstuffs that appears among offerings in the *Engishiki* refers to items that ought to be procured by various government offices of the Department of State (*Daijōkan*) and the Department of Divinities, under the supervision of the latter. One can imagine that, in addition to such offerings provided by the court, in actual festivals members of ritual groups would also offer a variety of regional *shinsen*.

The ancient Yamato court developed into what is known as *ritsuryō* state, and actively promoted the development of farmland under a tax system based on rice cultivation. It seems that such a cultural background affected the selection of rice and marine products as the main foods in kami rituals administered by the court's Department of Divinities. One can envision the outline of a history in which rituals based on livestock culture, which do not fit Japan's natural environment characterized by high temperatures and plentiful rain, were gradually removed from the standard *shinsen*.[4]

There are many instances in medieval sources in which shrine *shinsen* are referred to as "fish and birds" (*gyochō*).[5] Birds are not included in the items of *shinsen* that appear in the "Jingi shiki" of the *Engishiki*, but wild birds such as pheasants and ducks are frequently offered together with marine products in shrine *shinsen*, as in the case of the duck (*kamo*) of Daikyōsai at Katori shrine and the "hanging bird" pheasant (*kiji*) of the Ōshukushosai of Kasuga Wakamiya onmatsuri. Birds are included among the *shinsen* of Kyoto's Kamo shrine as well (Fig. 2.1). Although one might think that bird offerings as *shinsen* is a residue of the Jōmon period hunting culture, people belonging to wet-rice culture, as can be seen in the stele with representations of farmers and fishers/hunters (*Shouhuo yishe huaxiang zhuan*, Jp. *Shūkaku yokusha gazō sen*), a well-known example of Han dynasty funerary art,[6] also ate fish and birds they caught in wetlands. The addition of birds to marine products as *shinsen* could be an extension of such ancient genealogy of wet-rice cultural practices.

There are also cases in wild animals are offered as *shinsen*. Deer, wild boar, and other animals were offered at Suwa Shrine and, in the middle ages, at Aso Shrine and Futarasan Shrine, as well as in folk rituals and performing arts such as Shiiba Kagura and Kagami Kagura. These festivals, which drew on hunting cultures from the Jōmon period, took place in areas not suitable for wet rice such as mountain highlands. Nevertheless, it is easy to imagine that, except for some areas, the agricultural development of mountain areas and the ensuing spread of wet-rice culture brought about the decline of hunting-based cultures, as hunting, in contrast with wet-rice cultivation, could hardly provide enough sustenance for a large population; as a consequence, hunting culture elements also gradually disappeared from *shinsen*.

It is important to note, however, that one should not overemphasize the role of Buddhism in the decline in consumption of bird and animal meat, not only in *shinsen*

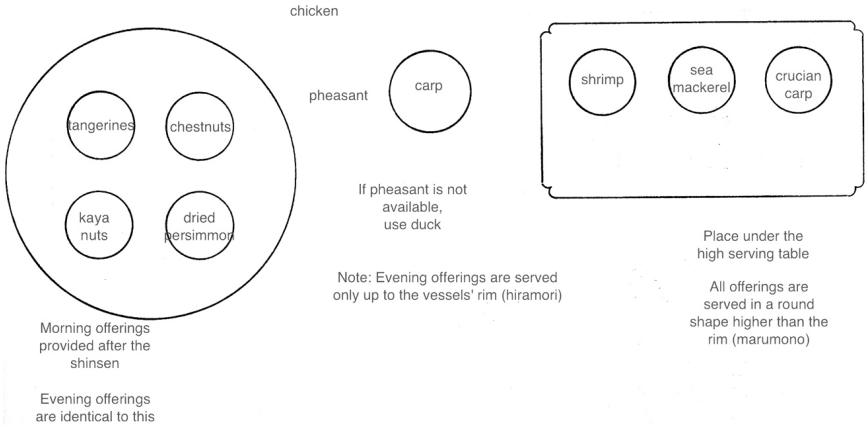

Figure 2.1 Shinsen food offerings for special ceremonies (*rinjisai*) at Shimo-gamo shrine, Kyoto. From *Jinja saishiki gyōji sahō tenko kōkyū*, edited by Jinja Honchō. Tokyo: Jinja Honchō, 1994, p. 350. Used with permission from Jinja Honchō.

