

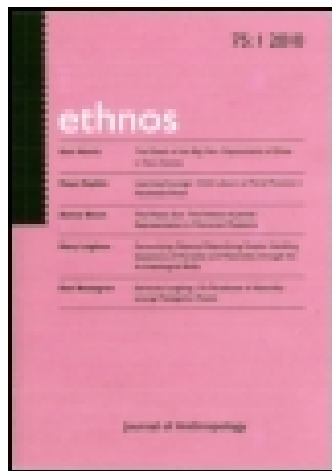
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Inari-sama: The Japanese rice-deity and other crop-divinities

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Inari-sama

The Japanese rice-deity and other crop-divinities

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Kobe, Japan

Ensnconced in an evergreen village coppice, standing along dusty rural roads, squeezed into the narrow cleft between two adjoining city-dwellings, or within the landscape garden of a wealthy merchant, and, more recently, as a background on the flat roof of a ferro-concrete sky-scraper, one comes across, when living in Japan, a small, unpretentious shrine. A jingle-bell with its rope probably hangs in front of it, two sitting foxes keep guard to right and left, and numerous small, red *torii* usually clutter up its approaches. Such shrines are dedicated to *Inari-sama*, or *O-Inari-san*, the Honourable Deity of Rice — and to his messengers, the white Foxes.

In popular esteem *Inari* reigns supreme, in spite of his low station in the divine *Shintō* hierarchy. The official crop rituals are not connected with *Inari*, but with *Toyo-uke-bime-no Kami*, who, like so many "producing" deities, is a lady (*hime*, *bime*, Princess). There is a male *Uga-no Mikoto* of indistinct character, and several food-divinities that are never heard of. And there is the well-known

Daikoku-san, the smiling, short fellow standing on two rice-bales and keeping company with *Ebisu*, the equally jolly god of Fisheries. *Inari*, perhaps the last arrival, surpasses them all in regard to the blind faith which people have in him, and his power goes far beyond the limits ascribed to the other food-gods. Yet his very personality is obscure, and he is but rarely represented in effigy, while good-humoured *Daikoku* is seen everywhere.

The supremacy which the rice-plant has acquired in Japan is in itself amazing. It appears quite conclusive that the invading "Japanese" did not know it, nor did the aboriginal Ainu. *Awa* and *kibi*, kinds of millet, predominate in mythological and early historical names,¹

¹ Suggestive are perhaps the numerous names applied to "rice", most of which are "Chinese". The plant itself is *ine*, unless it has grown wild, when it becomes *makomo*; but its young shoot is a *nae* or *sanae*. Usually it is *momi*, grown wet in a *ta* or *tambo* or *suiden* or *denji* (paddy-field), but some of it is grown "up-land" on a *hatake* when it becomes *okabo*. A specially glutinous kind is the *mochi-gome*, because mainly used for *mochi*, dumplings. According to its maturity, rice becomes *wase* (early), *nakate* (mid-season), or *okute* (late); but when it is harvested it is all *shin-mai* (new rice), and the previous one becomes *binemai*, *hinegome*, or *komai*, old, antique. Yet there is a generic name for the raw rice-grain: *kome*.

The *kome* is *koku'ed* (threshed, by pulling the stalks through a magnified comb, as a rule) and then *tsuku'ed* (pounded to clean it from the husks), by the *tsuki-gome-ya*, in the water-activated *kome-tsuki* (now often electrical); but if the pestle be moved by foot, as in the smaller establishments, the engine becomes a *kome-fumi* (treader). Yet the rice-cleaning mill is a *seimaijo*. The rice coming from the mortar in its first stage is called *gemmai*; slightly polished by further pounding it becomes *hantsuki-mai* (half), and with a continuation of the process the "white" *hakumai* emerges, also referred to simply as *tsuki-gome*. When polished until sparkling, it is known as *sōhaku-mai*.

The bran is called *nuka*, and mainly used for pickling vegetables, making a sort of coarse bisquit hardly inferior to some of the famous "breakfast foods", and, sewn into a bag, becomes the Japanese substitute for the finest velvet-soap.

The rice is bought at the *beikoku-shō* (cereal merchant), shortened to *beishō*, changed to *hakumai-shō* if he sells but the polished kinds, and more familiarly known as the *kome-ya*, rice-man. It is taken home to *toyu* (clean by washing — "whet", all these expressions are specialized), and then boiled, *taku*, of old and still occasionally referred to as *kashigu*, in the *kama*, or more correctly *hagama*, with a little water: actually it is steamed.

When you want your *meshi-jawan* (rice tea-bowl) filled, don't be stupid and ask for *kome*! The *kome*, in the process, has been transformed into *meshi*, or *gohan*, or *gozen* (the latter two "honourable" ones, *go-*, also applying to a "meal"), which the small child calls *o-mamma...* Infants and the sick are mainly fed on rice-gruel, *kayu* or *o-kayu*, which, when very thin, is distinguished

and the first rice-field lady, *Inada-hime*, occurs in a tale concerned with *Susa-no Ō-no Mikoto*, the Storm-god, who has distinct Korean affinities, even if born at the same time as the Sun-goddess, *Amaterasu Ō-Mikami*.² Yet *Susa-no Ō*, in the pertaining legend still instructs the concerned to "take all the fruits and make a liquor", which may apply to millet and barley, even if another version substitutes "take rice". As it is known that the Ainu brewed *sake* from

as *omoyu*. Usually rice is eaten by itself, unseasoned, a snowy mountain in a porcelain bowl. But on many an auspicious day it is *de rigueur* to eat rice cooked with red beans, *azuki*, for good luck, when the mess becomes *azuki-meshi*, *aka-no-meshi*, or *aka-no-gohan* (red), or again, sinified, *seki-ban*, according to the occasion. On the common monthly "red" days it is simply called *o-kowa*... The last bowl of rice is always washed down in tea, and known as the *o-cha-zuke*; but when the rice is boiled in weak tea instead of water, as is customary on fast days or when entertaining funeral guests, the mixture becomes *cha-meshi*. When cooked with vegetables (rarely done), you eat *na-meshi*.

Rice tastes best, of course, when it is *takitata-no-meshi*, piping hot from the pot. But busy housewives will usually cook enough for two meals or so (especially for breakfast inclusive), and at any rate none will be stingy — so there will always be some (cold) *hiya-meshi* or *hiya-gohan* in the house, which will usually be eaten as *o-cha-zuke*, with hot tea poured over it. For a picnic, or in between, people like to eat *nigiri-meshi*, rice-balls slightly salted outside and sprinkled with tasty seeds; in some places they are called *musubi*, "forms" (with a suggestion of tying). But far more appreciated are the numerous kinds of *sushi*, rice interlarded with fish, or egg, or vegetables and what not, slightly spiced with vinegar, and as a rule firmly rolled into laver (*nori*) wrappers... But with these tidbits we leave the territory of rice and enter the sphere of culinary arts...

The raw rice, *kome*, comes from the farm in a *tawara*, a straw-bag or rather bale. (When you count them, they are *hyō*.) Those who can afford a goodly quantity at a time will keep it in a square, wooden *kome-bitsu*, or *hammai-bitsu* (chest); and the cooked rice is served from out of a wooden or lacquered cylindrical container which, out of pure mischief, is also a *bitsu*, or an *o-bitsu*, an honourable chest, even if it is rather a small tub. Some kinds, however, are *o-hachi*, honourable bowls. The flat, oval serving ladle of wood is the *shamoji*.

Numerous other combined words apply to things oryzie, especially also the handling, trading in "spot" and "futures" (a very ancient feature in Japan) and what not. And woe to the investigator who would undertake a listing of localisms! They are simply never-ending. Which all only goes to show the occult importance of the staple grain of Japan.

² Like other major mythologies, *Shintō* is an agglomeration of several tribal beliefs, and as "the History of Japan" was only written early in the 8th century, when the Chinese myths had long been known, students of *Shintō* find it hard to unravel the various strands. While the Sun, as a matriarchal ruler, undoubtedly belongs to the Tsukushi race of the South, the Storm-god as certainly pertained to the Izumo settlers of Korean stock, and later absorbed a possibly southern Moon- and Ocean-god, *Tsuki-yōmi-no Kami*.

millet, it is also interesting to note the repeated Japanese references to Korean immigrants who produced better qualities of the drink, until as late as the 4th century (official chronology) of our era. They might point to both the introduction of *rice-sake* and its perfection. The "offerings of rice" in the divine epochs of Japanese "history" should not influence our deductions, since rice was the favourite food and sacrifice at the time the History was written. Revealing is the fact that in about the 8th century was built a shrine, Umemiya, near Kyoto, dedicated to "the god who first made *sake* from rice". As late as A. D. 713 an imperial edict enjoined the increased growing of millet for food. I would tentatively suggest that while rice was known here and there in "Japan" by the 4th or at the earliest the 3rd century A. D. (when history truly began), its cultivation assumed more general proportions not before the end of the 7th century. And evidently it was frowned upon as too luxurious for the common herd, possibly because deemed too wasteful in labour. In fact most of Japan is not naturally suited to rice-culture. Millet was the grain encouraged.³

Toyo-uke-bime-no Kami is the Goddess Lady Plantiful Crop Receiver, but not directly concerned with rice. She also goes by the names *Ōgetsu-hime*, Princess Great Food, and *Ukemochi-no Kami*, Food Preserving Deity, and her all-embracing rôle of sustainance-divinity is shown by the fact that she is also the protectress of silkworms. She is certainly one of the first known deities, not only because born of the generative couple, *Izanagi* and *Izanami*, but because hers is the personality most closely linked to that of *Amaterasu*, the Sun-goddess, in the oldest State-worship. The explanation is even more infantile than other endeavours to show the supremacy of the southern Sun-goddess over far older Central-Japan divinities, firmly established when the Tsukushi tribe came into ascendancy and oc-

³ Similarly, ancient Chinese history often refers to sacrifices of "millet and wine" instead of "rice and wine", and the Northern Chinese, Manchurians etc. eat far greater quantities of sorghum than of rice, which thrives best in hot climates.

cupied Yamato "in 660 B. C."⁴ As is well known, the sacred mirror of *Amaterasu* was kept in the Imperial "Palace", until Emperor Sujin, in the year 4 B. C., became somewhat scared at the proximity of such an awe-full fetish and, in honour of the goddess, had it transferred to a newly erected "august home" (*miya*) on the river Isuzu. But there, at Ise, *Amaterasu* felt lonely; so almost five centuries later, in A. D. 478, she made up her mind to appear to Emperor Yūryaku in a dream. She explained that she began to suffer from *ennui*, that eating the rice alone was no fun, and that she longed for the company of her good old friend, Lady *Toyo-uke*, whose sanctuary had remained behind at the Palace when her own was removed to Ise. Quite naturally the August Descendant hastened to fulfil the wish of the Heavenly Ancestress, and had a new shrine erected in her neighbourhood, on a wooded hill called Takakura (Tall Storehouse). From then on, the two ladies have shared every officially presented meal...

Nothing of this, however, is mentioned in either the *Kojiki* or the *Nihongi*.⁵ Actually certain investigators are convinced that *Toyo-uke-bime*'s shrine at Ise, now the "outer" one (*Gekū*), may considerably antedate the holiest of holies to *Amaterasu*, which was declared the "inner" shrine (*Naikū*). In turn this Food-lady becomes identified with *Kuni-toko-tachi-no Mikoto*, a male god whose name signifies His Augustness the Eternally Standing One, and who is said — on what grounds I have not found — to have originally been worshipped at Ise. *Kuni-toko-tachi*, however, is primordial: he is the first "being" that emerged from Chaos, "like a reed",

⁴ Actually, according to unbiased investigators, the agglutinative events described as Jimmu Tennō's conquests, and which led to a manner of hegemony, happened a good five hundred years later. The first twelve centuries of Japanese "history" are greatly fictitious. Only with the 5th century A. D. do we reach firmer soil, if still quite soggy in spots.

⁵ *Kojiki*, Records of Ancient Matters, compiled in 712, translated by Chamberlain in a supplementary volume to the Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Tokyo 1882; *Nihongi* (or *Nihon-shoki*), Chronicles of Japan, completed in 720, translated by Aston in a supplementary volume to the Transactions of the Japan Society, London, 1896.

which by and by was changed into a deity — and in due course passed away. He was the first of the single Celestial Divinities; only from the fourth generation on did they “emerge” in pairs, and only the seventh and last bisexual generation, *Izanagi* and *Izanami*, became creators properly speaking. *Toyo-uke-bime*, as we saw, was one of their numerous offspring. But while most deities were conceived and born in quite human manner,⁶ her coming into the world, according to one version, reminds one that in the East night-soil was practically the only fertilizer known. As all sources agree, the last deity to whom *Izanami* gave birth was *Kagutsuchi*, the Fire-god. He became the agent of her death, by burning her genitals, and the pain, it seems, caused *Izanami* to suffer from uncontrollable discharges. “The excrements produced the goddess *Hani-yasu-hime* (of the Earth, as Matter), the urine produced the god *Waka-musubi-no Kami* (the Young Binding Deity),⁷ and from their union was born *Toyo-uke-bime*.”

At Ise we might therefore oppose *Toyo-uke* as Goddess of the procreative Soil to *Amaterasu* as Goddess of the causative Heaven.

According to the *Kojiki*, *Susa-no Ō*, the Storm-god, killed *Ōgetsu-hime* (or *Toyo-uke*) at the time of his descent from the Plain of Heaven into Izumo — in fact, shortly before he met Princess Rice-Field. He was hungry and asked for a meal; so from her mouth and other orifices the Great Food Lady produced rice(?), fish and game, “dainties” (*tametsu-mono*) which she served to him at a banquet. The god, however, took offence at her feeding him with filthy viands and, drawing his sword, cut off her head. — According to the *Nihongi*, the god who behaved in such an unfriendly way was the Moon-deity; and when afterwards he reported his act to the

⁶ Not so the subsequently principal ones: the Sun-goddess sprang from *Izanagi's* left eye (the left being the more honoured), the Moon-god from his right eye, and the Storm-god from his nostrils, when he underwent a purificatory bath, after a visit to his deceased spouse, *Izanami*, in Hades. They were thus spontaneously created.

⁷ Both very little known deities. There are several “*Musubi*”, and *Hani-yasu* is more usually connected with *Ho-musubi*, another Fire-god.

Sun-goddess, "the latter became very angry, and secluded herself from him for the space of a day and a night". A possibly Chinese interpolation to account for Day and Night; it is the Storm-god that destroys the food, not the Moon. But by then *Tsuki-yōmi* had been practically amalgamated with *Susa-no Ō*, who in turn had become the ruler of Hades, usually a rôle attributed to the Moon.

From the body of the murdered Producer-Earth sprang "the five grains": rice from her eyes, millet from her ears, red beans from her nose, barley from her privy parts, peas from her anus; and these the Sun-goddess decreed should thenceforth be the food of the human race. On her head grew silk-worms, and from her body were created cattle and horses . . .

All mythologies have tried to explain the *Werdegang* of Life and Beings, and they all have much in common, and are all somewhat involved in mix-ups. *Shintō* but follows the general compositions of Babylon and Egypt, without the charm which we find in their myths, even more pronounced in their Greek descendants. And, as in Greece so in Japan, sundry group-myths were combined into one story which had to do duty for the "nation" once it had become loosely unified.

While *Ōgetsu* or *Toyo-uke* was decidedly a "Food" goddess, protecting all kinds of agriculture, we find, in the same Izumo circle of legends, another god of Food, *Uga-no Mikoto*, or *Uga-no Mitama*, the August Deity or August Spirit of the Storehouse, who has evidently more to do with the conservation of supplies after harvest. He is the son of *Ōkuni-nushi*, the Great Land Master, also known as *Ō-Namuji*, the Great Name Possessor, the domineering Earth-god of the Izumo tribe; his mother was the daughter of the Great Mountain god *Ō-yama-tsumi-no Mikoto*. Good, rooted stock . . .

