Laurence Caillet

TIME IN THE JAPANESE RITUAL YEAR

Introduction

Annual festivals are perhaps the most popular topic in Japanese ethnography. Most studies consist of monographs describing some annual festival in one village or throughout the country; but we must also note historical analyses that attempt to recover the original, ancient form of a rite, and other kinds of essays that explain the structure of the festive year. The latter type of study is, of course, particularly conducive to the understanding of conceptions of time.

Yet such research, which attempts to expound the structure of a ritual year, involves nearly insurmountable difficulties in a country like Japan, which never elaborated its own astronomical calendar and contented itself with the importation of foreign ones. Through the course of history, this has resulted in the superimposition of three different calendar systems: the primitive agrarian calendar, the old lunar-solar Chinese calendar, and the modern Gregorian solar calendar.[1] As a matter of fact, the Japanese have continuously shown a marked lack of interest in the computation of time and, generally speaking, in astronomy: they seem preoccupied only by the astrological use of calendars.[2] Consequently, the calendars themselves (two of which—the Chinese and the Gregorian—have been elaborated abroad) cannot provide us with any information about the Japanese rhythm of annual time. Therefore, I shall be discussing in this paper only the ritual calendar and not the ordinary, astronomical calendars—in the attempt to identify the differences between these two sorts of calendars. These

1. On the history of calendars see, for instance, Wakamori 1973.

2. Whereas in China there were both an Astronomy Office and an Astrology Office, in Japan the

differences will play a revealing role in the understanding of Japanese conceptions of time; I shall try not only to discover 'le rythme de l'activité collective', which is the basis of calendars (Durkheim 1968: 15), but also to describe the characteristics of the calendar considered as a collective representation of time.

In fact, the superimposition of these different calendars gave rise to a complex ritual year. Its intrinsic complexity has indeed inevitably led to difficulties in interpretation, a situation which goes some way to explain the sometimes strained efforts of Japanese scholars to elucidate simple principles. Roughly speaking, their attempts can be classified into two major tendencies, functional and structural. For Yanagita Kunio, a much-needed simplification is brought out by the distinction between calendar rites and agrarian rites;[3] for Origuchi Shinobu (1973: 54), the apparent complexity of the calendar disappears when one considers the extreme monotony of the practices which, put in reductionist terms, seem to consist of nothing more than the multiple repetition of very few ritual elements. For Miyamoto Jōichi (1972: 128–34) as well, the rites are fundamentally repetitive, and the only difference which can be found between them does not concern the carrying out of the rites, but rather the nature of the spirits that are being worshipped—ancestors, or gods of nature. A similar hypothesis is developed, even more radically, by Ōshima Takehiko (1959: 82–98), who considers the establishment of two ritual categories: rituals dedicated to ancestors and rituals dedicated to unsatisfied spirits of the dead that cannot gain access to the status of ancestors.

Notwithstanding these rather functional points of view, which implicitly avoid the problem of the ritual calendar itself, the same authors apply themselves to the definition of an annual structure. They point out three essential structural principles: (1) the year is composed of two symmetrical segments; (2) its rhythm is sustained by the comings and goings of a ricefield god from mountain to fields, and from fields to mountain, where he takes the name of 'Mountain God'; (3) the interchange of temporal segments is metaphorically assimilated with the succession of human generations (see the discussion on the structure of the ritual year below).

All these theories are based upon a sort of historical analysis aimed at reconstructing an original simplicity which is supposed to be 'Japanese', and which contrasts with the degraded form of the rites at the present time. These theories are much too complicated to treat in detail here, but I shall try to consider their principal features in the light of contemporary ethnographic reality. As a matter of fact, the functional theories seem too empirical to make this

3. Notice, for instance, that some agrarian rites—such as the ceremonial rice transplantation of the new year, *ta-uchi shogatsu*, or the harvest rites of the day of the sign of the young wild boar, *i no kami matsuri*, which are both performed at fixed dates—can be found in Yanagita's *Vocabulary of Usages Concerning Annual Ceremonies* (1939). Nevertheless, rites at the beginning of rice transplantation, *hatsu-ta-ue*, or first-fruits rites, *ho-kake matsuri*, cannot be found in this first *Vocabulary*, but appear in a later one of 1947 (*Classified Vocabulary Concerning Rural Villages*, also edited by Yanagita), in the chapter entitled 'Agrarian Ceremonies', *nōkō girei*.

reality intelligible, and the structural ones are, equally, too idealistic to make sense of it either. In this paper I shall consider successively the problem of the choice of ritual days, the structure of ritual periods and, finally, the structure of the ritual year as a whole.

Ritual Days

(i) Choice of ritual days

In present times, ritual days are fixed according to the numerical figure of the date of the month. Traditionally, however, there were three modes of determining ritual days: choosing the day according to the ordinal number corresponding with the figure of the month, called *jūnichi*, or 'double day' (such as the fifth day of the fifth month); fixing a day according to the Chinese signs of the zodiac; or determining a day by the phases of the moon.

(a) *Jūnichi*

The festivals celebrated on 'double days' have their origin in China. Most of them were adopted by the Japanese Court and, subsequently, by the urban population, before spreading to rural areas, where they were grafted onto pre-existing agrarian rites. Those celebrating 'double days' are usually aware of the foreign origin of the practices (concerning the zodiac, see Frank 1958: appendices).