offerings but also in everyday eating habits—a tendency that characterizes the entire history of Japan. The Buddhist prohibitions against taking life and eating meat apply to all sentient beings, and fish and birds, which are offered as *shinsen*, are no exception. The "Flowing Water of Vaiśālī" ("Chōjashi rusui") chapter of the *Golden Light Sutra* (*Konkōmyōkyō*), an important sutra that preaches the release of sentient beings (*hōjō*), preaches the release of fish, and already in Chinese Buddhism animals released in *hōjōe* ceremonies were predominantly fish and birds (see Michibata 1985). Thus, the decline of meat-eating habits among the Japanese from the ancient to the early modern periods derives from the development of wet-rice cultivation and the related decline of hunting, together with the lack of real animal farming culture, rather than from Buddhist thought. As a consequence, there was a historical tendency toward rice-based agriculture and fish eating.

The Amalgamation of Buddhas and Kami (*shinbutsu shūgō*) and Vegetarian *Shinsen*

One might think that the same food items have always been offered as *shinsen* at yearly festivals throughout history, but instead we must be fully aware that they may change significantly depending on a shrine's institutional and economic fluctuations. As an example of research on this subject, Yoshino Tōru points to changes in *shinsen* at Katori shrine's Daikyōsai from the Tenshō era (1573–1592) to the present day (Yoshino 2015, esp. Part 1, Chapter 1). Research has also been conducted on changes in *shinsen* at Hiyoshi Taisha's Sannō matsuri from the Meiji period (Nasu, Fukamachi, and Morimoto 2014).

In addition, the content of *shinsen* has also changed in conjunction with developments in religious thought. Following the amalgamation of buddhas and kami (*shinbutsu shūgō*) in ancient and medieval Japan, the *shinsen* of some shrines were influenced by Buddhism; *shinsen* also changed substantially following the separation of buddhas and kami (*shinbutsu bunri*) and the subsequent formation of the modern shrine system in the Meiji era.

For instance, at Hiesha (present-day name: Hiyoshi Taisha), which was the protecting shrine (*chinjusha*) of Enryakuji, records remain about *shinsen* from the Kamakura, Edo, and modern periods, and their contents show great changes according to the historical period. According to the *Yōtenki* (Kamakura period), fish and birds were offered as *shinsen* at the shrine even during the time of amalgamation of buddhas and kami, but in the Edo-period *shinsen* became vegetarian (*shōjin*) in accordance with Buddhist regulations. Oda Nobunaga's burning down of Enryakuji likely disrupted the traditions that had continued from the middle ages, and because the Edo *bakufu* did not recognize Hiesha's independent shrine territories in the process of rebuilding Enryakuji and thus stipends were provided to the shrine by Enryakuji, one can imagine that the strengthening of Enryakuji's control over Hiesha was the main cause of these changes. After the Meiji Restoration's separation orders, Buddhist vegetarian *shinsen* of the Edo period were abolished under the religious policy of the Meiji state (Satō 2011a). Therefore, when studying the *shinsen* of shrines, it is dangerous to make historical

overviews based only on sources from one historical period and present-day rites; we must keep in mind that *shinsen* changed significantly according to intellectual trends of the times.

According to Kuroda Toshio's theory (1975), Shinto was subsumed by Buddhism in the age of *shinbutsu shūgō*; it was no more than one aspect or sect of Buddhism, and there was no specific religious substance to it. This view, however, should be reconsidered (Satō 2007, 2011b). *Shinsen* can provide useful materials for a critique of this theory.

Indian Buddhism did not completely reject meat eating, as long as it satisfied the condition of the "three kinds of pure meat" (Jp. *sanshu no jōniku*) included in the Vinaya.[7] Chinese Buddhism, however, came to strictly observe the prohibitions against taking life and eating meat under the influence of scriptures such as the *Nirvana Sutra*, the *Brahma's Net Sutra*, and the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*. In Japan these practices of Chinese Buddhism were widely accepted (except for Jōdo Shinshu), and as a rule the meals of monks and nuns, offerings to the Buddha at temples, and meals at abstinences (*saijiki*) during Buddhist ceremonies, consisted of vegetarian food and did not include meat or fish.