Uga and *Uke* are undoubtedly identical (the hard and soft consonants are usually dialective differences, the *a* and *e* modulatory); but the male god became more particularly known as the deity of the Five Cereals: still not the "god of Rice". On the contrary, while the lists of five cereals vary, some of the oldest ones do not include rice but double the bean or the millet varieties. Although he is still highly

venerated by Official *Shintō*, the people at large hardly ever hear the name of *Uga-no Mikoto*, of whom nobody knows much.

I shall leave out for the present *Saruta-hiko-no Mikoto*, who is another very old "earthly" god, mainly concerned with protecting the fecundity, the productiveness of the rice-fields (apart from being a Road-god and a Pestilence-god — divine characters which go hand in hand not only in Japan); but I must revert to *Ōkuni-nushi*, father of *Uga*.

Ōkuni-nushi plays an important and complicated mythological rôle in Izumo — and later in all of "Japan" — coming into occasional conflict with his uncle (or father!) *Susa-no Ō*, and other great deities. Evidently a struggle among tribes, or sectional leaders. He does not prominently figure as a provider, however. He owns the land. Yet it is apparent from stories connected with him that he was a fertility-deity: he already meets a hare (universal symbol of progeny) early in his career, for instance; he is the one to win the hand of the "princess of the land"; he has a string of other names which link him with the soil and its development.⁸ His shrines are frequently combined with those dedicated to *Sengen*, or *Konohana-sakuya-hime*, the Blossom Princess and patroness of Mount Fuji — Fire, Warmth. He is distinctly a phallic deity, and phallicism was all-permeating in Japanese crop-lore, *Ōkuni-nushi*'s main sanctuary is at Kizuki, which name is but a contraction of *kine-tsuki*, "pestle-thrust"; the principal symbol there is a fire-drill, of the stick kind rapidly twirled in a perforated board; his fetish in processions is a halberd. The god himself may take the shape of an arrow or of a serpent, and under a distinct name, *Sannō*, he is worshipped in certain places as the "Stake-god" (that is, a pillar rammed into the ground), and has a monkey as his messenger. All these are well-known phallic emblems. He is also connected with medicinal springs, that is, with health and long life.

⁸ *Ōmono-nushi*, Big Thing Possessor; *Yachihoko*, Eight Spears; *Ashihara-shiko Ō*, Supreme King of the Rice-fields; *Ōkuni-tama*, Big Land Soul; *Akitsu-kuni-tama*, Soul of the Land of the Dragonfly — originally rather "of the Autumn-standing (crop)", and more.

This aboriginal Izumo hero, energetic as a pioneer in the opening up of the country, became confused at some unknown date prior to the Kamakura era (1192—1333) with the savage, scowling Indian *Mahākāla*, a destructive manifestation of *Shiva*. Buddhism brought in its wake much Hindu lore, and we need not here go into the *Mahākāla* infiltration. The *Ryōbu-Shintō* theory of reincarnation of one deity in another helped. The confusion is easily explained from a popular viewpoint, even if logically *Susa-no Ō* or somebody else would have been nearer the counterpart. For one thing, creation and destruction, life emerging from death and reverting to death, the un-failing modalities of growth and decay — nothing is constant except inconstancy — have always deeply impressed Oriental philosophies. *Ōkuni-nushi*, the phallic halberd and arrow god, became the god of warriors, and war is the most vivid expression of destruction. Destruction of the foe, however, means vivification of the victor. *Mahākāla* the Destroyer was a Rejuvenator.⁹ Possibly of even greater moment, because more obvious to the untutored, was the fortuitous convertibility of names. *Mahākāla* means Great Black. *Ō-kuni*, Great Land, in Sinico-Japanese (then all the rage) is read *Dai-koku*, and the same sounds, *dai koku*, also express “big black”! Thus *Ō-kuni* (*nushi-no Mikoto*) almost automatically became *Dai-koku* (*sama*).

The original *Daikoku*, as results from ancient representations, was a swarthy, frowning fellow, of stocky body, sometimes shown with three faces, which rallies him to the Road-gods — the bifurcation so dreaded by primitives as admitting pestilence. He continued to be one of the three special protective divinities of the warriors, the *yumi-ya san-ten*, Bow and Arrow Three Heavens.¹⁰ But it is interesting to note that *Daikoku* never became a *Mikoto* (August Thing) or *Kami* (Deity, God); he always remained *Ten* (the Buddhist “Heaven”, we might say Archangel), or more currently *Sama* (*San*), a title hard to translate, but which the Englishman would suggest by “Esquire” rather than “Mr.” in a letter-address.

⁹ *Ishtar* of the Assyrians was the goddess of War and of Fecundity.

¹⁰ The other two are *Marishiten* and *Benten*.

Daikoku, for no particular reason, became the first Rice-deity as distinct from the older Food-deities. Perhaps because by coincidence *koku* may also mean grain, corn, cereals, and a *koku* is the "bushel" with which they are measured. The Japanese language offers many such word-plays . . . The process of japanizing *Mahākāla* the Destroyer and creating *Daikoku* the Rice-god was concluded by the 13th century, and he emerged as a still short, plump fellow, but now with rosy skin, without demoniacal aspect or dreaded weapons. On the contrary, he has a rotund face full of kindly smiles, carries a bulky bag of good things on his back, and wields the *takara-zuchi*, a mallet with which he can create, by simply knocking, all the treasures which humans may crave for. Symbolical of his particular sovereignty he stands on two straw-bales filled with rice to bursting, and has, as messengers and familiars, nimble and quick-witted rats. The rats, while destructive, are emblematic of Plenty: where the larder is empty, these rodents will not make a home.

I cannot exactly follow the reasoning that because of the rats *Daikoku* is also affiliated with the elephant-headed Indian *Ganesha*, who is mainly a god of Intelligence, even if he likes to eat well and plentifully. Their common phallicism and bestowal of riches they share with many others. *Ganesha*, without the rats, has become *Shōten* in Japan, but is little known, although he seems to have been more popular a thousand years ago. Yet there may have been some occult nexus: it seems rather incongruous that most *Inari* shrines, apart from the archaic types, should show two elephant heads projecting from the columns forming the "portico". Again, the elephant heads may simply be an intrusion of Buddhist symbolism, if a less frequent one than the "lion".¹¹ But, and this seems important, shrine-makers rather use the name *baku* for these heads than *zō* (elephant). The *baku* is a purely Chinese conception, most fantastically described, but which generally has an elephantine head with short proboscis,

¹¹ The elephant, principle of Spirituality, is the steed of *Fūgen* (*Samantabhadra*), as the lion, principle of Intellect, is the steed of *Monjū* (*Manjusri*), the two primary Bodhisattvas.

whatever its body and paws. The *baku* is credited with the power to avert evil, especially pestilence — but its evolution seems no longer traceable.¹²

Daikoku is now mostly venerated, if in a somewhat familiar manner, as one of the medley of Seven Gods of Luck, and more particularly as the boon-companion of *Ebisu*, the god of Fisheries. Both are thus gods of Wealth. Yet while temples are erected to *Ebisu* (who is but the *Shintō* god *Kotoshiro-nushi* in disguise, or the first and imperfect child of the Creator pair, who was set adrift on the sea), I do not know of a single place of worship dedicated to *Daikoku* as such. He is represented in paintings and statuettes, and appealed to at home. And sometimes, if rarely, *Daikoku* rides on a white fox . . .”

One aspect of *Daikoku*, quite overlooked by his modern adherents, is that he is, or was, the god of the House, its “spine” or “soul”. The main pillar of a structure is still called the *Daikoku-bashira*. In turn this allies him with the worship of Nature as represented by a tree: the main pillar was not only the largest trunk used to support the roof; it brought into the home the “spirit” which inhabited the green tree. This very ancient fetishism would, however, lead us too far into the field of Tree-worship. Suffice it to say that of old the New Year’s pine-sapling, which is still erected at the gate of a home (now in pairs) as a symbol of revival (New Year being formerly spring’s beginning), was placed not outside but within the house, right in front of the *Daikoku-bashira*, and at times stood on two rice-bales! *Daikoku* on his rice-bales thus replaces the green young tree — future growth — which is offered to the old “soul of the house”, the main pillar, so that its spirit may not decay but absorb the fresh vigour of the young plant. However, going back further, we would

¹² The *baku* figures, for instance, at the four corners of the *Ni-ō-mon* (gate) at Nikko; it was generally painted, in gold lacquer, on the ends of the (wooden) pillows to procure good sleep, since it can “devour any bad dream that passes before the sleeper’s eyes”. As a paper charm, its picture or ideograph is hung up in rooms. Quite evidently a sickness-scarer . . .

find that the "main pillar" was not, originally, a roof-support at all, but a post embedded in the soil and protruding through the centre of the floor. It was, indeed, purely phallic. It was *Sannō's* "stake".¹³

While *Ōkuni-nushi* thus gradually developed into the more intimate *Daikoku*, his son, *Uga-no Mikoto*, remained one of the least known figures in mythology. But "father and son" of course often means but two localized conceptions of the same forces.

*

The most current tradition has it that *Kōbō Daishi*¹⁴ met an old man near the *Tōji* temple, south of Kyoto, who carried on his back a load of rice-sheaves. The man was a hundred years old, people said, and they called him *Ryūzata*, Dragon Thick Head, because his countenance was as a dragon's, and an unearthly radiance emanated from it . . . The great *Kōbō Daishi's* penetrating eye recognized in the old man "the deity-protector of temples, *Ida-ten*" (*Vēda Rāja*),¹⁵ whereupon he called the deity "*I-nari*", Rice-Load (-Bearer).¹⁶ The people considered the god to be *Uga-no Mikoto*. Possibly, as others say, the encounter was between the Old Man, *Uga*, and some emperor. It matters little. The strain remains that *Inari* was but an epithet, that *Uga* is involved, and that Buddhism, through the *Shingon* "protective deity", early in the 9th century inserted a wedge into the *Shintō* crop-myth.

But to ascribe the establishment of an *Inari* worship to *Kōbō Daishi* is evidently a Buddhist effort of no traditional value.¹⁷ More

¹³ In a book in preparation on Phallicism in Japan I hope to demonstrate that *Daikoku* on his rice-bales is but a civilized form of penis and testicles.

¹⁴ The most famous Buddhist Saint in all Japan, who introduced the mantric *Shingon* doctrines and founded the Koya-san monasteries. Whatever demands some emphasis is attributed to his genius . . . He lived from 774-835, but the incident mentioned is said to have happened in 711!

¹⁵ Generally represented as a strong and handsome youth, of martial character and carrying a halberd!

¹⁶ Other suggested ethymologies of the name are *Ina-kari* (originally *Ine-kari*), "Rice-cutting", or *Ina-iru* (*Ine-iru*), "Rice-gathering".

¹⁷ To show how "facts" can be garbled I refer to a further tradition, that the

satisfactory, I would say, is the explanation that Empress Gemmyō (708—714) originated shrines to all the crop-deities combined, of whom by then there must have been quite a few. This sovereign had just tried to put some order into the country by creating a permanent capital at Nara in 710. Before her, the imperial residences had floated about in more southern Yamoto districts for generations. What seems suspicious is that she should establish a central *Inari* shrine in the “Kyoto” plain across the mountains, then still rather far from home. (Kyoto, Heian-kyō, was only founded in A. D. 794.) But hers was a period of a jumble of creeds, of amalgamations and schisms, of occult circumvolutions and popular shortcuts, and, if not at her suggestion, her farming population may well have decided to simplify the worship of both native and imported gods and such who had become hermaphrodites. They lumped together those who concerned them most, and merely addressed them as *Inari*, the Loads of Rice which they hoped and prayed for.

Popular tradition concocted another quite interesting account of the establishment of the first *Inari* shrine. In the same period of Empress Gemmyō, known as *Wado*, there lived a proud and very rich man who made it a sport to use *mochi* (rice-cakes) as a target for his arrow-shooting practice. The soul of the Rice-god, greatly offended at this impious treatment, flew away; and men who saw it asserted that he had the shape of a pure white bird. Whereupon the rich man became frightened, considering it a bad omen, and consulted a diviner, who finally pronounced that because of his wickedness he would soon lose all his fortune. In the hope of making amends and thus avoiding such fate, the man thereupon built a shrine to the Rice-god, erected on the hill where he lived, which happened to be ‘Mount Inari’.

Buddhist priest Chishō Daishi (who lived from 814 to 891) in the 12th year of *Kōan* (which would have been A. D. 1289 if the era had more than 11 years) when returning from a pilgrimage to the temple of *Kumano* and passing through the village of Inaba in Kii, saw an old man and two old women cutting rice plants. He recognized at once that they were not ordinary people, but gods, and immediately set about to erect them a “rice-gods” shrine.

The Yamashiro plain, especially the northern triangle between Hiei-zan, Mikuni-yama and Atago-yama, with Kyoto now at its base, has always been full of marvellous fertility legends. (The subsequent choice of the Kyoto site for a capital appears to have been influenced by them.) *Inari* may well have been an old local deity, afterwards remodelled. The Kamogawa plain to the south of this triangle was highly fertile, and the hills to the east of it evidently adapted for worship. The first "*Inari*" sanctuary is generally acknowledged to have comprised three small shines erected very early in the 8th century on three eminences, which may be identified with the three hills forming a chain from North to South between Kyoto Fushimi. The three original shrines were respectively dedicated to *Uga-no Mitama-no Mikoto*, *Ōmiyama-no Mikoto*, and *Saruta-hiko-no Mikoto*. I believe it significant that the hills in question are the last spur southward of the important Higashi-yama range, of which Hiei-zan is the highest peak; as Hiei-zan lay to the North-East of Kyoto — the *ki-mon* or Devil's Gate, the direction from which evil comes — and was to protect the future capital, so did the three hills stand at the *ki-mon* of the fertile plain intersected by the Kamogawa and Katsura-gawa (rivers). The three gods — three is a highly auspicious, all-embracing number — became the evil-repelling protectors of the principal rice-producing district, whether for Nara or, later, Kyoto. They were comprehensively known as *Inari*.

Kōbō Daishi is probably more correctly reported as having founded, in 816, a shrine "to the protective deity of *Tōji*" at the foot of the "*Inari Hill*"; and as his influence was great, people began to pay homage at this new shrine and to neglect the old ones.¹⁸ Thus the name *Inari* may popularly have been transferred to the abode of some god (*Ida-ten?*) who originally had nothing to do with crops. I consider it decidedly remarkable, for instance, that the scholar Hayashi Razan (1583—1657), in his Annals of *Shintō*, in referring to the god's first appearance, does not write *Inari-yama* as "Rice

¹⁸ Their presumed ruins are said to be still visible some 1 1/4 mile behind the present shrine.