(b) Zodiac signs

Like the zodiac itself, many of the festivals celebrated according to the signs of the zodiac have been imported from China. Nevertheless, some purely Japanese rites are performed on days selected in accordance with the zodiac. One famous example is the ritual of *hatsu-uma*, the 'First Day of the Sign of the Horse'. Folk tradition relates that this day was chosen to commemorate the arrival of Inari, the Rice God, in Japan (this deity is supposed to have come to Japan on the first day of the sign of the horse in the fourth year of the Wadō era, in AD 711). According to Yanagita (1972a: 246; 1951: 474) and Hashiura (1949: 169–70), the horse day was chosen to celebrate the Rice God because an old agrarian rite which had no link with the zodiac was performed on that day. This ancient rite is celebrated by a household head leading a horse with a magnificent harness to the mountain, so that the Mountain God (who goes to the plain at the beginning of spring to become the Ricefield God) can mount the horse and ride back with him. This particular role of the horse in spring may explain why the day of the sign of the horse was chosen to worship Inari.

(c) The phases of the moon

Each month, most ceremonies fall on three dates: the fifteenth of

the day of the full moon in the old lunar-solar calendar; the seventh or the eighth, i.e. the day of the first quarter; and the twenty-third or the twenty-fourth, i.e. the day of the last quarter. This supposedly ancient mode of determining ritual days should permit the identification of rites of Japanese origin (Wakamori 1966: 8), though it should be noted that the date of the full moon was also very important in China and India. Examples that can be cited include the souls' festival, celebrated about the first full moon of autumn (*bon*), and the viewing of the full moon in the middle of autumn (*jūgo-ya*).

In fact, for a date to have been chosen according to the Chinese or primitive (and thus supposedly Japanese) calendar does not in itself inform us about the origin of the rite. All that can be said for certain is that the important dates of each month have exerted an attraction upon each other. Ceremonies of different origin tend to be grouped around one important day, while elements of a single rite are usually dispersed among various important and proximate dates. This has resulted in a great fluctuation in the dates of the ritual days which, added to the previously mentioned superimposition of three different calendar systems, makes it extremely difficult to restore a coherent ritual calendar, even after an archaeological analysis of rites and practices has been made.

(ii) Definition of ritual days

In contemporary Japan, annual rites are usually referred to as the *nenchū* (or *nenjū*) *gyōji*, which literally means 'rites performed during the year'. However, this expression, which originated at the Court of Heian, did not at first signify the annual rites as such but designated a sort of table of rites (ibid.: 1). In fact, there was no generic term for annual rite; there existed only specific terms designating 'the day of the rite', such as *setsu-bi* (節日), 'joint day', an expression which makes an analogy between a day of ritual and a bamboo joint.

At present, many words meaning 'annual rites' still convey the idea of 'joint' or 'bamboo joint': the precise meaning of *sekku* (節句) in standard speech is 'the making of an offering [for the day of] joint'; and the dialect terms *shichi* or *sutsu* (Yanagita 1939: 1; Beillevaire 1982: 220), found in the southern islands, are none other than the local pronunciation of the word *setsu*.

Dialects provide us, in fact, with a great variety of terms which designate rites—thus for example *monbi* (in Ehime prefecture—see Yanagita 1946: 1608), a contraction of *mono-imi no hi*, the 'seclusion day'; *hata-bi* (in Kyushu—see Sakurada 1959: 1), the 'day for raising banners'; *shiba-bi* (in Kyushu—see Yanagita 1970a: 199), the 'day [for settling a sacred area] with faggots'; *kami-goto* (in Akita prefecture—see Yanagita 1946: 403), 'the god rite'; *orime* (in Kagoshima prefecture—see ibid.: 306), 'folding'; *toki-ori* (in Nara prefecture—see Yanagita 1939: 2; 1946: 1030), 'time folding'; and, lastly, *toki* (in Yamaguchi and Kagoshima prefectures—see ibid.), which according to ancient usage means 'moment' or 'opportunity'. Putting the matter succinctly, it can be said that there are two main ways of designating ritual days. The first refers to cult

'joint' or 'folding' in the everyday course of time. This form of conception of sacred times appears very clearly in Nara prefecture, where ritual days are called *toki-ori* or *toki-yori*, 'time folding', while ordinary days are known as *aida*, 'intervals' (ibid.). It should be noted here that nearly all these expressions do not literally designate the rites themselves, but rather the ritual days. They seem to signify that the ritual moment is more important than the ritual content. A rite seems to be a temporal link—rather than a festival dedicated to a particular deity.

(iii) The multiplicity of meanings conferred on a single rite

A ritual day does not seem to have a finite, limited meaning in itself. It is just a moment where human and divine worlds come into contact, a moment the significance of which is not clearly stated. We shall consider here only one instance: the equinox festival known under the name of *higan*, the 'other shore', an expression which designates two weeks, one centred on the day of the spring equinox, the other on the autumn equinox.

The *higan* is considered everywhere in Japan as a Buddhist festival celebrating the arrival of the spirits of the dead on the other shore, i.e. in paradise. The choice of the equinox to celebrate this is founded on the fact that the equinox is the moment of the year when the sun sets the furthest to the west, in the direction of the very popular Amida paradise.[4] However, in many places the *higan* is, on the contrary, a festival welcoming ancestors returning to the village, exactly like the *bon* festival. For instance, in the Akita district of Akita prefecture people choose a day of the *higan* period to climb a hill. On the top of the hill, they make a great fire, the light of which guides the ancestors on their way back to this world. The rite is exactly the same as the one performed in other villages on the day of the famous *tanabata* (七夕) festival, on the seventh day of the seventh month, just a week before the souls' festival of the full moon, when the spirits of the dead begin to arrive in the village.