On the other hand, the traditional offerings of fish, birds, and wild animals were indispensable for shrine rituals. As the effects of the amalgamation of buddhas and kami became stronger, some shrines began to offer only Buddhist-based vegetarian foods as *shinsen*. The deities of these shrines were called "vegetarian kami" (*shōjin no kami*). The earliest example is Usa Hachiman Shrine. A record states that when its god Usa Hachiman traveled to Nara in the middle of the eighth century to aid in the building of Tōdaiji's Great Buddha, "in the provinces along the roads the killing of living beings was prohibited. Those accompanying the kami were to abstain from wine and meat" (*Shoku Nihongi*, Tenpyō shōhō 1 (749), entry for 11.28); it appears that by then the god had already become vegetarian.

Even in later eras, when imperial messengers were dispatched to Usa and Iwashimizu Hachimangū during the period of religious abstinence (*shōjin kessai*), the emperor was supposed to take vegetarian meals.[8] There were similarly "vegetarian kami" at Gion Shrine (present-day Yasaka Shrine) and Kitano Shrine, which were under Tendai control and had a close connection to Buddhism since the time of their origin. In addition, the gods became vegetarian at Munakata Taisha, where the title of bodhisattva was bestowed on its deities by an oracle in the mid-tenth century,[9] and also in cases like Taga Taisha in Ōmi province, where vegetarian *shinsen* alone were offered at the "Hijiri no miya," thought to enshrine a kami who took the tonsure and appeared in the form of a Buddhist monk.[10]

In the case of Kasuga Taisha as well, fish are offered at Kasuga Matsuri, which draws on the tradition of *ritsuryō* rituals, but vegetarian *shinsen* ("*osome goku*") that do not use fish or birds are offered at the Kasuga Wakamiya Onmatsuri, which is conducted under the leadership of Kōfukuji (Okamoto 1989).[11] Thus, we can conclude by saying that kami rituals during the period of amalgamation of buddhas and kami included both vegetarian rituals conforming to Buddhism (such as those for the god Hachiman and the festival of Kasuga Wakamiya), and rituals dating back to ancient Department of Divinities ceremonies, and in some cases, both sets of rituals (and related *shinsen*) were performed separately for the same deity.

Accordingly, it is not true that all shrine rituals were transformed to follow in principle Buddhist vegetarianism; on the contrary, the practice of offering animal *shinsen* overall has not changed. Even though the idea, based on the *honji suijaku* theory that the true bodies of the kami were buddhas, spread widely, it was not easy to abandon rites contrary to the spirit of the Buddhist precepts and ideals of compassion, and in the end, it was historically impossible to close the gap separating the values of Buddhism and those of Shintō.

For example, in *Konjaku Monogatari shū*, there is the story of a man who tried to kill animals in order to make offerings of fish and birds at the yearly festival of Kashii Myōjin. The man died after sinking in a pond, but he appeared to his parents in a dream and told them that he had been reborn in the Pure Land because the act of taking life for the purpose of performing rituals to the kami did not cause bad karma and the three treasures of Buddhism saved him.[12] Stories like this suggest that Buddhism struggled with traditional Shintō *shinsen* involving killing animals, as they run counter to the prohibition against taking life.

In addition, frictions regarding the *shinsen* of fish, birds, and wild animals can be found all over in medieval sources. For example, in *Kōgi zuikesshū*, the record of a dialogue between Shinsui, a disciple of Hōnen, and a priest at Suwa shrine in central Japan, Shinsui encouraged the prohibition against taking life in Suwa kami rituals. This indicates that there was a significant rift opposing Buddhist ethics and Shinto values, even during the period in which the assimilation of buddhas and kami was dominant.

On the other hand, the *Shasekishū* tells the story of a Buddhist monk who visited Itsukushima shrine and expressed doubts about offering fish to the kami; the kami issued an oracle, saying that offering one's life, after retribution for past deeds is exhausted, to the kami—who is a manifestation of the buddhas—may constitute the cause and condition for entering the Buddhist path.[13] The justification of, and forgiveness for, the taking of life because it is a "skillful means" (*hōben*) is also seen in the *Shintōshū* and *Suwa daimyōjin ekotoba*. These are products of doctrinal compromise on the Buddhist side toward kami rituals involving the taking of life, and follow a logic that cannot possibly be approved from the perspective of Chinese Buddhism. The Japanese Buddhist tendency of tolerance toward alcohol consumption and meat eating could have been fostered by Buddhist involvement in kami rituals under the discourse of the amalgamation of buddhas and kami.

In this way, a focus on *shinsen* provides new perspectives in the study of the amalgamation of buddhas and kami, and at the same time constitutes an important set of materials to understand the formation and development of amalgamation processes.