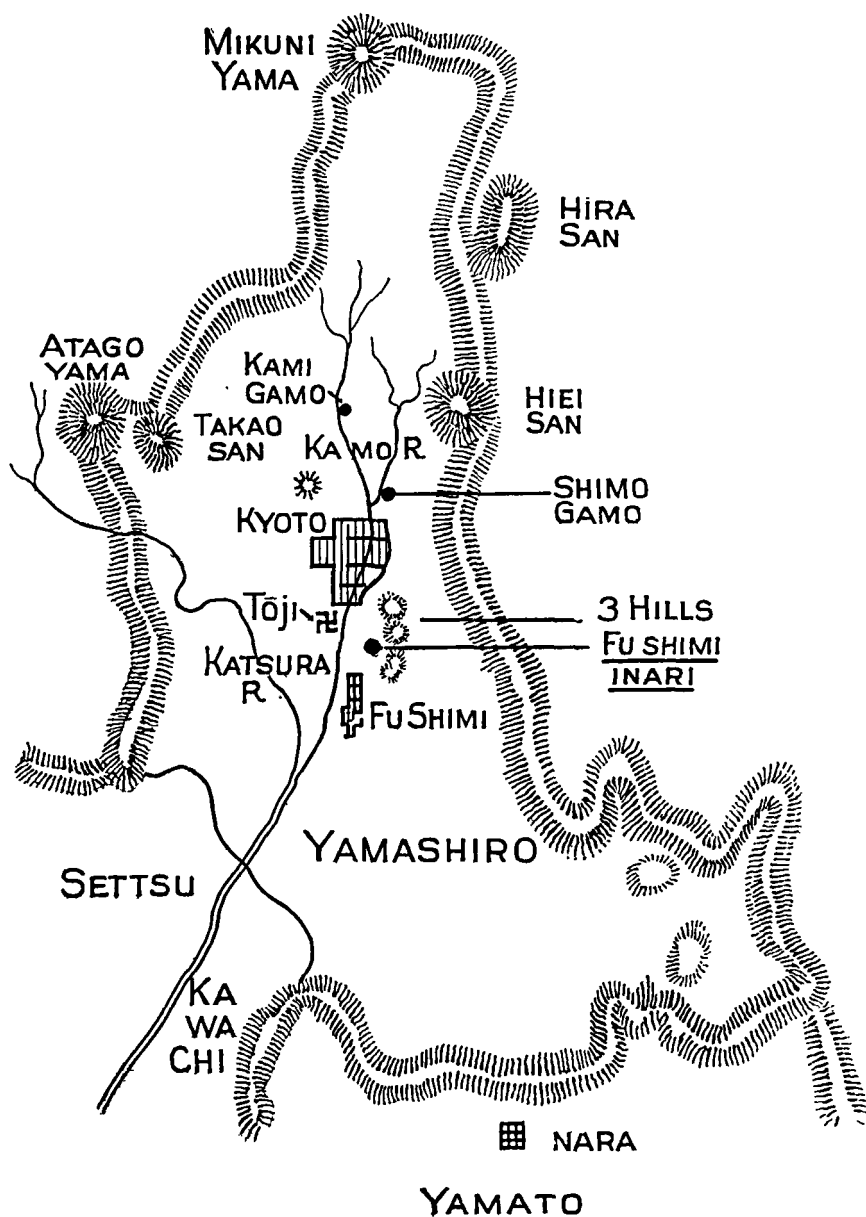


Fig. 1. Sketch map of the Kyoto district, with locations mentioned in this paper

Load Mountain" but purely phonetically . . .¹⁹ However: let us not forget that neither historical nor chronological exactitude have ever been Japan's *forte* — and at this distance it hardly matters much . . .

The combination of the three gods is interesting: *Uga* as Cereal-god; *Ōmiyama* would be the Big August Mountain, which includes Forests; *Saruta*, the Monkey-field, the Prince of the Roads and of the Soil. The three are still worshipped at the *Inari* shrine of Fushimi, south of Kyoto, which is considered to be the principal one in all of Japan.

But, queerly enough, there *Ōmiyama* is also called *Ō-miya-no-me-no Mikoto*, logically the Big Shrine Female's Augustness. Yet *Ō-miya*, big shrine, is also explained as being "one of the seven *Sannō* deities" (*Sannō* being the deity of Hiei-zan, the *ō-mi-yama*, Big August Mountain) — a multiplication, or splitting process, which tastes very much of Buddhism.²⁰ But as *O-miya* may also mean Imperial Residence, the female deity is explained as being a personification of the Emperor's Palace . . .

All rather unsatisfactory. But could *Ō-miya-no-me-no Mikoto* possibly be a corruption of *O-Miwa-no-me-no Mikoto* — the Female August Thing or the Honourable *Miwa*? Chinese ideograms were (and are) applied according to sound and their suspiciousness, are often miswritten or substituted, and instead of interpreting the original idea do confound it . . . The Japanese spoken language, apart from dialects, has always been slack, modifying, excising and slurring. The Great Deity of *Miwa*, so often mentioned of old, is but our good Izumo friend *Ōkuni-nushi* in Yamato disguise. If, as serious

¹⁹ This philosopher of the *Shushi* school, also known as Dōshun, in 1606 became Iyeyasu's secretary, as which he was mainly in charge of drawing up government acts. We can hardly tax him with lack of knowledge!

²⁰ Much mysticism was later introduced by the fact that *Sannō* was (at least then) written as "Mountain King", 山王; these strokes, three perpendicular and three horizontal ones, either group "joined" by a line, showed "a mysterious union of affirmation and negation", of "what is neither the one nor the other", of Trinity and what not — clearly Chinese occultism. *Ōmiya* was then "identified" with Buddha himself! . . . I incline to consider *Sannō* a contraction of *Saru-no Ō*, the Monkey King.

investigators conclude, the official identification with *Ōkuni-nushi* is a very late one, the *Miwa* god was simply a similar phallic deity pertaining to the old settlers of Central Japan (or Yamato); he was, as is stated in the *Kojiki*, a Thunder-snake, and called *Ikazuchi*, the Severe Serpent... He was a mountain-deity, or perhaps rather forest-deity, and a giver of fertility.²¹

I would not be surprised if this surmise were correct. Big Mountain, *Ō-yama* gods there are, of course, everywhere. In this case — for the Kyoto district — it would be Mount Hiei, formerly perhaps “Hiye”, the Cold Mountain, a region full of phallic lore — and whose main deity was *Sannō*, the specialized *Ōkuni-nushi* with his Monkey-messengers and Stake-emblem. We seem to be always turning in a circle. *Ōkuni-nushi*’s “better” self was the *Miwa* deity, whose sanctuary is a high and thickly wooded hill, cedars predominating. It is to be noted that the *sugi* (cryptomeria) is the divine tree of *Inari*!

The one part which is striking is the tentative introduction of *me*, the female. Originally the Japanese did not have the notion of gods in pairs. Apart from the two Creators, their males and females were independent, and they need not permanently mate.²² Even *Izanagi* continued to create after *Izanami* was dead. The idea of having a god and a goddess for the same purpose is Chinese, and based on their all-pervading concept of the *yang* and *yin* principles of the Universe. It never attained similar prominence in *Shintō*, and Buddhism of course was not at all affected by it, since fundamentally Buddhism denies all spiritual influence to females.²³

²¹ The *Miwa* god apparently has no true personal name, being referred to as *Saki-mi-tama*, Glorious Soul, or *Kushi-mi-tama*, Marvellous Spirit. He first appeared to *Ōkuni-nushi* as a brilliant light over the sea, and declared himself to be his interlocutor’s “superior soul” — a Chinese conception which penetrated Japan at an early date, but I do not believe autochthonous, as the Heavenly *Kami* have but one spirit. — Emperor Yūryaku, in the 5th century, once had the Serpent captured — and got the shock of his life when he saw the seventy-foot-long reptile!

²² “Marriages” are always between Heavenly Deities and Earthly Deities.

²³ Only at a very late date did some Buddhist divinities absorb feminine traits from local creeds, but they are never conceived a “wives” (*Sakti*) of gods, or as their feminine emanations, as for instance in the debased Tibetan Tantrism.

The second god is thus as obscure as possible. *Ōmiya-no-me-no Mikoto* is said to be especially "a goddess who fosters harmony between the government and the people" — but we can dismiss that as a late Confucianist addition.

Saruta-hiko is the only clear personality, even if he has become many-sided too. As a matter of fact he perishes rather early in mythology.

When *Ninigi-no Mikoto*, the Sun-goddess' grandson, was sent to earth to take possession of Japan, which had a rather turbulent population, the progeny of the Storm-god and of numerous inferior Earth-deities, he met a monstrous giant, who seemed to block his progress. None of the many heavenly gods who accompanied him had the courage to challenge the road-obstructor; but *Ame-no Uzume-no Mikoto*, the impudent female of Cave-dance fame, went to face him, "with her waist-band lowered below the navel and with her breasts laid bare". She greeted him mockingly, and found that he was not at all there to object to *Ninigi's* arrival, but had on the contrary intended to greet him. — Whereupon they laughingly went off together ...

They turn up once more later, as a married couple, in Izu, I believe, and shortly afterwards *Saruta-hiko* dies. While out fishing, his hand was caught by a monster-shell, and he was dragged under. Allegory of tidal-wave or erosion? At the same time shells are connected with fertility... Queer is that *Uzume*, too, "the Heaven Alarming Female",²⁴ becomes involved in fish-legends. It is as if two myths had clashed — an agrestic culture and a pelagic one — and an effort at combining them had been made. Both deities disappear from history.

²⁴ I find it hard to agree with the official interpretation of her name. *Uzu-me*, who danced on a "tub", never alarmed anybody: she caused the gods to roar with laughter and mare *Amaterasu* curious, but not frightened. She was the only one not to be scared by the phallic *Saruta-hiko*. She was, I feel, "*Usu-me*", the Mortar Female, as *Ōkuni-nushi* (*Saruta-hiko*) was "*Kine-tsuki*", the Pestle Thrust. Pestle and Mortar are the utensils of the Fertility Hare in the Moon: phallus and kteis.

Saruta-hiko, the Monkey-field Prince,²⁵ in spite of his name and life-story, is mainly the god of the Cross-roads, and only indirectly of the Rice-fields, although of course both hang together. Perhaps his lesser known name, *Ōtsuchi-no Kami*, the Big Soil God, would be the correcter one. He is the deity of the ground, of the "dirt", the soil. He has a very long nose and eyes shining like mirrors. His festival is celebrated on the day of the Monkey — wherefore he has been identified with *Kōshin*, the Monkey-god. And *Kōshin*, in turn, is but a modification of *Sannō*, who is *Ōkuni-nushi*...

Saruta-hiko, through his three monkeys, protects the "bifurcation" of the road, the *mata* or *chi-mata*, against the death brought to the settlement by evil. *Mata* is the crotch of the legs; *chi* means earth. The phallic monkey of fertility can, of course, offset the decimations caused by epidemics or crop-failures. The familiar three monkeys, corresponding to the meeting of the three roads, have later been wilfully misinterpreted by Buddhism as paragons of goodness: speak no evil, hear no evil, see no evil. Actually their hands close the head's orifices, mouth and nose, ears, and eyes, against all penetration of evil... (*Daikoku* of old had three scowling faces...) *Saruta-hiko* prevents death by caring for the protection of the fields. His emblem is the phallus.

To these principal deities, compounded into "*Inari*", were added, as secondary gods at least at Fushimi, and at a much later date — in 1276, about — the Harvest-god *Ō-toshi-no Kami*, "who revealed himself in the form of a crane carrying a grain of rice in his bill", and *Ō-yashima-no Kami*, the god of the Eight Islands, which poetically meant all of Japan. So, at least, some sources say. Others refer to "two additional shrines", the *Ta-naka-sha* and the *Shi-no Daijin*. The first, the Field-Middle Shrine, is dedicated to *Ō-ana-muchi-no Mikoto*, an August One who is definitely Big and Valuable. He is said to be a descendant of *Susa-no Ō* by *Inada-hime*... In fact, he is but another, very obscure manifestation of *Ōkuni-nushi*;

²⁵ *Ta* applies to paddy only; other cultivated land is *hata*, *hatake* etc.

but what the "ana" stands for is undecipherable. The sign is that for "snake" (*mi*): could the god possibly be *Ikazuchi*, the Thunder-snake of *Miwa*? Yet the sign might substitute a few others, and phonetically *ana* means "hole" ... Could the *Volksmund* have meant a much less occult *ana* — just a hole? A snake-hole or a fox-hole? Could it have deified a rocky formation suggesting the *kteis*, as so often happened? Or could it have mixed up a Big Name, *Ō-na* (*muji-no Mikoto*), another title of *Ōkuni-nushi*, with a Big (holy) Hole, *Ō-ana*(*muchino Mikoto*)? Mystery. — The second shrine, dedicated to the Four Big Gods, includes more weird beings: *Iso-takeru* (or *takeshi*) -no Mikoto, the Fifty Furious August Thing, another "son" of *Susa-no Ō*, only known for having accompanied him to Korea; *Ō-Ya Hime*, the Lady Big House; *Tsumeru-tsu Hime* (? at least so the characters read), the Lady Pinched Harbour — or should it be Filled-in Bay?; and *Koto Yaso Kami*, the Things Eighty God.²⁶ Whatever their names or groupings, neither carries any weight. But henceforth, on great festivals, five *mikoshi* (august palanquins) paraded the streets in gala attire — one for "each" god.

Yet not even the three principals are constant! While *Uga-no Mitama* is always cited, one source mentions the others as being *Susa-no Ō* himself, and an absolutely unknown lady, *O-Ichi-hime*. *O-ichi* probably means Doll. We shall see that "dolls" are an *Inari* charm. But she may also be the "Number One Princess", the First among all — plainly "Woman", the Female. Equally remote from popular acceptance is the more learned view that *Inari*, in truth, is

²⁶ The last one evidently refers to eighty varieties of vegetables grown: to this day the green-grocer is known as the *ya-o-ya*, the Eight Hundred (Things) House — he sells "eight hundred kinds of eatables". Eight, eighty etc., as well as fifty etc., are mythologic numbers. — *Susa-no Ō*'s trip to Korea is linked with trees, forests, which may enclose the field on one side and protect it against the "fifty furious" winds; the farmer's home will stand somewhere in or near the field; in part the field may have been reclaimed from the "squeezed" or "pinched" foreshore. As the "*mi*" sign may also stand for "self", and at a stretch even be the cyclical "trunk" standing for Junior Brother of Earth, *O-ana* might be the "Junior Brother" of the old field resulting from such reclamation. Or he may be a sort of *Ding an sich* ... Who knows what symbolism played its part a millennium ago ...

but *Daikini-ten* (or *Dakini*), "formerly a demon whose original self is said to have been a fox. He was thought to possess a miraculous instinct to foresee one's death six months previously and to devour the hearts of human beings. At the beginning he used to behave savagely, but he was subsequently overpowered by the noble virtue of Buddha", and eventually became a faithful guardian of Buddhism. This is an identification which in my view smacks too much of a warmed-up *Hariti/Kwannon* transformation, itself very spurious, to be acceptable as formative of the *Inari* myth. At the same time this "god of wonders and of magic" is said to have been unequivocally phallic, and may have been absorbed, customarily, with the phallic *Inari* of *Shintō* conception. A further link: there is a close relation, to the average mind, between *Daikini* and the blood-thirsty Hindu *Kāla*, the cannibalistic Destroyer. And *Māha-kāla* we have seen identified with *Daikoku*... The only renowned "Buddhist *Inari*" temple I have heard of is at Toyama, near Nagoya,²⁷ and this is more particularly dedicated to *Toyokawa Inari Daikini Ten*. The inclusion of the locality name (Toyokawa) would point to some quite circumscribed sphere of influence. The belief exists there that both *Daikini* and *Inari* wandered about at night, seeking souls whom they might devour, before Buddha converted them. A very Tantric deism not usually found in the *Mahāyāna* of Japan. On some Buddhist *kakemono* *Inari* riding his fox may appear as a minor attendant; but the current *Inari* is always of *Shintō* ideology. Buddhism will in a slight manner have influenced it, as it did that of other *Shintō* divinities, and especially their sanctuaries and festivities. But Buddhism is not concerned with Food, as Shintoism decidedly is; and *Inari*, even as a deity of Prosperity, is basically connected with food.

✱

²⁷ This temple has been sadly neglected for generations.