This walk in the mountain may also, at the same time, be the opportunity for solar rites. At sunrise people go to the east to make offerings to the rising sun; at noon they go to the south; and in the evening they go to the west. This rite, called *hi no tomo*, 'companion of the sun', may also be performed on the day of the village 'sanctuary festival', or *shanichi*.[5] This day is fixed, following Chinese custom, on those days of the signs of the elder-of-the-earth and of the rat that are closest to

4. Of the four paradises described by Buddhism, the Western Paradise, also called the Paradise of the Pure Land, is the only one which became popular. The diffusion of this belief was perhaps helped by old autochthonous beliefs assigning the world of the dead to the western side (Yoshino 1972: 219 ff.).

5. In China, Shanichi rites were at first dedicated to earth and community gods, but they later developed in festivals for the ancestors as well as for the Earth God. In Japan, the rites are dedicated to the Earth God and to ancestors, and to the Ricefield God as well.

the equinox. Furthermore, most of the celebrations of *shanichi* may be performed for *higan*, especially the welcoming of the Ricefield God mentioned above (Berthier-Caillet 1981: 179, 339).

It is very difficult today to decide whether the solar rites are older than the festival for the spirits of the dead or older than the rites dedicated to the Ricefield God, because the *higan* is now a conglomerate of all these ritual elements.

Further examples will not be added here, but it must be mentioned that the description of most of the annual rites reveals how nearly all the ceremonies—like the *higan*—possess multiple meanings. It seems that a ritual has no finite meaning, but is fundamentally a moment in the course of the time which is considered sacred and on which is conferred a wide spectrum of possible meanings.

(iv) The local character of a ritual calendar

According to an investigation made in Shōwa 21st year (1946), 43.6% of Japanese families celebrated the new year at the beginning of the solar Gregorian year, 41.3% did so at the beginning of the lunar-solar year (though to simplify matters people often prefer the same day of the following month), while 14% mixed both calendars (Nishitsunoi 1958: 260). Today, because of the legal holidays, all families celebrate the solar new year. But the souls' festival, or *bon*, in the middle of the seventh month, is still often celebrated in the middle of August. The reticence felt over the celebration of rites that conform to the new calendar can easily be explained by the seasonal shift introduced when the Gregorian calendar was adopted. In the traditional calendar, the beginning of the year corresponds to the beginning of spring, and the *bon* festival must be celebrated at the beginning of autumn. The old year began in February (see Frank 1971), January and July coming too early to be considered as the beginning of spring and autumn.

In fact, the calendar unification, decreed by the Meiji government in order to reinforce political centralization, paradoxically added to the complexity of the calendar and gave support to its tendency to local variation, a tendency which, since the Middle Ages, has always been reasserted by the regular publication of provincial calendars.[6] Today, nearly every village possesses its proper ritual calendar, in which elements of different calendars are combined in conformity with local convenience.

In concluding the first part of this essay, it can be stated that the co-existence of different ways of fixing ritual dates, the multiplicity of meanings attributed to a single rite, and the local character of festive calendars, all tend to prove that annual time is not perceived as a universal, but that it is considered as eminently contextual. Time does not seem to be conceived as an abstract category but

rather as a concrete thing, which may be articulated and manipulated according to local ecological, agricultural or social necessities.

The Repetitiveness of Rites

In correlation with the multiplicity of meanings attributed to a single rite, and because of the reiteration of the same date according to different calendars, the ritual year as a whole seems to be composed of a small number of rites repeated many times with little variation (Origuchi 1973: 54 ff.). The celebration of New Year, for instance, clearly shows this tendency towards reiteration. The main rites are centred on the 'Great New Year', celebrated according to the lunar-solar calendar on the first day of the first month, and on the 'Agrarian New Year', fixed to conform with the primitive natural calendar on the day of the full moon. Similar rites are also performed on the seventh day of the first month, the day which Chinese people used to call the 'Day of Man', and again on the eve of spring, the day called *setsubun*. Specialists usually try to characterize each of these four celebrations of the new year. They consider the 'Great New Year' as the time of the restoration of the village community, and the 'Little' or 'Agrarian New Year' as the time of the restoration of agricultural fertility. The new year celebration of the seventh day is characterized by numerous propitious rites, and the *setsubun* by exorcisms. This sort of differentiation is statistically possible, yet local analysis of new year celebrations casts doubt on such conclusions (Hashiura 1949: 21; Kurata 1969: 5–42).

Consider, for instance, the ceremony of driving out the devils (*tsuina*), which originated in China. The ancient Chinese believed that demons could provoke particular trouble at each change of season (Bodde 1975: 75; Wakamori 1966: 72); this belief was introduced to Japan during the Muromachi period. Nobles and warriors used to expel evil forces at the beginning of spring; later on, the rite spread in Buddhist circles, and demon expulsions were added to Buddhist 'Meetings of the First Month'. Finally, the common people also adopted the belief—by scattering parched beans to drive out evil spirits for the *setsubun*. However, all these exorcism rites were mixed with welcoming rites dedicated to traditional Japanese demons, monstrous beings that regularly come from the other world to bring prosperity, and whose arrival to the village is celebrated at 'Great New Year', at 'Little New Year', or at 'Seventh-Day New Year'. The interpenetration of these rites has been so intensive in the course of history that it is impossible to fix a single date for the accomplishment of a rite, or a single meaning for it.

