

Ritual Process and Cult Organization in Central Japan

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This paper is a field research report of the ritual process and cult organization in a central Japanese village. This is a result of my fieldwork in Aoyama-village, Shiga prefecture from 1981 to 1985. Generally Japanese village has one or more village shrines (*ujigami*), and has a cult organization for the various festivals. The cult for the village shrine is practiced annually under the various forms of cult organization. In central Japan, many villages have a special type of cult organization. It is so called *Miyaza*. *Miyaza* is a type of cult organization with special the principle of membership and social structure. The principles that have characterized *miyaza* organization is *Tōyasei* (lotation system of festival duty) at the family level and age-class system and others in the personal level.

It is the main problem in this paper which is the basic principle of *Miyaza* organization. This paper describes and analyses cult organization in Aoyama, and make clear the basic principle of *Miyaza*.

Aoyama is a typical farm village in central Japan, and is located in southern part of Shiga prefecture. Aoyama village contains 50 families and 219 persons. Agriculture in Aoyama is mainly paddy cultivation, and main products is rice and green tea. Aoyama is a integrated village, but lacks dual organization as some villages in central Japan.

Miyaza organization in Aoyama is called *Miyashū*. *Miyashū* is contained 10 members of restricted age. Age of *Miyashū* members in 1979 is from 54 to 59 years old. All the male member of each family be able to take membership under the certain conditions. Every man of over fifty years old and with his wife can take membership of *Miyashū*. And oldest member lost it's membership. In the first year in *Miyashū* he take the position called *Shinza*, and in the second year he become *Negi*, and in the third year he become *Kannushi*. *Kannushi* is most important position in *Miyashū*, he performs festival duty (*toya*) in the

year.

Miyashū organization in Aoyama was organized under the two principles. One is the lotation system around the all families in Aoyama, and another principle is age-class system. Among the two principles I think that the first principle is more basic and other principle is secondary. Lotation system is based on equality principle among the all families in Aoyama as long-term principle, and age-class system is short-time hierarchy system.