Inari, as we see, was thus not a distinct personality but a comprehensive notion of the fertility-urges inherent in Nature as applied, mainly but not exclusively, to food-plants. It began, approximately, with the 8th century. This "centralization" or syncretization apparently possessed a great appeal for the populace, because small *Inari* shrines multiplied rapidly. Yet "*Inari*" remained vague, and to begin with we hear nothing of the foxes which were to become his main symbol.

A definite single figure, however, and the possessor of foxes, becomes visible in the legend of the early days of Minamoto Yoritomo (1147—1199), the future *shōgun*, at a time when he was still in exile at Hirugashima in Izu (1160). "A fox-messenger of *Inari*" appeared to him, predicting his future rise and that Kamakura would be the scene of his glory. No nexus between *Inari* and Rice is shown, but well between *Inari* and a prophet of the Warrior. He still takes on the rôle of the lancebearing *Ōkuni-nushi*. As late as the 13th century we find him to be the patron of sword-smiths, because he personally assisted one Sanjō Kokaji Munechika in forging a mighty sword for the emperor, Ichijō. Since Ichijō reigned from 987 to 1011, this is clearly a revival of some legend which, it is contended, caused that in A. D. 1246 the original three little shrines on the three eminences were removed,²⁸ and combined into one more majestic building at a spot where *Inari*, to try the sharpness of Munechika's weapon, had cleft a rock with it. The legend explains that the smith used to take the clay for his "packings" from the hills in question, and to worship at the shrines.²⁹

²⁸ Cf. page 14, the "removal" to Kōbō Daishi's temple.

²⁹ The story forms the theme of a well-known *Nō*-play, "*Kokaji*". Sanjō-no Kokaji Munechika, said to have lived from 963 to 1033 in Kyoto (Sanjō district) is connected with another legend, having to do with the equally phallic divinity of the *Gion* shrine, (See Note 34, 2) at whose festival in July are still drawn in procession huge and elaborate cars (*hoko*) surmounted by sundry fertility emblems. Munechika's only daughter fell dangerously ill, and no medicines or spells helped, so that everybody gave up the hope for her recovery. The father then concluded that only divine protection could avail; and with his most earnest prayers he made a vow to the god of *Gion* to donate a halberd of finest

To this day, *Inari* remains the protector of sword-smiths and cutlers; but we know that all over the world the sword, as a symbol, is connected with fertility³⁰ and with the soul. *Inari*, in this respect and in this story, takes the place of the Dragon (of fertility) who long before him, in A. D. 806, helped another sword-smith, Shinsoku, to forge another extraordinary blade.

Since sword-smiths used the bellows, *Inari* was by them worshipped at the *Fuigo-no matsuri*, the Bellows Festival, held on the 8th day of the 11th Moon. Originally a smith's festivity, it was later extended to the home, and became the day of the Kitchen-deity (as hearth-fire), *Hettsui-no Kami*. *Inari*, thus, is also the patron of creative fire, and that may be one reason why he is so popular with the lower-class women. "By extension and inversion, *Inari* has become the patron of firemen, whom he protects against the perils of the conflagrations they combat." Interesting, as showing the nexus between fire and fertility, is the saga that the first bellows were discovered under an orange-tree, having come down from heaven. The orange is a "life-fruit" in Japanese as in Mediterranean myths.

*

In these and other stories *Inari* is conceived as a man — sometimes youthful, sometimes old and bearded, but always vigorous. Yet in the popular imagination *Inari* is far more frequently a girl! As a young woman, *Inari* does not impersonate one of his feminine com-

workmanship to the shrine, as a token of lasting gratitude, should his daughter get well again. Miraculously she was soon restored to her former health, and Munechika thereupon with utmost care and diligence made a wonderful *naginata*, as a memorial offering. This, it is said, was carried atop the processional *Naginata Hoko* until 1675, when it was replaced by an imitation one, which is still in the van at the festival.

³⁰ Through the lightning-thunder-rain triad, but also through more occult death-and-resurrection conceptions. The mythological smith of Japan was *Amatsumara-no Mikoto*, which means the Heavenly-standing Phallus Deity; if I am not mistaken, the smiths of ancient Rome had a phallus over the door to their forge, as a "shop-sign".

ponents, but suggests a resurrection of the same idea which created *Inada-hime*, Princess Rice-field, the Producer whom *Susa-no Ō* encountered and delivered from the eight-headed *orochi* dragon, on his arrival in Izumo. This is one of the basic myths of Japan. The Storm-god discovered an ancient couple on the river-bank, bewailing the loss of their eighth and last daughter. *Inada*, whom the snake-dragon would come to devour that very evening. *Susa-no Ō* recommended them to brew plenty of *sake*, as already mentioned, and to erect certain fences before whose openings eight *sake*-tubs should be placed. The *orochi* drank heavily, fell asleep, and the god cut off its heads, and hacked the body to pieces, when in the tail he found a heavenly sword. For better protection, he had previously transformed *Inada* into a comb — possibly the toothed apparatus through which the rice stalks are pulled to separate the grains — and when the danger was over, he married her.

The Izumo myth is replete with life-and-death allegories; but the idea of continued fertility even after danger of extinction is dominating. In a less pronounced form we find the same theme in local legends which have not acquired such extension. In all of them the "fertility embodiment" is a woman, usually a virgin. The same type of myth exists all over the world. Quite possibly the "*Inada* personality" persisted in the mind of the uneducated masses, as a new embodiment of *Inari*.

Rather than a division into a male and a female deity giving rice, based on the (Chinese) duality of the *yin-yang* (or *in-yō* in Japanese), which never played an important part in Japan, we could rightly suppose the male *Inari* to be the actual, immanent Spirit of the rice-plant, while the female *Inari* would be the Energy procreative of the plant. The two concepts would very well accord, and together form a single Deity of the Rice, somewhat like body and mind. It is decidedly not a pair of *Inari*; the deity is rather of undefined sex, once appearing as a male, again as a female, according to one's personal fancy or specific circumstances. *Inari* was and is a "plebeian" divinity, simply *embodying* the plant; and this may be the explan-

ation why *Inari* never became an "official" deity. All ritualistic observances are still made to *Toyo-ūke-bime*, the goddess who gives the plant, the food. Yet we must note that the final *Inari*-lore retains nothing of the death-and-resurrection aspect which pertains to some of his or her ancestors, and which is so generally encountered in vegetation myths.

By considering *Inari* to be a plant fairy, perhaps with a male "superior" or spiritual soul and a female "inferior" or material soul,³¹ we might also explain the foxes which for the last nine hundred years or so have accompanied *Inari*. Unadulterated *Shintō* gods use occasional messengers, but have no regular "familiar".³² The latter belong to what corresponds to our fairies, and are essentially Taoistic. That Taoist lore entered Japan in early times is acknowledged.

It has been suggested that one of *Uga*'s names was *Miketsu Uga-no Mitama*, and that the *mi-ketsu*, implying his character as "Food Deity",³³ was by the uneducated understood to mean *mi-kitsune*, Three Foxes! Hence the Food-divinity became the Fox-divinity. The three foxes were his companion, his steed, his messenger.³⁴ — All such deductions remain speculative because in those good old days people hardly wrote, and when they wrote chose whatever interpretation they fancied. The meaning of a word, however, can only be gauged by its ideogram. The explanation is not impossible, and might even echo the very infiltration of Taoistic fairy-lore with its transcendental animals. Yet I consider it unlikely, and at best applicable to

³¹ Many *Shintō* gods, like Taoist men, were provided with a *nigimi-tama*, a soft soul, and an *arami-tama*, a rough one. Cf. *Okuni-nushi* and the god of *Miwa*, Note 19.

³² As have, for instance, all Egyptian gods.

³³ Compare with *Ō-getsu (bime)* mentioned before. *Mi*, august; *ō*, great, honourable.

³⁴ Another version applies the same circumstances to that son of *Susa-no Ō* whom the Sun-goddess sent to earth as a herald, and whose proper name was *Tome*. He had many other, more honorific appellations, and one of them was *Tome Miketsu-no Kami*. Foxes, of old, were often called *tome*; *mi* means either august or three, and the confusion between *ketsu* and *kitsu(ne)* helped as in the former case, so that the god became the Fox of Three Foxes!

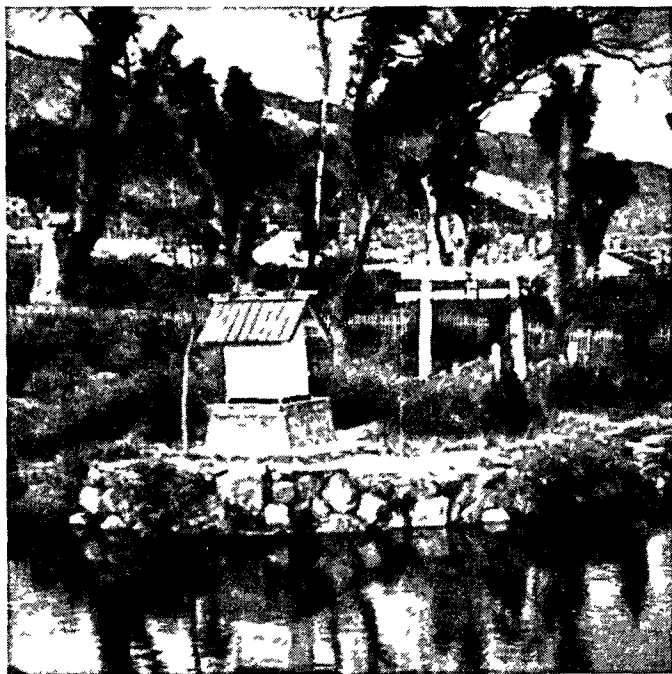
secondary phases of *Inari*-lore. As a matter of fact in the rare legends where *Inari* appears in person, he does so without the fox.³⁵

The people pray, before the little shrine, to the spirit whose abode it is, and of which they form no clear picture. But with the corner of the eye they very much also invoke the two *kitsune* (not three), the guardians and messengers, the minions of the law who can make or mar the magistrate's ukase. The *Inari* foxes are always shown with oversize ears, frequently painted red inside: they hear everything and know everything, and because they act as intermediaries, yet are shifty beasts and cannot be entirely relied upon, they are far more important, in a way, than the principal. How venerated white foxes were is illustrated by the fact that when a nobleman, Fujiwara Nakasue, accidentally killed one, he was exiled to Shikoku for his crime — as recorded in the *Hyaku Renshō*.

This vague conception of an *Inari* — by some supposed to be the deified human discoverer and first cultivator of the rice plant! — has at any rate become the popular divinity of Rice. One of his emblems is a snake guarding a bale of the valuable grain. Snakes — *Ikazuchi* of *Miwa*! — in the Orient as in the Occident are the custodians of wealth, and food is the original wealth of a community, making for contentment and preventing death. They kill the rats in their rôle as destroyers . . . But snakes have also to do with progeny, with the soul, with death and resurrection.

Indirectly, therefore, *Inari* has become a god of riches in any form or manner, especially also in clinking cash. While he receives extraordinary veneration from the farmers, his popularity is as high among the traders, and all-surpassing among the professional entertainers of any kind. Hence the numerous little shrines, not only in the back-yards of the peasants' homes and in the gardens of the wealthy, but in nooks and corners of the city's business sections, even

³⁵ The few non-Buddhist representations of *Inari* and Foxes which have come to my notice, whether painted or sculpted, are modern, probably not even intended for Japanese. *Inari* is soil-grown *Shintō*, however rambling, and *Shintō* knows no holy images. A Buddhist embodiment of the *Inari* figure is very rare.



Courtesy of Mr. V Sokolovsky, Kobe

Fig. 2. Small "local" *Inari* near Kobe

atop banks and department stores, and without fail in each and every place of amusement. Probably few of the speculators at the rice- or stock-exchange would venture upon the operations of the day without having first paid their devotions to *Inari-sama*. No actor, *geisha*, prostitute will start the day's work without praying to *Inari*; and in practically every small shop one will find, in some corner of the shelves but plainly visible, the miniature shrine with its two foxes. *Inari*, as giver of food and wealth, is worshipped by high and low alike, by Shintoists and Buddhists without distinction.³⁶

³⁶ It is said that a considerable impulse was given to the *Inari* worship by

Not so many years ago, when the train approached the big *Inari* shrine between Fushimi and Kyoto, one could see every passenger in the third class, and many of the "superior" ones in the second, stand up, face the building, and clap their hands loudly a few times before engaging in a short prayer . . .

But *Inari* is frequently appealed to also as a protector during voyages: he is still a Road-deity, as was *Saruta-hiko*, and therefore his little sanctuaries will be found along the highways and byways. And it is probably as a sequence to the Road-god's interception of evil that *Inari* is furthermore venerated as a god of Healing. As the successor to sundry phallic deities he is especially invoked by those suffering from venereal disease . . .

*

The *Inari* shrines are always small in comparison to others, and if some buildings within the enclosure are proportionately large, it will be found that the holiest one retains its diminutiveness. Not infrequently the building will be but a strong, well-roofed shed with latticed sides and a large "window" opening in front, behind which, on a tallish socle, will stand the sheltered miniature of the perfectly finished actual shrine. The "public" *Inari* are usually completely coated red — *tan-nuri* — the colour of vitality, such as we find in the *Kasuga* shrine (Nara) and in the *Gion* and *Gamo* temples (Kyoto) or the *Kurama* one (in the hills north of Kyoto), where, however, the walls are of white plaster.³⁷ The "superstructure" of the roof

non-farming classes in about the *Temmei* era (1780—1800), when one Tanuma Shume-no-kami attained an exalted position owing to his devotion to this god.

³⁷ All of them are connected with phallicism; yet their buildings show strong Buddhist characteristics (*Ryōbu-Shintō*). 1) *Kasuga-no miya*, founded in A.D. 767, is dedicated to several divinities (as usual in *Shintō*), with *Ame-no Koyane* as principal, a god connected with the "rock-door" of the Heavenly Cave into which the Sun-goddess retired; he was the ancestor of the Nakatomi (Fujiwara) family, main *Shintō* ritualists and great opponents of Buddhism. 2) *Gion*, also called *Gion-no yasbiro*: the principal ones are at Kyoto and Nagasaki; I do not think there are other important ones. The original *Gion-ji* of Kyoto is said to

may, however, be black, and the "faces" of certain timbers white. The colouring evidently depends more on personal preference than on any ritual differentiation. Smaller shrines, and those set up in the house, often remain untinted, in accordance with the fundamental architecture of *Shintō*, which should be of natural, whitish timber.³⁸

The *Inari* style is not rigidly fixed, but no type (leaving out Fushimi for the present) shows more than a minor Buddhist inflexion in such details as ornamental metal-plaques and some carvings underneath the eaves. As a rule, the body of the shrine is of the plainest:

have been dedicated to *Yakushi*, the Healing Buddha, and *Kwannon*, the Merciful: its name is actually the appellation of the park (*Jêtavana Vihâra*) presented to Buddha by Anâthâpindaka for a monastery. But in A. D. 656, already, a *Ryōbu-Shintō* temple is said to have been erected within the precincts, in honour of *Susa-no Ō*, to whose worship was associated *Inada-hime*! Since then the name *Gion* has been applied to *Ryōbu-Shintō* temples in which these two deities are worshipped, and which therefore correspond to the pure *Shintō Yasaka-jinja*. (*Gion* again succours against disease of the sexual organs.) 3) *Shimo-Gamo*, on the outskirts of Kyoto city, and *Kami-Gamo*, north of it, date from A. D. 677: the former is especially connected with vegetation (*Aoi* festival!), the latter with a legend involving a virgin, *Tama-yori Hime*, a red arrow floating down the *Kamo-gawa* (*Ōkuni-nushi*?), and a resultant supernatural son who transformed himself into a thunderbolt. *Kamo, gamo*, is the wild duck, symbol of conjugal life, progeny. 4) *Kurama* is said to mean Saddle Horse (*kura-uma*), the steed which a fleeing prince is related to have left there. Doubtful etymology: it could very well be a contraction of *kuro-yama*, the Black Mountain, as it is overgrown with tall, dark cryptomerias. A Buddhist temple erected in 770 is dedicated to *Bishamon-ten* (*Vâsuvana*), a martial figure; yet it is connected with snake-lore! It possibly converted some older place of worship, since *Kurama-yama* is especially connected with the *Tengû*, Nature-goblins of bird-and-man shape, or provided with exceptionally long noses. As said, the entire district north of Kyoto is particularly fertile in phallic legends and customs.