This phenomenon is of sufficient significance that it seems difficult to consider it as simply contingent upon history, as have most Japanese ethnographers. On the contrary, it seems better to propose that this reiteration of the same rite is

One of the most famous Chinese festivals is celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth month (a 'double day') to ensure longevity. It was adopted at the Heian Court, where people celebrated the 'double ninth' by drinking *sake* with chrysanthemums; and it later spread to rural regions, notably in the north-east, where it fused with harvest festivals. Moreover, in these remote north-east regions, people usually celebrate not only the ninth day of the month, but the 'Three Ninth Days'—i.e. the ninth, the nineteenth and the twenty-ninth days of the ninth month, 三九日 (*san-ku-nichi* in Tōhoku, or *mi-ku-nichi* in Chūbu) (Hashiura 1949: 253; Nishitsunoi 1958: 786; Wakamori 1966: 171).

The rites of the *inoko*, or 'young wild boar', celebrated in the south-west for the harvest, underwent a similar evolution. In China, the propitious rites of *inoko* were performed on the first day of the sign of the wild boar of the wild-boar month (the tenth month). They were celebrated on the same date when adopted by the Heian Court, but the warriors who began to celebrate *inoko* during the Middle Ages chose the second day of the wild boar of the tenth month. Later, as a result of the re-importation of the warriors' rite to the Court, nobles came to celebrate *inoko* three times a month. It is this triple celebration of *inoko* that peasants, in turn, finally adopted. They commemorate successively the first *inoko*, or '*inoko* for nobles and warriors', the second *inoko*, or '*inoko* for peasants', and the third *inoko*, or '*inoko* for merchants'—according to a process reflecting the social classes of the Edo period. It should be noticed, by the way, that the repetition of harvest rites implies the repetition of Ricefield God departures, as well as the indigenous creation of a corresponding welcoming rite for the deity in spring (Yanagita 1972b: 113; Hashiura 1949: 261). Thus the *inoko* festival, which is celebrated only once in China, is celebrated four times by Japanese peasants: once in spring, and three times in autumn.

The 'day of the sign of the bull', *ushi no hi matsuri*, which is commemorated in Kyushu at harvest time, attests to the same principle of repetition: one celebration in spring and three in autumn (Yanagita 1972c: 417; Nishitsunoi 1958: 78).

Ethnographers usually consider these repetitions to be the expression of the three great stages of the harvest process: the first-fruits offering, the harvest itself and the thanksgiving ritual (Inokuchi 1959: 151–60). Yet in most cases, the first-fruits offerings and the thanksgiving ritual are celebrated separately from the triple celebration of the ninth day, *inoko*, or the day of the sign of the bull. Furthermore, peasants insist on the auspicious character of these repetitions and on the pernicious influence of 'unique' celebrations, which are often said to be *kata*, or 'one-sided' (Yanagita 1939: 5, 129). In Shimoina district in Nagano prefecture, celebrating 'Great New Year' and not 'Seventh-Day New Year' is thought to be dangerous. In the Mino district of Gifu prefecture, people say the same thing about 'Great New Year' and *setsubun*, while in the district of Hiraka in Akita prefecture, celebrating the 'Great New Year' without celebrating the 'Little New Year' leads to the death of a mother or father.

The numerous moon-viewing rites of autumn are submitted to the same belief. Chinese custom calls for the contemplation of the full moon of mid-autumn, but

the eighth month for the yam-lifting (Yanagita 1946: 121–2, 589; Nishitsunoi 1958: 58, 443, 774), but also on the thirteenth day of the ninth month for the wheat harvest and chestnut gathering, and on the tenth day of the tenth month for the rice harvest and the lifting of giant radishes. The indissoluble links between these moon contemplations are made explicit by their denominations. The fifteenth day of the eighth month is called *otoko meigetsu*, 'men's full moon', and that of the thirteenth of the ninth month is called *onna meigetsu*, 'women's full moon'. *Kata* ('one-sided') celebrations are often strictly forbidden, and it is said that if clouds hide the moon on the fifteenth of the eighth month, it is better not to look at the thirteenth-day moon of the ninth month, as an unbalanced celebration of the rite may bring bad luck (ibid.: 197).

It may be thought that these repetitions are the expression of an obsessional temperament, but their objective consequence is that rites do not constitute definite points on the abstract course of time, but rather that they compose temporal segments. There is not one specific day celebrating the arrival of the Ricefield God, but rather a long period which may be called the period of his arrival. Rites are privileged moments, the meaning of which determines the meaning of ordinary days considered as *aida*. Berque (1982: 63) proposes to treat *aida* (or *ma*) as a spatial concept, such that the nature of its limits or boundaries constitutes part of its character or definition; similarly, the character of the *aida* (the ordinary days between rites) is in part defined by the character of the rites (*toki*) that they separate. Moreover, the intensive repetition of rites provokes a sense of some kind of real, concrete time which can be grasped only through the meanings given to it (auspicious, dangerous, etc.), and not through any mathematical model. The sort of time to which the annual rites give birth is not an empty medium, but rather an uninterrupted succession of various temporal segments. It is a qualitative time more than a quantitative one.

The Structure of the Ritual Year

It should now be clear that such complexity has led scholars to propose simple structures to the course of the annual ritual cycle. Three main structures have been pointed out.