³⁸ With the exception of the oldest and most sacred *Shintō* shrines, and some built since the *Shintō*-revival of post-feudal days, almost all show strong Buddhist influence in their architecture. Under the *Ryōbu-Shintō* combination, Buddhism had the upper hand. There are, however, a few *Shintō* shrines of more archaic construction — *nagare* and *irimoya zukuri* — in the North and North-East regions of Japan, which are also of the red *tan-nuri*; their gods all belong to the *Susa-no Ō/Ōkuni-nushi* circle! Those ill-proportioned, fanciful, multichrome sanctuaries best represented by the *Nikko fane*, and which are made of so much for advertising purpose, are the most un-Japanese buildings extant: they are a weird concoction of Buddhist outlines smothered in transmuted Hindu carvings, and tinted in Taoist rainbow-hues. Irrespective of their "memorial" purpose according to *Shintō*, they have absolutely nothing in common with *Shintō* architecture.

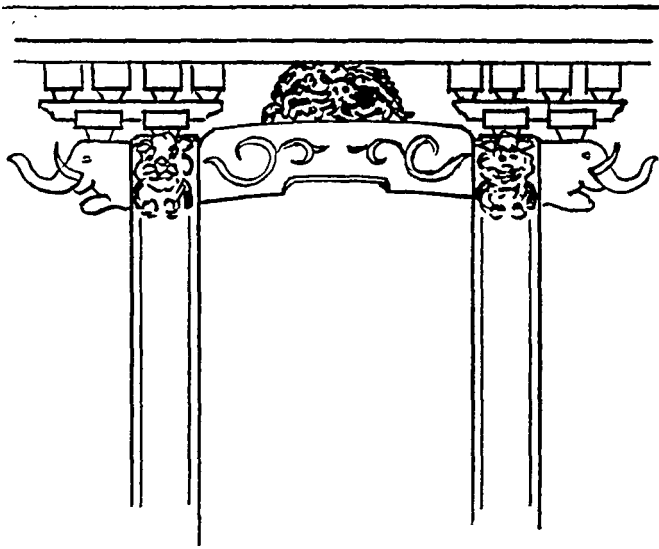


Fig. 3. The "Porch" arrangement of the common modern *Inari* shrine

a box, whose four rounded or square pillars are prolonged through the floor to form rather high supports. The walls are of wooden boards applied internally, so that the pillars remain visible, and the front one has a double door, which, however, is not opened. A step below the "floor" will be a platform, again on posts that in turn prolong upwards in the form of a "porch", as an added support for the roof. All the posts, as a rule, are set into a frame of thick timbers, laid across stones embedded in the ground. Fundamentally, therefore, the *Inari* shrine follows the oldest building style, known as *Shinmei* (Divinity), as used in the age of the gods: sober yet impressive. This artless type, however, is nowadays only used for "home sanctuaries" set up by the orthodox believer. Most *Inari* shrines, large or small, show some of the later elegance introduced by Buddhism; but they are never extreme, and always remain well proportioned. We may thus say that, generally, they belong to the

more dignified style known as *Nagare* (flowing), which is still archaic enough *Shintō*.³⁹ Usually, especially in the later *Inari* types, a series of high steps will lead up to the platform — the risers sometimes embellished with gilt and engraved metal-strips — and the latter will extend into two balconies, provided with balustrades, to right and left. The balconies will again be supported by several more slender posts ending, above the railing, into the well-known “jewel-knobs”.

All *Inari* shrines are essentially recognizable by a very heavy roof of bark, thatch or shingles, over visible beams and rafters. (In small shrines the shingles are reproduced in the carved wooden roof.)⁴⁰ The gable-ends are generally on the sides, and the frontal incline, slightly curved, is far longer than the rear one, thus quite overhanging the slender building. If the gables are front and back, there may be an extra roof projecting from below the front gable. The ridge, covered lengthwise with a flat beam, will probably show the pairs of flat “end horns” known as *chigi* and typical of *Shintō* shrines, and the “cigar-shapes” across the creast, the *katsugi*. Frequently there are also two horizontal projections just below the *chigi*, with thickening upward bend, and distinctly suggestive of a Japanese halberd (*naginata*). Of obscure origin and apparently not archaic, they are known as *tombō*, “dragon-flies”.

A large carved “jewel” with streamers is the usual final within the acute gable of the later type building. The two square pillars which form the “porch” are joined by a delicately swung cross-piece

³⁹ I believe that no regular *Inari* presents the bulging *Irimoya* roof, or the multiple intersecting roofs, found in later *Ryōbu-Shintō* styles. — Some short *résumés* on the different types of buildings may be found in “*Shintō and its Architecture*” by Aisaburo Akiyama, Kyoto, 1936 (Japan Welcome Society), and in “*Japanese Architecture*” by Prof. Hideto Kishida, Tokyo, 1935 (Tourist Library No. 7); possibly also in Laske, “*Architektur und Kultbauten Japans*” and Sadler, “*A Short History of Japanese Architecture*”, both unknown to me. Most foreign books refer only to Buddhist and Home architecture, and do less than glance at *Shintō*.

⁴⁰ Where up-to-date police regulations forbid such inflammable material, copper-sheeting imitating shingles will be preferred to tiles, which are purely Buddhistic.

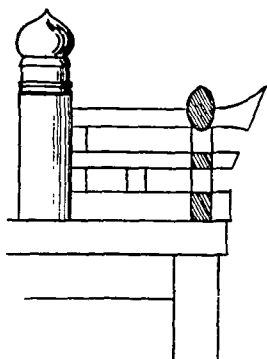


Fig. 4. Phallic post and balustrade arrangement of a modern *Inari* shrine

which ends in two elephant-heads projecting sideways, while two lion-heads and paws will balance them to the front. The curve is surmounted by a coiled dragon forming a semi-circle. The old type shows none of these decorations, which appear simply as stylistic influences of Buddhism, without direct nexus with the *Inari* lore. A few piled brackets are inserted as intermediaries to uphold the main crossbeam. As in all true Japanese architecture, no nails are used: tenons and mortises do full duty, with an occasional peg for solidity.

*

On the frontal platform, to each side of the door, will probably sit two foxes. Above them, attached underneath the roof, will be a large jingle-bell with thick rope, which the devoted may pull so that the bell's noise prepares the god for the invocation to come. Else he will have to clap his hands. *Shintō* rather insists that the gods are not all the time waiting for man's convenience, although willing to appear at shortest notice.

The most evident sign that the shrine is a popular one belonging to *Inari* is the quantity of small, red *torii* of simple style before it, often with even smaller ones planted here and there in the neigh-

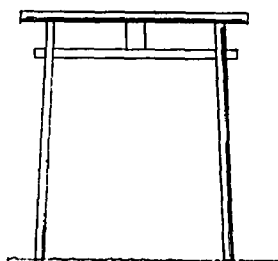


Fig. 5. Archaic *Inari torii*

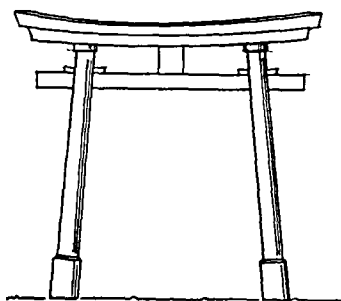


Fig. 6. Usual *Inari torii*

bourhood. All of them are vermillion red (with the topmost "roof" and the lowest part of the posts sometimes black), and frequently they are so close together and so numerous as to form a real tunnel of approach, just high enough to walk through it upright. They are more or less well finished, according to the donor's pocketbook, as they are all gifts in appreciation of the god's having fulfilled a fervent wish. Some of them are hardly more than artlessly assembled poles. Basically they should have round uprights (*hashira*) slightly leaning inwards and standing on circular or octagonal feet (*kamebara*). The uprights should be surmounted by circular plates (*daiwa*) on which the crossbeam is placed, and the latter consists of two parts, a flattish upper *kasagi* with slight peak, and a shorter, squared

lower *shimagi*, both welded together. Their projection is normal, and the upward curve but gentle. Underneath, again somewhat shorter but still projecting, is a square cross-piece (*nuki*), held in place by prominent wedges (the *kusabi*). The outline, therefore, belongs to *Ryōbu-Shintō*. In the centre, linking the two beams, there should be, but often is not, the "tablet" (*gakuzuka*) also due to Buddhist influence. — Superstition has it that if one throws a pebble onto the *kasagi* of a tallish *torii*, and it stays, one's formulated wish will be granted, or one will be favoured with general good fortune. You can try as often as you like . . .

At the small but favourite Anamori⁴¹ (or Haneda) *Inari*, near Ōmori, Tokyo, there are literally thousands of *torii* in the grounds. At the Fushimi *Inari* there are so many that the original alley became too long, and a second one winds around it, the space between being also littered with *torii*. Thousands more are strewn over the hills. A queer explanation is given for the origin of these *torii* agglomerations. If a fox can jump over a *torii*, he will gain high rank in the fox-world and be able to perform powerful magic. Which may be good for him, but unpleasant for man. Therefore, as a protection, man erects so many such hurdles in close succession that even the finest athlete among the beasts no longer attempts the feat! . . . In the days when men's eyes were as yet unspoiled, it is also said, people went to see foxes trying to jump a *torii*, and some of them became so enthused that they attempted to do likewise. On returning home, their families would take fright at them and cry out, "Oh! a fox is coming!", and with this good augury the jumper would then hasten to build a shrine to *Inari* and erect many small *torii* before it . . .

Several other *Inari* claim national prominence — like the one at Yoshida on the Tōkaidō, considered second only to the one at Fushimi — but offer no particular interest, with the exception of the one at Kamakura, whose messenger visited Yoritomo in A. D.

⁴¹ *Ana-mori* would indicate a "copse" full of "holes", or a sacred hole within it!

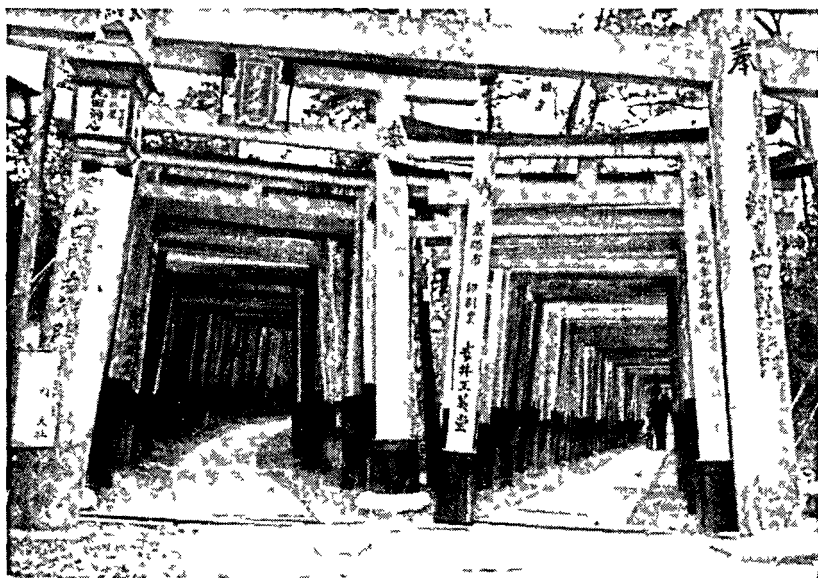


Fig 7. Alleys of *torii* at the Fushimi Inari. Gifts with inscriptions of donor's name, date etc

1160.⁴² Although of insignificant appearance, the shrine is said to have been famous ever since its foundation by Fujiwara-no Kamatari in the middle of the 7th century! It was, indeed, a mysterious white fox which appeared to this exalted personage and showed him the spot where he should bury his *kama*, or sickle — evidently some sort of homonymical magic, Kamatari meaning “Sickle-foot” — but rice is cut with the sickle! — whence the village is later said to have taken its name, *Kama-kura*, the Sickle Storehouse . . .

The same *Inari* appeared to Yoritomo's son, the third *shōgun*, Sanetomo, in the guise of a venerable old man, and advised him to re-establish the temple *Jōmyōji*, or *Gokurakuji* as it was then called. The work was begun in 1212 and the temple lavishly provided for.

⁴² See page 22.

I fail to see that it did Sanetomo much good: after a perturbed but unimportant span of hardly seven years he was assassinated when only 28 years of age. With him died the short line of Minamoto *shōgun*. Tradition asserts, nevertheless, that whenever "the ghostly animal" makes an appearance, it still heralds good fortune to the *Jōmyōji*.

In honour of the *Inari* god, Yoritomo, soon after arriving at Kamakura, offered him a picturesque little shrine in the Sasuke valley, in the hills at whose foot he later erected the Great Buddha. Behind it is a small, rocky cave beneath the roots of magnificent old trees — and a long procession of red *torii* marks this as the home of the mystic fox!

*

The Fushimi *Inari* near Kyoto, which indisputably claims first place and is in a way the parent shrine of all the myriads of lesser ones, always enjoyed a special position. The "*Inari-jinja*" already figures eighth among the twentytwo important shrines mentioned in the *Engishiki*.⁴³ With a revival of *Shintō* after the *Meiji* Restoration, in May 1871, it was declared to be of the "superior" *Kampei* grade of *Taisha* (State shrine). It is usually referred to as *Inari-no Yashiro*.⁴⁴ The present numerous buildings, which include a *kagura* stage (for the holy dance) and halls for prayer and votive offerings, are said to have been erected in 1589 by order of Tyotomi Hideyoshi, and renovated in 1822 by Tokugawa Iyenari. They are built in mixed but ostentatious styles of *Ryōbu-Shintō*, and not at all typical of the innumerable lesser shrines.

Special favours may here be acquired by the fervent if he make the "circuit of the hills", *o-yama-meguri*, visiting the thirteen sub-

⁴³ A book on the "Ceremonies of the *Engi* Era" (901—922), written in 927 by two Fujiwara Court-nobles, Tokihira and Tadahira.

⁴⁴ Shrine, Holy. Our word shrine is represented by many terms — *miya*, *jinja*, *jingū* being most common — and one or the other usually receives preference for a peculiar deity, although no fixed rule exists.



Courtesy of Fushimi Shrine Office

Fig. 8. *Torii* along the mountain circuit at Fushimi

ordinate shrines distributed on the elevation behind, and connected by a winding road.⁴⁵ Any number of *torii* may be seen everywhere. The pilgrimage is sometimes referred to as *hōra-meguri*, "circuit of the caves", because of the many fox-holes along the path. A few choice ones, with sacred boulders surrounding them, are known as *o-samba*, the honourable midwife, as they are supposed to be the places in which the holy vixens give birth to their young! "To do the mountain", *o-yama-suru*, is particularly advantageous on any Horse or on any Serpent day, throughout the year, and crowds of people may then be found marching over the couple of miles of the *hōra-meguri*.

For the people of Kyoto district, the Fushimi shrine's main festival is thus a prominent affair, including a procession with *Inari*'s "godly

⁴⁵ One Japanese authority says that there are "several thousand petty shrines" scattered over the area. I did not check.

cart" which is famed for its decorations in silver, gold, copper and iron. On the first Horse-day of the second Moon, the god is taken for a vacation to his *Otabi-dokoro* (a sort of country-residence) in the district of Kujō, near the temple of *Tōji* of Kōbō Daishi fame. Thence he only returns the following month, on a day of the Hare.⁴⁶ The "cart" and the conveyances of the secondary gods are followed by a crowd of specially attired attendants bearing banners and lanterns and *sakaki* trees (the holy tree of *Shintō*), swords and lances and bows and arrows. Quite a material array — clearly harking back to the *Ōkuni-nushi* lore with its phallic spear and arrow.

Considering the deity's importance it is natural that its feast-day be one of the earliest in the year: also, the second moon corresponded to approximately March, and was the beginning of spring. But all Horse-days are highly propitious for prayer to *Inari*.⁴⁷ In some localities there was a special Children's *Inari* Festival, *kodomo Inari*, on one of the early Horse-days, when, evidently, blessings were called down on growing humanity instead of future crops.⁴⁸ As *Inari* was the healer, he was the health-preserver.

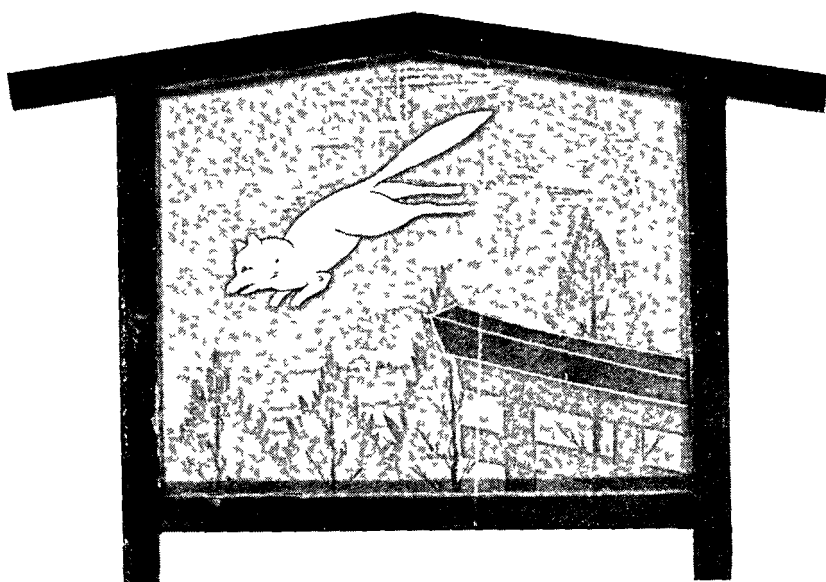
Usually, however, *Inari* festivals are not so elaborate, most shrines being of too restricted local significance. The date varies according to the place, but the preferred one is everywhere a Horse-day. Apart from the general bustling of the district, with everybody in gayest attire, there will be an endless beating of drums, day and night. The community will be too poor for a *mikoshi*, or sacred palanquin, and for a regular *kagura* dance; but the villagers themselves may per-

⁴⁶ The days, like the months and years, were swayed by the twelve animals of the (Chinese) zodiac: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Serpent, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Cock, Dog, Boar.

It would go too far to thoroughly correlate *Inari*'s connection with the Horse (white = sun, black = thunder-clouds), with the Hare (of fertility) and with the Snake. Suggestions will present themselves immediately to the ethnologically inclined reader. There is not much difference between East and West in this respect.

⁴⁷ Early in June, about, horse-races were held near the Fushimi shrine! The big rains start in mid-June.

⁴⁸ Incidentally, in the oldest invocations, or *norito*, humanity is always compared to grass.



The Ethnographical Museum of Sweden, Stockholm Stolpe coll

Fig. 9. *Inari* fox jumping over a torii. Votive painting

form some rollicking posturing on a rude stage, mountebanks and jugglers will enliven the day as thoroughly as at the Big *Yashiro*, itinerant vendors and fortune-tellers put fresh life into the village, and everybody will feel as happy as Puck, including *Inari* who, if circumstances do not permit, does not insist on the *villeggiatura*, and loves his parishioners nevertheless.

In the evening there will be a general illumination of the streets, and in prominent places will stand groups of large cloth banners with inscriptions: donations of guilds or wealthy individuals. Of old, the houses were also decked with dolls and figures. These latter undoubtedly were parallel evolutions of the scapegoat: *Shintō* also knew the puppet that took away the sin of person or community, and the image which, correspondingly, received and stored blessings.

They played a major rôle in several spring purifications⁴⁹; I also refer to the *O-Ichi* deity subordinately adored at Fushimi. The flags are clearly a sign of Buddhist intrusion: true *Shintô* knew them not — they were brought as prophylactic magic from India. By fluttering in the wind, they scare devils and put them to flight, thus “purifying the air”. They formed a conspicuous part of the earlier temple-accessories, and their survival is found in sundry draperies and metal pendants. As *Shintô* followed the same idea with its wisps of fern and paper attached to the *shimenawa* (sacred straw-rope), it was easy to change over to the more lively banners for certain popular festivals. At the *kodomo Inari*, similarly, it was customary for the children to offer any number of little paper-flags to the shrine: yellow and red ones, blue and white ones, inscribed with the name of *Inari* and perhaps a line of praise. Glued to short sticks, they were planted in the grounds all around *Inari-sama*, and presented quite a gay picture.⁵⁰

We need not go into the symbolism of fire which, whether represented by torches or lamps, is again universal. Paper lanterns are common to all Japanese festivals. But those for *Inari* are peculiar, and of two kinds. The hanging ones (*chôchin*) are sometimes round, but more usually and typically cylindrical and very long, often extremely narrow, with a broad metal or laquered wood border at top and bottom. Both kinds frequently bear heavy black inscriptions set off with red, and are ornamented with “jewel” forms. The cylindrical type I believe frankly suggestive of a phallus.⁵¹ The standing lanterns (*tôro*) consist of a wooden frame, quadrilateral but slightly narrower at the bottom than at the top, the paper-lined panels sometimes elaborately latticed, and surmounted with a gabled wooden roof.

⁴⁹ Best known the Girl's Doll Festival, in the third month, which has completely lost its original meaning of a scape-goat sacrifice.

⁵⁰ Such miniature flags are also offered to a few other deities, including *Shôten*, the phallic *Ganesha*-elephant of Japan. Originally they were certainly meant to have one's ill-fortune, transferred to them, blown to all the winds, scattered.

⁵¹ Odawara, near Kamakura, is famed for similar collapsible lanterns, and an impotent man is jokingly referred to as an *Odawara chôchin*.



Courtesy of Fushimi Shrine Office

Fig. 10. Romon = "Tower gate" to Fushimi Inari showing complete Buddhist influence

Perched on a tall post, all the woodwork is painted red — except for the roof, which is black — giving them a quite distinctive aspect. As far as I am aware, similar lanterns are only further used with the rare *Gion* shrines,⁵² whose woodwork, as we have seen, is also invariably coloured a full, glaring red.

The hanging lanterns as well as the more "festive" square ones will show the heavy-shanked *Swastika*, which is distinctly an emblem of Buddha, yet will also be found on the outhouses of the *Inari*. The striking fact is that Japan does not seem to have known this design as a symbol of the forces of Nature; it is therefore hard to guess how it became *Inari's* crest.⁵³ But far more interesting than the

⁵² See Note 37.

⁵³ Archaic Japan is poor in any kind of linear symbolism. The universally distributed *Swastika*, when it becomes the emblem of *Inari*, has such broad shanks that the spaces between them are but slits.

Swastika lanterns are those *tōro* whose sides will show comical pictures of not too refined a taste, or verses and mottoes which are quite Aretinian. This feature is fast disappearing; I do not doubt that it was already an improvement over former more racy customs, which Buddhistic decorousness abolished just as Western influence now destroys feudal habits. The salacious exhibition of nudity,⁵⁴ obscene drawings, and the singing of ribald songs have everywhere been a feature of early fertility rites based on phallicism.

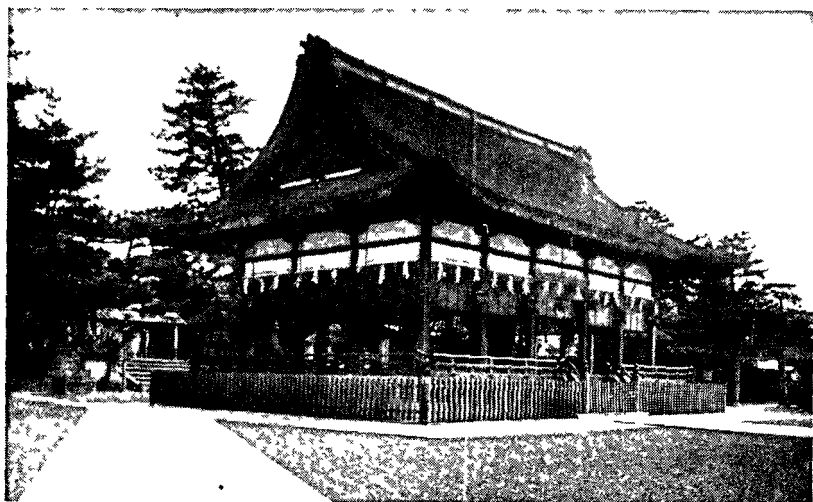
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Highly important in the *Inari* worship, as may be guessed, are the Foxes, his "messengers" or "familiars": they play a far greater rôle in the popular comprehension of this homage than the god or goddess. Ancient records of the Fushimi *Inari* are said to explain how they became employed as messengers by the Rice-god. It seems that in the very early times there was an old white fox with a big, thick tail, and an old vixen with the head of a deer.⁵⁵ These two animals asked that they might be made gods, and their so modest wish was granted ... Whereupon they became the messengers of *Inari* ...

As noted, a pair of foxes will invariably keep guard at the shrine. It has been suggested that they replace the Buddhist "lions" (*shishi*) or "Korean dogs" (*Koma-inu*) found in front of temples, and now supposed, after some vicissitudes in their interpretation, to keep off evil spirits. That may be, as regards their emplacement, and would simply add one more Buddhist facet, muted, to the *Inari* worship. Like the lions, the foxes always sit on rectangular pedestals (of varying height), sometimes ornamented

⁵⁴ Cf. *Uzume's* meeting with *Saruta-hiko*, page 18; in her cave-dance she behaved a good deal worse.

⁵⁵ It is impossible to here go into the vast deer-lore, connected with Sun and Life, and with the Cosmos Tree through the branching horns. As composite animals are hardly known in autochthonous myths, I presume this legend not to be too old and influenced by Chinese concepts.



Courtesy of Fushimi Shrine Office

Fig. 11. Haiden = Prayer Hall at Fushimi Inari

with flaming jewels. Remarkable is the fact that at Fushimi two huge stone foxes flank the main gate of the *haiden* (oratory), while the verandah of the actual shrine is protected by two *Koma-inu*, gilt and with bright blue and green hair! But then, the Fushimi *Inari* is a thing in itself, too closely situated near the old Imperial Court which had been completely buddhified. As a rule there are no lions at all, or they act in a very secondary capacity.⁵⁸ It is the pair of foxes that are *Inari's* intimate vassals. At the larger shrines, for instance those of villages, they will sit between the *torii* and the building, and nearer the latter; at the smaller, far more numerous ones, they will sit right on the platform. They are always white: of whitish stone if large, of white porcelain if small. The colour undoubtedly symbolizes their spirituality: according to Chinese belief, very old real foxes — five hundred or eight hundred years

⁵⁸ As on the pillars, where the elephant and dragon are just as prominent.

old — turn white and become supernaturally gifted. In China, even more than in Japan, the fox is one of the most potent animal spectres.

While in popular appreciation the "lion" takes no religious part whatever, to the farmer, the *geisha*, the shop-keeper, *Inari* is himself the Spiritual Fox. In many a lowly home, perhaps in a corner of the kitchen,⁵⁷ will be found the two foxes, with the offertory paraphernalia but without a shrine. Although, as we shall see, fox superstition did greatly increase in about the 11th century through absorption of certain Chinese beliefs, in other respects it undoubtedly goes back to most ancient local convictions. The Chinese folklore enlarged on the mischievous, malevolent aspect of the fox; the autochthonous idea was that it was a crop-animal, and a phallic one.

Almost all races believed in some animal or other as the source of agricultural fertility, or, perhaps better said, as the medium of the plant's multiplication. By going through the fields it fructifies the standing stalks into bearing seeds a-hundred-fold. When in France, Germany, Slavonic countries, the blowing wind makes the corn move in undulations, the peasant will say that "the wolf goes through the corn". The wolf was their crop-animal, as a dog was it elsewhere, or again a pig, a hare, a cock. At times the same capacity was attributed to several animals. Not only were certain "rejuvenation" characteristics noted in animals — such as change of fur or feathers in spring — but animals were of course found in the fields at any time when the corn stood high. The vegetarian ones were naturally interested in an abundant crop; the appearance of carnivores was more suspicious: what had they to do in a corn-field? All the reader was an occult link presumed.

The habit of some wild animals, including the fox, of living in caves with narrow openings, made them even more mysterious. Caves were not only connected with the netherworld of gnomes and riches, but with death and re-birth. Souls came out of graves, as

⁵⁷ Cf. page 23, *Inari* and the hearth.



Courtesy of Fushimi Shrine Office

Fig. 12. *Mikedani* = "August Dinner-table Valley" behind Fushimi Shrine

the plant grew out of the soil; the foxes etc. could very well be re-incarnations of souls, hence have power over humans and their welfare. The soul and re-incarnation lore is too vast to be considered in this study; but we know that some ramifications influenced the belief in fertility-animals considerably. Like the soul (or the ghost), crop-animals or corn-spirits were frequently conceived as being white.

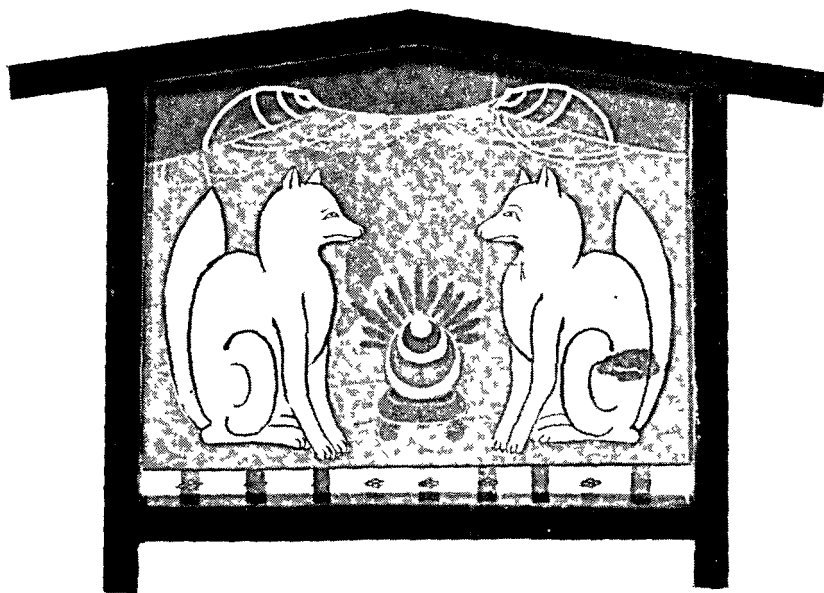
To primitive man — "primitive" is an unsatisfactory term: such primitiveness persists to our day, and primitive reasoning is by no means artless — to the man, let us say, whose logic is swayed by impressions rather than by cold analysis, by fanciful deductions rather than by ascertained facts, magical mutations of shape are as perfectly natural as are the magical yet visible changes in the weather or in growth. Hence crop-deities — usually old men or young women — if it suited their purpose, could appear to humans in the

form of animals. We have exactly the same reasoning in Japan, where *Inari* is an old man or a young woman, and appears as a fox — a white fox. The “messenger” of a deity, or his “familiar”, is but the zoomorphic form of an anthropomorphic spirit.