(i) The bipartition of the year

According to a Chinese commentary of the fifth century,[7] the Japanese did not know the four seasons and defined a year as the succession of spring and autumn,

7. By Fei-songzhi, as a footnote to the chapter Woren-zhuan ('Book of the People of Wo' [or *wa* in Japanese]), to be found in the section Weizhi ('Chronicle of the Wei') of the classical text *Sanguozhi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*). A modern edition of *Sanguozhi* was published in Peking (1964) by Zhonghua Shuju; see vol. [illegible] for the [illegible]

the season of ploughing and the season of harvest. This connection
two things: the agrarian character of the definition of the primitive year, and the bipartition of this year. The former is confirmed by the etymology of the word *toshi*, which nowadays means 'year', but the original meaning is 'rice fruit' or 'rice crop', which developed in 'the duration between two rice crops', viz. 'year' (see, for instance, Ōno *et al.* 1974: 911).[8]

The problem of bipartition requires further discussion. Hirayama (1957: 93–4) pointed out that the *Shoku Gunsho Ruijū* (an important 19th-century compilation of classical texts) gives a list of the official rites for a half-year. For the first six months of the year, the rites are described in detail in one column, and for the last six months, at the same day of the month, there is written only 'idem', with an indication of variants as appropriate. Furthermore, many ethnographers, following Yanagita (1970b: 37 ff.), have attempted to prove the dual character of the ritual year, which they thought was symmetrically organized around an axis connecting its two most important ritual periods, the New Year and the *bon* festival. In fact, despite the influence of the Chinese ritual calendar on the New Year celebrations, and the Buddhist influence on the souls' festival, these two sacred moments still seem to resemble one another. They are very similar both in their calendrical structure and in the ritual practices performed.

When 'Little New Year' is counted as the climax of the New Year period (Yanagita 1972b: 32), the New Year and *bon* periods may both be seen to centre on the first full moon of the agricultural seasons.

It is true that today, the *bon* festival seems to be a Buddhist festival dedicated to prayers for the spirits of the dead, whereas New Year seems to be the celebration of a calendrical deity called *toshi-gami* or *toshitoku-gami*, 'Year God'. However, a detailed investigation shows that the *bon* festival is also an auspicious period, and that New Year celebrations are also dedicated to dead spirits (Yanagita 1970b: 59; 1972b: 92). In some places, for instance, the offerings to the Year God and to the ancestors coming for the *bon* festival are presented on the same domestic altar, which is renewed every year (Hayakawa, quoted in Ōshima 1959: 78).

That the *bon* festival and the New Year were originally similar festivals is very probable, and one may say that in olden times they effectively divided the year into two halves, separated from one another by the sacred periods of the ancestors' return. The real problem is to discover whether this symmetrical principle should or should not be regularly extended to the whole year, as many ethnographers have suggested. Certainly, the ritual year marks other instances of symmetry.

The most obvious of these is the symmetry of the first day of the sixth month with the first day of the twelfth month—both of them are under the sign of water and are dedicated to exorcisms of aquatic dangers. It is said that snakes slough on the first day of the sixth month, and that one must avoid going under mulberry trees, since this is where they do so. Everyone makes offerings to water deities (these deities are often represented by snakes) in order to avoid drowning. On the first day of the twelfth month, one must not go near rivers or the sea so as to avoid similar perils. As Wakamori Tarō points out (1966: 142), the cause of the symmetry of these two ritual events is the ancient performance of purification rites before the beginning of the New Year and *bon* festival periods.

In fact, it can be suggested that the annual rites which are repeated every six months are all linked to the New Year and *bon* celebrations, and to the rites for the equinox. This corresponds to the four annual returns of the ancestors to this world. The reality of this symmetry raises no doubt, but its primitiveness must be questioned, since it is dictated by the astronomical calendar, which is of Chinese origin. It should also be noted that this 'original' symmetry can be discovered only through the difficult archaeology of ritual dates defended by Yanagita and his disciples. The very existence of this difficulty in itself tends to prove that the Japanese did not hold much store by such astronomical symmetry, which has since completely disappeared, owing to the historical evolution of ritual calendars.

Moreover, there seems to be another symmetry principle that gives structure to the ritual year, viz. the belief in the comings and goings of the Ricefield God/Mountain God.

(ii) The comings and goings of the Ricefield God

As Origuchi Shinobu (1973: 55) justly remarked, all Japanese folk rituals are repeatedly marked by the welcoming of a god on his arrival and the escorting of him back on his departure. This welcoming and escorting of gods provides the opportunity for elaborate processions, which may constitute the core of the ceremonies. The structural value of this principle (of the comings and goings of gods) is emphasised so much by folk beliefs that it dominates not merely the organization of most of the rites and festivals but also the development of the whole year. The beliefs differ slightly from province to province; it is generally said that the Mountain God comes down to the plain at the beginning of spring under the name of Ricefield God, in order to protect rice-growing. When the harvest is completed in the autumn, he leaves the plain and goes back to the mountain, where he becomes Mountain God once again. But in other places, the Ricefield God is said to live in human dwellings in the cold season. Some people also believe that the Ricefield God and the Mountain God are distinct deities, and each year they celebrate, at the end of autumn, the marriage of the Ricefield God with the Mountain Goddess. Lastly, in the south-west region of the country, the aquatic genii, or *kappa*, are substituted for the Ricefield/Mountain God, and their comings and goings in the seas, rivers and mountains determine the rhythm of the festive year (Kōda 1959: 233).

Roughly speaking, the visit of the Ricefield God (or the presence of the *kappa*) determines an agrarian year of approximately ten months (from the second month till the tenth or eleventh month), consequently leaving a sort of blank

8. It seems that this phenomenon is not peculiar to Japan, since there was the same evolution in China (Granet 1959: 42).

period, lasting two or three months, around the New Year. Thus the partition of the year that is determined by the travellings of the Ricefield God does not coincide with the previously mentioned bipartition of annual time. In fact, the comings and goings of the god may rather constitute a reflection of the ecological complementarity of spring and autumn, and of the symbolic complementarity of the human and divine worlds—a religious context, in other words, which describes the other world not as the prolongation of this world, but as the immediate complement of it.