As a counterpart we find the general conviction in Japan — and this is the part which was more elaborated by China — that the fox, any fox, but especially an old one, can take on the shape of a beautiful woman or wise old man, can bewitch people, take possession of their living body, produce hallucinations, and even cause the death of persons it dislikes. There are several legends of feudal days where lovely but baneful concubines were nothing but transformed vixens, and many more other in which people came to grief, or were at least fooled, because they met a transformed fox, followed a fox-fire (*ignis fatuus*), or acted greedily to the detriment of a fox. Even nowadays “fox-possession” is a mental disease which claims many victims, especially women. A fox’s revenge is always feared. If the trouble-maker is a fox in the flesh, it must be killed by a brave man, as otherwise its spirit will avenge itself; if it is a spectral fox, the only help lies in strong exorcism, in a religious, spiritual “ban”.⁵⁸

I believe that the spectral and bewitching aspects of the fox — his werewolf nature, in a way — has had little to do with his rôle in the *Inari* worship. For one thing, the mischievous or goblinly fox-stories do not seem to be current in Japan before the 11th century, which the rice-fox antedates. At least they were not clearly defined, although they may have been present in embryo. They became a common belief during the later *Kamakura* period, if not even after that. But, as in so many things: it is hard to draw a line of demarcation, since the Japanese have always been fond of ascribing antiquity to usages and beliefs, and are inclined to represent as

⁵⁸ While there is some similarity between the fox and the werewolf, the usual fox-stories are rather prankish, and deaths by fox-possession are rare. The cat is far more dangerous in that respect. Yet in some legends the fox becomes a true vampire in woman’s shape.



The Ethnographical Museum of Sweden, Stockholm Stolpe coll.
Fig. 13. *Inari* foxes. Votive painting

native what was palpably taken over from China. While we must not overlook the fact that to the aboriginal Ainu the fox is one of the most powerful sorcerers, whose skull they use for divination, we also know that the Ainu did not profess agriculture (which they still only attend to in a most desultory way), so that there could hardly be a crop-animal nexus in this respect.

Inari, of course, like most other *Shintō* divinities, can himself deliver oracles by temporarily occupying a medium.

Rarely are the *Inari* foxes blamed for serious misdeeds or even disagreeable escapades. They may, perhaps, occasionally punish an evil-doer; but on the whole they just play the intermediary between man and the deity, and convey the latter's prophecies or warnings. Unless, as we have seen above, and as many people firmly believe, *Inari* himself be "the white Fox". The *Inari* fox is generally con-

sidered to be a spectral one; yet we have seen that his ilk inhabits true fox-holes, and there are stories where the white vixen was saved from hunters, and showed her gratitude by bestowing wealth, sometimes even by becoming a charming girl and the faithful wife of the rescuer. However, this does not exclude that the *Inari* fox, inasmuch as he remains a fox, is rather feared than truly revered.

At any rate *Inari-sama*, the god, is held responsible for the good behaviour of all the foxes in the land.⁵⁹ Formerly that was quite a numerous tribe, and if there are fewer actual ones to-day, the farming population is still prone to ascribe to foxes any unusual happening to man, animal or field.⁶⁰ When damage was done by

⁵⁹ A typical legend tells us how, long ago, the owner of a fine peacock found the bird killed by a fox — whereupon, extremely wroth, he demolished the little *Inari* shrine which he had in his garden. The same night the god appeared to him, simply to mention that his act had done nobody any harm. A few nights later, *Inari* again came, to inform the man this time that he had punished the real criminal. The man awoke quite perplexed, and was even more confounded the next morning when he came across the body of a dead fox in his garden. So of course he hastened to build a new shrine to the divinity.

⁶⁰ As I write this paper I hear of a typical case, if more involved than usual. An acquaintance of mine, in Kobe, received a request from some relatives in Kishū, across the bay, to visit a prominent *Inari* zealot and ask for counsel. A man and his wife, after spending almost twenty years in California as farmers, returned to Japan some ten years ago, bought ground in Kishū, and developed some "upland" near their paddy-fields. In the course of his work the husband happened to cut in two a snake in the soil. Suddenly he was taken ill and died — round sixty years old. The illness looked suspicious, and a diviner of course blamed it on the curse of the cut-up snake, to whose spirit no oblations had been made. And now, a few years after the husband's death, ill-luck would that the wife, too, became bed-ridden. She simply could no longer walk about, without feeling otherwise sick. Somebody had suggested a fox curse.

The *Inari*-god's reply was definite and distinct. The husband's death had been erroneously diagnosed as due to the snake-spirit's revenge. In the course of levelling some ground, he had also closed up a fox-hole. In that hole lived an old old Reinecke, so old he was almost hairless, and not nimble enough to escape while it was time. So he was entombed in his lair, and asphyxiated. Which he did not like: hence his revenge on the malefactor, unwitting that he was. Yet through the stupidity of the diviner, no propitiation had taken place even after that, and now the fox was harassing the widow.

The remedy: some paper charms and a few grains of sacred rice. Used according to prescriptions, they would break the fox's spell. — It takes more than twenty years in the United States to get rid of superstitions that are bred into the bones with mother's milk.



After Katherine M. Ball, *Decorative Motives of Oriental Art*

Fig. 14. *Ojisan Inari*, from a woodcut by Hokusai

these beasts of prey, whether to crops or to the barnyard, it was quite a common practice to write a letter of remonstrance to *Inari-sama*. When the deprecations were extraordinary — especially also when the sacred fowl kept at other shrines were decimated — a fence was erected around the next *Inari* shrine, so that the worshippers could not approach, “thus punishing the deity”, clearly through “loss of face” . . . No less a man than Toyotomi Hideyoshi, patron of Fushimi *Inari*, towards the end of the 16th century sent a strong note to *Inari* when one of his servants became bewitched. The letter is said to be still kept at the *Tōdaiji* at Nara, and was addressed to the Great Name Divinity of Higashiyama, Kyoto, evidently the Fushimi god himself:

"To Inari Daimyōjin

"My Lord, I have the honour to inform you that one of the foxes under your jurisdiction has bewitched one of my servants, causing her and others a great deal of trouble. I have to request that you will make minute inquiries into the matter and endeavour to find out the reason of your subject misbehaving himself in this manner, and let me know the result.

"If it turns out that the fox has no adequate reason to give for his behaviour, you are to arrest and punish him at once. If you hesitate to take action in this matter, I shall issue orders for the destruction of every fox in the land.

"Any other particulars that you may wish to be informed of in reference to what has occurred, you can learn from the High Priest, Yoshida.

"Apologizing for the imperfection of this letter, . . . etc.⁶¹

✱

Immediately apparent in the *Inari* fox images, and not at all found in Chinese lore, are their two phallic attributes; the "key" and the "jewel". I may add at once that, at the same time, no emphasis whatever is laid on the genitals, contrary, for instance, to the badger (*tanuki*), which is also a fertility animal, and never represented except with an enormous scrotum. There is no apparent reason for such restraint, which has always been (and still is) foreign to the Japanese race. Mostly both foxes are sexless, otherwise one is male, the other female.

The "key" is held between the animal's snarling lips, as if it were to defend it. Its outline may vary, in accordance with the sculptor's or caster's medium and technical requirements; but the real key shape is frequent enough not to leave any doubt on the symbol's identity. Most often it is conventionalized into a sort of

⁶¹ *Walter Dening*, "The Life of Toyotomi Hideyoshi", Tokyo, 1890.

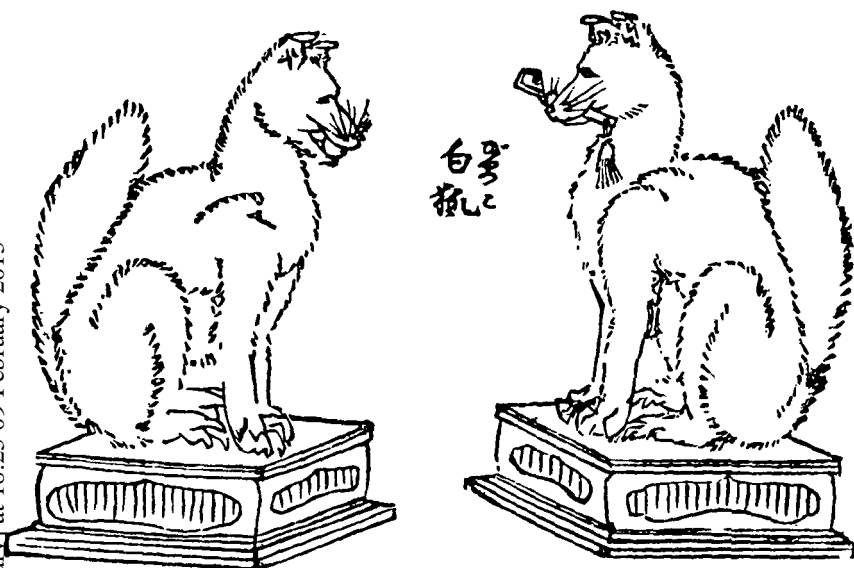


Fig. 15. Inari foxes as Temple Guardians. From a Japanese woodcut

bar, or double-headed pestle — perhaps a simplified shape of the *vâjra*.⁶² Because of the outline it is also known as a “scroll” (*maki-mono*), an ancient and common (if Chinese) emblem of Wisdom which, however, in this instance seems inappropriate. The identification is in my view purely due to a misunderstanding. Much more logical is the occasional transformation of the “key” into a round “pearl”.

Leaving out the variants, let us consider the key. Of course we must not think that all the keys look like ours: in principle a key is an instrument which, by being inserted into a hole, can remove an obstacle behind the door, so that it may be opened. Convenience

⁶² *Indra's* “diamond sceptre”, which only became an emblem of irresistible spiritual forces after having been an emblem of lightning and, quite possibly, earlier than that, in its single-pointed style, connected with the phallus cult.

dictated that it be lengthy; to ensure security, the key received certain convolutions, excisions or projections to which not only the key-hole but adjacent parts of the obstacle — usually a bolt — had to conform.⁶³ Having the right key to the door, or rather the obstruction behind it, permitted entry into the treasure-vault — Paradise.⁶⁴ The “key” was the materialized “word” which opened the portals to Life, and its possession gave Power. It may be a moot question whether the union of sex organs suggested the mechanical contrivance, or whether the latter’s function was subsequently applied to the former’s procreative consequences; but undoubtedly the two were identified at an early date,⁶⁵ and keys play a quite phallic rôle in legends all over Asia as well as in Europe. The “key” which opens the Unknown, whether Paradise or the Underworld or the Treasure-cave, is often a (phallic) bone, a child’s finger, a sacred root, a “golden” rod. Symbolically, the key almost exclusively pertains to Life-and-Death lore, whose “remote cause” it becomes, and is connected with angels and with gnomes or witches. Like all such symbols, it became an amulet against illness and evil ghosts. In *Mahâyâna* Buddhism it figures as one of the Eight Treasures — which are but older magic charms in a new attire.

⁶³ Even feudal Japanese buildings still show this arrangement. The thick bar-handle of the key has a forged iron attachment of meandrical outline (“key-pattern”!), parts of which will so enter certain notches in the bolt as to lift it, if vertical, or slide it, if horizontal. The bolt runs in clamps and simply fits into a hole. Other types were known, however, and the (Chinese) padlock, for instance, has a flat key with forepart bent at a right angle and showing an odd-shaped excision. This opening will fit around several springs and compress them, thus releasing a stem to which they are attached so that it can be pushed out.

⁶⁴ “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven”, said Jesus to Peter — since when two keys have become the symbol of the papal Vicarate of Christ. — Having the key to a problem means being able to solve it, to have access to its mysteries.

⁶⁵ It would appear that the first humans did not attribute pregnancy to sexual intercourse alone, even if they suspected a certain nexus. Interesting from the phallic standpoint is that in the Italian language a verb derived from key, *chiave*, is the current expression for *coire*, and has in turn created a noun for *coitus*. I do not know of such linguistic relationship in other languages, but almost universal is the distinction between “male” and “female” keys according to the formation of the projecting stem.

Queer is the expression "to have the key to the field", found in many agricultural parts of Europe, as being the equivalent of to cut, to bind, or to tresh the last sheaf of corn, and is attributed in sundry rites to the individual who, in the make-believe, represents the Spirit of the Corn.⁶⁶ I do not find that the Japanese have or had a similar figure of speech; but waste land is "opened", that is, cleared and made arable, as with us, and the fox-key may follow a similar basic idea. At any rate the key in the fox's jaws is now interpreted as "the key which by divine power unlocks the portal of wealth, the granary" — which is near enough.

More directly connected with crops is the animal's tail. With all crop-animals, as distinct from goblin-animals, be they bird or quadruped, the supernatural power was believed to lie in the tail. With many peoples it was customary to make votive figurines of their crop-animal with a body and tail of straw, at certain festivals, particularly after the threshing was done. Japan knows exactly the same straw-animals as sundry charms, whether for good weather or against sickness, and while a fox is no longer represented among them, as far as my knowledge goes, it is not inconceivable that a straw-fox was the precursor to the more solid image. In Japan, too, "the fox passes through the field". Parallel to European customs, the last sheaf of rice in the field may well have been compared with a fox's tail: in certain districts of Central Europe the last sheaf of corn is still known as "the fox". I have found no trace in Japan of such European harvest customs as throwing sickles at the "fox" sheaf to "cut off its tail", the winner thus "capturing the corn-spirit", who was also called "the Old Man".⁶⁷ Yet the connection of *Inari* with a sword may well be indicative of some such ritual cutting of the first or last sheaf in antiquity. In a protohistorical legend, for instance, Yamato-takeru, a prince and conqueror, cuts the grass on

⁶⁶ The primrose, of numerous poetical associations, in German is called the *Schlüsselblume*, key-flower — because it opens the fields to new fertility in spring?

⁶⁷ The underlying idea seems to have been that the corn-animal retreated from sheaf to sheaf, until held fast in the last one. — Cf. *Frazer*, "The Golden Bough".

a moor (which had been set on fire by the enemy) with the mythic sword which *Susa-no Ō* had found in the dragon, and which thenceforth was to be known as the *Kusanagi-no Tsurugi*, the Grass Moving Sword.⁶⁸ Later we find that sword and sickle are interchangeable weapons against evil spirits, as well as magical death-dealing instruments. Logically, in martial Japan the sword took precedence, especially in symbolical rites.

The tail, thus, contains the power which gives the plant its final fructification. It must have been conceived as conveying a sort of magnetic effluence, transmitted to the stalk while the crop-animal wandered through the field . . . Quite a few animals must be classed as crop-spirits in Japan, and if the fox has become the chief of them all, it may well be because it has the most magnificent "bush", which, for good measure, is of the vitalizing "red" colour.⁶⁹ The belief in this inherent potency is still so strong in Japan that people will never cut off the tail of dog or cat, because it would develop into some goblin.

Remarkable enough is that in the common parlance of most races the male organ becomes a tail (*penis*). While Japanese mythology contains nothing which directly refers to caudal rituals,⁷⁰ in the creation myth a pair of wagtails, in amorous dalliance, taught "the art of love" to the Creator-gods, *Izanagi* and *Izanami*, by the suggestive whipping of their appendices.

⁶⁸ Before he came into its possession it was called the *Ame-no Murakumo-no Tsurugi*, the Heavenly Pile of Clouds Sword, or, as I prefer, the Pile of Rain-clouds Sword. The whole hero-legend is full of death-and-life symbolism.

⁶⁹ It has been suggested that the Teutonic names Fox, Fuchs, Vos and so forth are derived from the Sanskrit *puccha*, tail. With the exception of the wolf, far more to be feared, there is probably no animal which plays such a general and mysterious part in European superstition as the fox.

⁷⁰ With the early Romans, the severed tail of a sacrificial horse became the symbol of communal blessings; certain African tribes offer the tail of an ox to obtain good crops; with the Tibetans a yak-tail is an amulet against evil and sin. We all know the Buddhist "fly-whisk" made to resemble a horse's tail: from an earlier "magic wand" of priests and magicians, Buddha made it into an instrument to drive away insects — instead of ghosts and devils . . . But in the hands of the Taoists of China it reverted to its old purpose, and at the wave of this "tail" men and gods could be transformed, and the magicians and sages could walk over water or fly through the air.

As far as the rice-fox is concerned, the tail's supernatural power took a distinctly phallic aspect: whatever the modifications of the artist's fancy, the fox-tail is never anything but a conventionalized upright phallus. From a short "stem" it sharply widens into a thick, vertical cylinder, surmounted by what is called a "jewel", the onion-shaped *tama*, often coloured red. This *tama* is undoubtedly also connected to some extent with "fire", that is, with the Sun-heat which makes plants grow and ripen. The "jewel" is the embodiment of the Fire-principle. Whence, for instance, the belief that if one steps on a fox's tail at night, by mischance, a fire will break out in the village.⁷¹

In the main, however, all over the Orient, the deeply occult conception of a jewel, or pearl, has to do with Life lore and Soul lore: partly through a further nexus with the Moon and the Ocean — both abodes and regulators of life and death — partly as being the "fruit" of the Cosmos Tree. It is thus also the embodiment of the Water principle, and the essence of Being. Space forbids to enter into etc. pg. 46.

All over the Orient the conception of a jewel, or pearl, is deeply occult, and has to do with Life lore and Soul lore: partly through a nexus with the Moon and the Ocean — both abodes and regulators of life and death —, partly as being the "fruit" of the Cosmos Tree, or again as the embodiment of the Water or of the Fire principle, and what not. Space forbids to enter into greater detail: what interests us in respect to the fox symbolism is that jewels and pearls, in many legends, penetrate virgins (always the personification *par excellence* of Fertility!) and glow in them, making them pregnant of supernatural sons. In the mythology of Japan, the "crunching" of *Amaterasu's* jewels gave birth to innumerable deities of light and vitality. *Tama*, indiscriminately applied to jewel, bead, sphere, also

⁷¹ The Biblical reference to Samson catching three-hundred foxes, putting "a fire-brand in the midst between two tails", and chasing them into the Philistines' fields and storage places to burn up their corn (*Judges xv, 4—5*), seems to be but an inversion of some similar belief in a "fiery potency" in the animal's tail, added to the usual connection of foxes with crops.

means soul,⁷² and it is manifest that the ancients conceived the "spirit" to be something like a crystal-clear bubble, as which certain creative forces may still be represented in allegorical paintings.⁷³

Modifications no longer traceable, but which may partly be ascribed to the "heaven-ascending" or "aspiring" power embodied in the jewel, gave the sphere a slightly pointed upper portion, usually known as the "onion shape". To Buddhism this became the "wish-granting jewel", the *nyo-i-rin* (*cintamâni*), which is able to gratify man's innermost desire.

This jewel not only bestowed and prolonged life, but procured the general fertility of fields and forests and the sea to sustain it. Its magical power was thus identical with the one long before ascribed to the emblematic phallus. Under Buddhist influence, partly aesthetic, partly mystic, especially accepted in Court circles, the phallus-fetish was therefore replaced by a post surmounted by a *nyo-i-rin*. We all know how phallic stones protected travellers — Road-gods and Field-gods have everywhere been allied — and the substitution is best apparent in the Japanese bridges, whose pillars end, above the span, in stumpy, round posts crowned with a bronze "jewel" knob. Stairs and galleries surrounding Buddhist temples usually show the identical pillars; while acting as supports to the railings, they continue to function as phalloi: to dissipate disease and penury, always hovering in the air, by the "threat" that increased fertility and birth would overcome all dearth and death.⁷⁴

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⁷² Nowadays written with a different ideogram, which does not change the old association, clearly proved by many examples.

⁷³ See f. i. the "Merciful Kwannon" and infant, by Kanō Hōgai († 1888) in the Art Academy, Tokyo.

⁷⁴ *Izanagi*, the Creator, halted his pursuing wife, *Izanami*, who had already entered the shadows of the Underworld, by planting a rock in the middle of the road — clearly a phallic rock. She thereupon threatened to kill a thousand people a day in revenge for his divorcing her; he retaliated by promising to build fifteen hundred parturition huts a day!

The fox is clever, the fox is prolific, the fox, by killing the rodents of the fields, protects the crops. Its emergence from the ground, its sudden disappearances, were as uncanny as if supernatural. Foxes were numerous enough to be encountered in any field at any time, and it is no wonder that the fox was chosen as the very special crop-animal of Japan, and thereby attached to the Rice-divinity as a messenger. Its tail is so luxurious that it intimated a heavy sheaf of rice-stalks, and it is quite possible that the tail's phallic representation was further suggested by a sheaf, bound just below the ears with some twisted straw: Mediterranean cultures knew amuletic figurines with tail and mane formed of corn-stalks. Japan had no ritual plastic arts until Buddhism came,⁷⁵ and cave-drawings are practically absent; so we do not quite know what the fundamentals were. When the *Inari* fox emerged as a sculpted symbol, it had already coagulated into what we meet now.⁷⁶

An interesting variant of the *Inari* fox, mostly seen in the home sets, is the animal with a raised paw. Sitting on his haunches as usual, he also has before him a very large "flaming jewel".⁷⁷ The paw beckons riches — a well-known feature of the so-called *maneki-neko*, or beckoning cat, favourite charm of small shopkeepers and especially of prostitutes etc. As there are two or three legends explaining the origin of the *maneki-neko* belief, which goes back to

⁷⁵ The *haniwa* clay-figures of grave-mounds, of legendary antiquity, are exclusively reproductions of humans, domestic animals, and every-day objects.

⁷⁶ I frankly see no reason why the *Inari*-fox worship might be allied to the Ainu *inao*-fetish worship (via a fox-tail represented as an *inao*?), as suggested by Neil Gordon Munro (in "Prehistoric Japan"). For one thing, the Ainu did not know agriculture properly speaking until the invading "Japanese" contacted them: the Ainu were not their teachers. The *inao* is a willow-stick whittled in such a way as to leave the shavings attached in a woolly bunch — very faintly if at all suggesting a sheaf of cereals. The etymology of *inao* is in dispute, and if it strongly resembles *ine*, rice, and *ina-o* might mean "rice-tail" (in Japanese), I would much rather incline to consider it, like the Japanese *go-bei*, to be another type of "magic wand", similar to the *bossu*, or fly-whisk made of horse-hair. Yet I have found from other circumstances that the *inao* may also basically be a "doll", formed of the "spine" (seat of life with the Ainu, and made by God out of a willow-tree) and the messy hair, of great occult significance.

⁷⁷ A further elaboration of the *nyo-i-rin*, with three tongues of flames on the crest: *hōjū-no-tama*.

some time in the 17th century, and is mainly based on the story of a prostitute's pet, I would say that the *maneki-kitsune* of *Inari* is a posterior modification of this cat. By itself, the cat is not associated with wealth, and I have never heard of an explanation of the beckoning fox. After all, *Inari* fox and beckoning cat both pursue the same end, to bring wealth into the house; but the fox with raised paw is, we might say, a glyptic pleonasm . . .

Apart from its rare appearances, the lore of the *Inari* fox is as meagre as that of the deity himself. Much more often do we find *Märchen* where a dog is of material help to man, and even cats and sparrows are in greater "individual" evidence. The "spooky" fox is the comon, live one, or a goblin, even if popular comprehension is not always clear-cut. The *Inari* fox is a vague animal which, in ways not pried into and that remain mystic, indirect, procures rice and such patronage as brings cash. I have come across only two peculiar superstitions. Lake Suwa, in the Japanese Alps, in winter freezes hard enough for even packhorses to traverse it. But nobody would venture on the ice before certain cracks have appeared on its surface: until then it is considered unsafe for man or beast. The cracks are attributed to the passage of a fox especially employed by the *Inari* divinities of Kami Suwa and Shimo Suwa (Upper and Lower Suwa) at the two ends of the lake.⁷⁸ — In most parts of Japan the belief exists that the *Inari* foxes — or other "old foxes of very high rank" who are so provided — sometimes by accident or in a fight lose the *hoshi-no-tama* which they bear at the tip of their tail. They then fall in disgrace, become outcasts from their community, and will naturally do anything in order to recover their precious ornament. So the man who picks it up by chance may be sure to become suddenly rich! Quite numerous people have been thus fortunate — or so at least it is asserted. The *hoshi-no-tama* which they picked up look remarkably like balls of animal hair — which they probably are.

⁷⁸ The peculiar cracks are explained as probably due to expansion caused by the pressure of inflowing water against the ice-crust in the centre.



After Katherine M. Ball, op cit.

Fig. 16. *Inari Daimyōjin*

The other legends are humdrum: appearances of beautiful maidens, or young or old men, to grant the wishes of petitioners. These go back to early days, and become fewer as time progresses. In the *Gempei Seisuiiki*, a book of the *Genji* and *Heike* History (1160—1185), for instance, reference is made to one Takahiro whose wife fell seriously ill, and who therefore prayed for seven days and nights at an *Inari* shrine. At the end of this period the shrine's doors opened, and a beautiful page-boy stepped out to tell him that his prayers had been vouchsafed. And indeed, when Takahiro reached his home, he found his wife completely recovered. — Typical.

Inari is sometimes referred to as *Shō Ichii Inari Daimyōjin*, the Big Name Deity *Inari* of Lower First Rank. It is related in the *Ryushi Kokushi* that in the fourth year of *Tenchō* (827) the Emperor, Junna was suddenly taken ill. The diviners discovered that this was due to his having given orders to cut down certain trees on Mount Fushimi, within the shrine-grounds. To make amends, the emperor immediately went there to worship, and further bestowed the practically highest Court-rank, *Shō-ichii*, on the divinity . . .

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It is but natural that a deity of such importance should issue amulets which will protect individuals and households against illness and misfortune. An illustrative homophonic amulet is of purple colour: of old, a wild fox was called *murasagi*,⁷⁹ and *murasaki* means purple! Most numerous are paper-slips imprinted with an image of the sitting fox, or pair of foxes: they can be found pasted over cottage doors throughout the land, will be kept in the household shrine, or even in one's pocket-book, and of course in the special charm-bag which many people still carry.

But other types are numerous, and among the most famous are the earthenware and porcelain amulets sold at Fushimi, in the rows

⁷⁹ A name no longer current, and whose connotation I cannot find. It might be something like "village fraud".

of small shops that line the approaches to the shrine. Their many varieties have been known as *Fushimi-ningyō* (dolls) from time immemorial. Of course the fox image again prevails, and if you want to assure the efficacy of your own private miniature *Inari*, you will buy the guardian foxes at Fushimi. But there are human figures, too, especially also of children, single and in groups. These are mainly prophylactic, particularly against epidemics and children's diseases, and sometimes include attendant monkeys. Old *Fushimi-ningyō* often had phallic (and kteic) outlines when seen from behind; modern morality, imported like machinery and enforced for the sake of the tourist trade and of vigilant missionaries, has caused some changes under paternal police guidance, and the clay dolls are now such as may be found elsewhere, and possibly bought from an Osaka factory.

At the time of the spring-festival, itinerant vendors throng the accesses to all *Inari* shrines with their light stalls, from which they sell any kind of vegetable and cereal seeds — guaranteed to sprout better than any others . . .

As a propitiating or grateful offering to *Inari* the usual *Shintō* rice and *sake* are of course acceptable. Rice, being the staple grain, represents all food; *sake*, being brewed from it, is the "spirit" of the crop in every way. The rice is often cooked together with red beans, which have a peculiar mystic power to bring luck. More than with other divinities, fruit and green vegetables are placed before *Inari*. And very usual is the addition of some "age" — anything fried in oil (*abura-de ageru*), but principally sliced bean-curd (*tōfu*) — because the foxes are very fond of it. Indeed, it is risky to carry fried delicacies overland: some fox will usually come and steal them unnoticed . . . There is even a sect of fanatic *Inari* worshippers, banded together into clubs and who call themselves *Kitsune-segyo* or *Nō-segyo* (meaning "Fox Charity" or "Field Charity"), who in the coldest nights of winter visit fox-holes and bring the "spirits" *tōfu-age* to please and nourish them . . .⁸⁰

⁸⁰ A tidbit made of *tōfu-age* and rice, rolled in laver (*nori*), is known as *Inari-sushi*!

For food and drink sacrifices the usual plain, unglazed *Shintō* utensils will be used: *kawarake* (dishes) and *o-miki* or *miki-dokkuri* (bottles). Sacred straw-ropes (*shimenawa*) with their paper or straw fringes, bits of cloth (*nusa*), streamers and what not, the gifts of devotees, may ornate the approaches; and especially also paper-lanterns, which will hang in clusters from the shrine's eaves or from the room's ceiling.

Before the public *Inari*, the usual large box with slanting gap for cash oboli, the *saisen-bako*, will not be missing.

*

We see that *Inari* is a very mixed and a very misty divinity,⁸¹ still undefined as to sex and age, and popularly rather confused with the foxes, his or her familiars. Although as prominent in the Tokyo area, the Kyoto plain may have been his cradle, as legend tells us. To a slight extent Buddhism may have taken a hand in shaping him. Personally I have a strong feeling that *Inari* is basically but an offshoot of the group typified by the 7th century *Gion*,⁸² itself probably the modernized successor to some primeval place of phallic worship. There are too many specific points of similarity to be fortuitous, and the transmogrifications of *Shintō* deities are staggeringly confused. I do not think that this theory has so far received any attention, and it would be interesting to pursue it further; but for the present I lack correlative material and must be satisfied with making the suggestion. At any rate, they all belong to a brotherhood of phallic fertility gods whose chief dwellings, contrary to all *Shintō* standards, are painted red.

⁸¹ Even *Benzaiten* (*Sarasvatī*) has been adduced as an ancestress; I leave her out as she has fully been amalgamated into the goddess of Love, Beauty, Eloquence, Music and Good Fortune, *Benten*, who, however, is still connected with the Ocean, Jewels, and Dragon-caves. Fundamentally all Nature-gods have certain things in common and the feminine *Inari* figure shows no special *Benzaiten* traits.

⁸² See page 26.



Fig. 17. *Inari* shrine and *torii* presented to The Ethnographical Museum of Sweden by Mr. Gosta Guston, former Swedish Consul at Yokohama. The arrangement of the shrine is of temporary character

Whatever the early beginnings, *Inari* not only soon became independent: he left the circle of national gods — except at Fushimi — to turn into multitudinous purely local manifestations. Certain miniature shrines, whether in a business or *geisha* quarter, or even within one's backyard, acquire incredible regional fame, yet may never be purposely visited by people of even the next ward. They have their own quite satisfactory *Inari*, and Japan is still parochial.

Inari shrines are probably more numerous than all other places of worship combined.⁸³ They might well be compared with the ubiquitous Cross-emblems of Bavaria and the Tyrol — which are themselves but “modern” manifestations of far older heathenish amulets.

Inari, the unknown Food Provider, never obtrusive, is a kindly soul that meets one in Japan wherever humanity has settled.



Fig. 18. *Inari* foxes

⁸³ An old diarist jots down the remark that the things without number are (like), *Iseya*, *Inari* and *Inu-no kuso* — the trade-name “Ise House”, *Inari* shrines, and Dog excrements...