(iii) The anthropomorphic course of time

Some Japanese scholars interpret such contacts between this world's time and the other world's time as a sort of alternation of two different times that succeed each other in the same fashion as human generations. This third hypothesis elaborates the sexual metaphors originating in the assimilation of an agricultural process with the human life-cycle in a constitutive principle of the development of time.[9]

It should be noted that many agricultural tasks are evidently associated with sexual representations, like the immersion of rice seeds (for germination), which is compared to a resting after parturition, or the transplanting of rice, which is compared to sexual relations (Berthier 1980: 31). One should also note that the end of autumn and the beginning of winter, the time of germination and gestation for seeds, corresponds to the celebration of the gods' marriages, and quite often of human marriages also. But these agrarian representations are too scattered for one to be able to compose a coherent system covering the whole year.

In fact, the three hypotheses presented above must each be considered as partly correct. The bipartition of the ritual calendar reflects the symmetry of the astronomical year; the travellings of the Ricefield God attest the ecological complementarity of spring and autumn; and the anthropomorphic metaphors related to particular moments of the year confirm the essentially agrarian character of the Japanese symbolic universe. Yet these three hypotheses offer only a partial explanation, because they do not take into account the obvious complexity of the ritual calendar. As mentioned above, they require a historical analysis aimed at reconstructing an original simplicity, and they implicitly assert that 'Japaneseness' is 'original' and ahistorical. Paradoxically, this historical analysis results in a fundamental negation of historical processes. The problem of the structure of the ritual year must be reconsidered by taking into account the actual complexity of the rites. This complexity is, of course, the result of the historical process of the superimposition of calendars, but I think that the fact of the simultaneous use of different calendars in Japan, more or less skilfully juxtaposed, cannot be considered merely as contingent upon history.

9. These sorts of theories are all founded upon the description of *ae no koto* (饗の祭) rites (see Matsudaira 1957: 31). These rites are very localised, and it is difficult to extend conclusions to the whole country, even considering their archaic character.

(iv) Interrelations of temporal segments

Let us go back to the case of the symmetry of the first of the sixth and the twelfth months. It will be recalled that the discovery of their symmetry is founded upon the existence, on both sides, of rites whose purpose is the exorcism of aquatic dangers. But if we decide to take into account the multiple interpretations of the rites, it appears that the first day of the sixth month is linked not only with the first day of the twelfth month but also with the first day of the first month. Notice that the first day of the sixth month is often called *rokugatsu tsuitachi*, which means the 'New Year of the Sixth Month'. It is said that beliefs concerning the sloughing of snakes are the reflection of the renewal of the year, which takes place at about the time of the summer solstice. At this time of the year, people eat the last rice-paste cakes prepared for the 'Great New Year', and preserved until then, or else they prepare food similar to that of the New Year festival. People who are in dangerous years celebrate their personal birthday once more, on the first day of the sixth month, in order to add one more year at once and so to escape the perils bound up with their age (Wakamori 1966: 119).[10]

The complete examination of the correspondences between annual rites results, in fact, not in a symmetrical structure, but in the establishment of an intricate network. The New Year refers to the *bon* festival, which in turn refers to the equinox festivals, which in their turn refer to the complex of the welcoming and farewell rites dedicated to the Ricefield God (who is also the Mountain God and shares a common nature with the ancestors). The New Year celebration refers to the first day of the sixth month, which itself refers to the first day of the twelfth month. There are no isolated rites, and yet on the other hand there is no perfect symmetry connecting them all together either. The annual course of time appears like a cobweb bringing together all the annual rites.

Thus the multiplicity of associations existing between annual rites transforms the annual course of time into an inextricable network similar to a spider's web. The intricacy of this structure blurs the succession of time segments. The portions of time arising from the ritual calendar are not units with a mathematical structure, but moments to which rites give different meanings. This sort of calendar does not measure time—it describes it.

Moreover, the multiplicity of associations between rites performed at different moments of the year makes it impossible to isolate a given ritual period: one cannot think of a ritual period without several others coming immediately to mind, leading in turn to all the other periods of the year, thus following a chain reaction. The course of continuous time as on an oriented arrow, with each moment being the cause of the next one and the consequence of the previous one, is submerged by those privileged moments which are the times of rites themselves rising to the surface; and the meaning of these does not depend on their situation in the course of time—it is, on the contrary, these festive times which give

10. For a detailed discussion of these 'dangerous years', see the paper by Lewis in this volume.

meaning to time in-between. Rites propose time, transforming it into a surface where the mind circulates in all directions.[11]

Conclusion

Thus reality seems to be quite different from the idealistic bipartition recognized by Japanese ethnographers or, at least, is not reducible to this simple structure. The symmetry principles I have pointed out are the reflection of natural, temporally-given conditions. They reflect the astronomical and ecological data which determine the spectrum of different possibilities for calendrical elaboration, but they do not in themselves provide us with any information about the choices among these possibilities.

The anthropomorphic hypothesis (which may be elaborated under the influence of Christian conceptions of annual time) is more interesting. It reveals a social factor, i.e. the celebration of marriages after the harvest, when people have a lot of food and no more work.[12] This custom, together with the fact of the actual germination and gestation of seeds during the cold season, gave rise to the belief in the marriages of the gods.[13]

The Japanese conception of annual time, such as it is, is based upon these natural and social realities, the harmony of which the calendar expresses. Yet this harmony does not seem to be realized by a regular mathematical symmetry, but rather by the constant relations between human and divine worlds. The bipartition which characterizes the annual Japanese cycle may be the reflection of the spatial contacts between these two worlds, which are constantly being actualized by the comings and goings of the gods. It might also be the constant infusion of the divine world into human activities that originates the cobweb-like structure of annual time.

In fact, the main characteristic of the annual ritual calendar seems to be the multiplicity of associations between rites, and it is this multiplicity, as seen above, that prevents us from grasping annual time as a simple mathematical structure.

Of course, neither in Japan nor in the West is there a unitary conception of time. At the two ends of the world, the analysis of the understanding of time comes up against the insoluble inadequacy of the two series of concepts which constantly coexist inside time: a subjective series, which takes into account the past, the present and the future, and an objective series, which takes into account

11. This may be the reason why Gilles Deleuze and Asada Akira, his 'neo-academic' emulator, have enjoyed so much popularity in Japan.

12. Granet notes a similar custom in China (1982: 177).

13. The somewhat enigmatic belief that the gods travel to the province of Izumo and conduct negotiations relating to human marriages could well be considered in the context of the beliefs discussed here.

simultaneity, duration and succession. Ever since Aristotle defined time as μέτρον κινήσεως, while admitting that only the individual conscience could grasp its unity, classical Western thought has tried to make time an object, apprehending it as the milieu of all changes; but it could not escape the tyranny of language which identifies 'presence' and 'being'. So this thought, in spite of its assertions, favoured the subjective definition of time (Derrida 1979: 33 ff.). The Japanese attitude, as it expresses itself through the annual conception of time, does not require that a central subject compose the unity of time; it is, on the contrary, quite satisfied with the extreme mobility of the subject on the surface of time.[14] Note the fact that the only purely Japanese word for time is *toki*. This word is often used with the same meaning as the term *jikan*, which is originally Chinese and literally means 'intervals between *toki*'; but *toki* is above all a word close in meaning to the French *quand*. Would this not mean that, instead of the linguistic tyranny of the present which Derrida stigmatizes, the Japanese understanding of time proposes, as the only reality, the reality of simultaneity or concomitance, viz. the reality of time coming above all from the context such as is expressed by the word *toki*? Of course, this is a much larger problem than the one I have tried to tackle in this essay, though it probably has something to do with non-linear time which the analysis of the annual calendar of rites raises to the surface.

14. This problem can be further considered in relation to the contextuality of the subject, as discussed by Augustin Berque (in this volume).

References

Beillevaire, Patrick 1982. 'Le Sutsu Upunaka de Tarama Jima: Description d'un rite saisonnier et analyse du symbolisme spatial sur une île des Ryûkyû', *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Vol. LXXI, pp. 217–61.

Berque, Augustin 1982. *Vivre l'espace au Japon*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Berthier, Laurence 1980. 'La Fête des petits garçons', *Cahiers d'études et de documents sur les religions du Japon* [Centre d'études des religions et traditions populaires du Japon, Paris], Vol. II, pp. 9–88.

Berthier-Caillet, Laurence 1981. *Fêtes et rites des 4 saisons*, Paris: Publications Orientalistes de France.

Bodde, Derk 1975. *Festivals in Classical China*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Derrida, Jacques 1979 [1972]. *Marges de la philosophie*, Paris: Editions de Minuit.

DURKHEIM, Emile 1968 [1925]. *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
FRANK, Bernard 1958. '*Kata-imi* et *kata-tagae*: Etude sur les interdits de direction à l'époque de Heian', *Bulletin de la Maison franco-japonaise* [Maison franco-japonaise, Tokyo], Vol. V, nos. 2–4.
. . . 1971. 'A Propos de la "vieille année" et du printemps', in Lydia Brüll and Ulrich Kemper (eds.), *Asien Tradition und Fortschritt: Festschrift für Horst Hammitzsch zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, pp. 103–16.
GRANET, Marcel 1959. *La Religion des Chinois*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
. . . 1982. *Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine*, Paris: Albin Michel.
HASHIURA, Yasuo 1949. *Festivals and Rituals* (repr. 1955 under the title *Festivals of Every Month*) (in Japanese).
HIRAYAMA, Binjirō 1957. 'The Dual Structure of Annual Rites' (in Japanese).
INOKUCHI, Shōji 1959. 'Agrarian Annual Rites' (in Japanese).
KŌDA, Yōbun 1959. 'Localism and "Sociality" in Annual Rites' (in Japanese).
KURATA, Ichirō 1969 (repr. 1972). *Agriculture and Folklore* (in Japanese).
MATSUDAIRA, Narimitsu 1957. 'Le Rituel des prémices au Japon', *Bulletin de la Maison franco-japonaise* [Maison franco-japonaise, Tokyo], Vol. IV, no. 2.
MIYAMOTO, Jōichi 1972 [1942]. 'Folk Calendars' (in Japanese).
NISHITSUNOI, Masayoshi (ed.) 1958 (repr. 1973). *Dictionary of Annual Rites* (in Japanese).
NŌDA, Chūryō 1956. *A Historical Essay on the Science of Calendars* (in Japanese).
OKADA, Yoshirō 1973. 'All Calendars which have been Elaborated in every Province of Japan' (in Japanese).
ŌNO, Susumu, SATAKE Akihiro and MAEDA Kingorō 1974. *Dictionary of the Archaic Japanese Language* (in Japanese).
ORIGUCHI, Shinobu 1973 [1930–32]. 'Annual Rites' (in Japanese).
ŌSHIMA, Takehiko 1959. 'Beliefs and Annual Rites' (in Japanese).
SAKURADA, Shōtoku 1959. 'Synthetical Essay on the Annual Rites' (in Japanese).
WAKAMORI, Tarō 1966 (repr. 1973). *Annual Rites* (in Japanese).
. . . 1973. 'The Japanese History of the Calendar' (in Japanese).
YANAGITA, Kunio (ed.) 1939 (repr. 1975). *Vocabulary of Usages Concerning Annual Ceremonies* (in Japanese).
. . . (ed.) 1946 (repr. 1970). *General Folk Vocabulary* (in Japanese).
. . . (ed.) 1947 (repr. 1975). *Classified Vocabulary Concerning Rural Villages* (in Japanese).
. . . (ed.) 1951 (repr. 1973). *Dictionary of Japanese Folklore* (in Japanese).
. . . 1970a [1942]. 'Festivals of Japan' (in Japanese).
. . . 1970b [1946]. 'About the Ancestors' (in Japanese).
. . . 1972a [1946]. 'Views about the Days of the Festivals' (in Japanese).
. . . 1972b [1949]. 'Notes on Annual Rites' (in Japanese).
. . . 1972c [1961]. 'Views on Mitoshiroda' (in Japanese).
YOSHINO, Hiroko 1972. *Principles of the Festivals* (in Japanese).

JAPANESE REFERENCES

橋浦　泰雄
1949(初版)　『祭りと行事』
1955(再版)　『月ごとの祭り』東京：岩崎美術社
平山敏次郎
1957　「年中行事の二重構成」『日本民俗学』4、2　89～95頁　日本民俗学会編
井之口章次
1959　「農耕年中行事」大間知篤三 その他『日本民俗学大系』7　117～166頁　東京：平凡社
倉田　一郎
1969(初版)　『農と民俗学』
1972(再版)　東京：岩崎美術社
郷田　洋文
1959　「年中行事の社会性と地域性」『日本民俗学大系』7　167～238頁
宮本　常一
1942(初版)　「民間暦」
1972(再版)　『宮本常一著作集』9　73～264頁　東京：未来社
西角井正慶編
1958(初版)　『年中行事辞典』1973(再版)　東京：東京堂
能田　忠亮
1956　『暦学史論』東京：角川
岡田　芳朗
1973　「日本各地で作られた暦のすべて」『歴史読本』18、14　54～63頁　東京：国鉄
大野　晋 その他
1974　『古語辞典』東京：岩波
大島　建彦
1959　「信仰と年中行事」『日本民俗学大系』7　67～116頁
折口　信夫
1930～1932(初版)「年中行事」
1973(再版)　『折口信夫全集』15　47～124頁　東京：中央公論社
桜田　勝徳
1959　「年中行事総説」『日本民俗学大系』7　1～16頁
和歌森　太郎
1966(初版)、1973(再版)『年中行事』東京：至文堂
1973　「暦日本史」『歴史読本』18、4　29～39頁
柳田　国男
1939(初版)、1975(再版)『歳時習俗語彙』東京：国書刊行会
1942(初版)　『日本の祭り』　1970(再版)『柳田国男全集』10　153～314頁　東京：筑摩書房
1946 a (初版)　『綜合日本民俗語彙』　1970(再版) 東京：平凡社
1946 b (初版)　『祭日考』　1972(再版)『柳田国男全集』11　181～291頁
1946 c (初版)　『先祖の話』　1970(再版)『柳田国男全集』10　1～152頁
1947(初版)　1975(再版)『分類農村語彙』東京：国書刊行会
1949(初版)　『年中行事覚書』　1972(再版)『柳田国男全集』13　1～177頁

1961(初版)　『御刀代田考』　1972(再版)『柳田国男全集』13　411～430頁
吉野　裕子
1972　『祭りの原理』東京：慶友社

JANE M. BACHNIK

TIME, SPACE AND PERSON IN JAPANESE RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

THE Japanese are often characterized by great sensitivity to relationships. As Lebra writes, 'The overwhelming impression from the literature, as well as from my personal observations, is that the Japanese are extremely sensitive to and concerned about social interaction and relationships' (1976: 2). 'For the Japanese *ningensei* ("humanity", or "human-beingness") takes precedence over everything else' (ibid.: 6).

Such sensitivity is not directed primarily towards marital or family relationships, but towards '. . .other relationships, *even at the expense of the former*' (ibid.; emphasis added). This means that relationships are primarily identified with the broad spectrum of social life *outside* the primary group, or family. It has been well documented that ties are central to many arenas of Japanese social life, including enterprise productivity, which is increasingly related to a 'fundamental humaneness about the mode of organizing people' (Cole 1979: 252). In addition, government ministries, Diet representatives, political parties

Acknowledgements: This is a revised version of a paper first presented at a Conference on the Social Anthropology of Japan, held at the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies, Oxford University, in March 1984. The material presented here is based on five years of field research in Nagano prefecture, Japan, conducted in 1967–8, 1970, 1972–5 and summer 1984. The research was supported in part by a grant and two renewals from Fulbright-Hayes (Institute of International Education), by two NDEA Title VI grants, by a Ford Foundation Grant through the Harvard Comparative International Program, and by a William Neal Reynolds Grant from the University of North Carolina. I am grateful to T.M.S. Evens for extensive comments on this and earlier versions of this paper.