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Source: *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1946), pp. 43-53

Published by: [Wiley](#) on behalf of the [American Anthropological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/662789>

Accessed: 22/06/2014 03:34

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THE RICE GODDESS AND THE FOX IN JAPANESE RELIGION AND FOLK PRACTICE

By MORRIS E. OPLER *and*
ROBERT SEIDO HASHIMA

IN the latter part of March, 1943, I joined the War Relocation Authority and for eighteen months thereafter held the position of Community Analyst at the Manzanar Relocation Center. Since one-third of the evacuees who were living in the Center were immigrants who had begun life in Japan, and some of the young people, though American citizens, had lived in Japan and been educated there (these are the much-discussed *kibei*), this proved an excellent opportunity to gather information about Japanese customs and beliefs. The pressure of events was so great, however, that it was a type of inquiry which had to be undertaken in spare time and aside from official duties. Therefore I tried to confine investigation to those topics to which a contribution could conceivably be made, that is, to subjects that were not completely covered in the literature or about which the materials available are unclear, few in number, or contradictory in content.

One of the subjects which seemed worth pursuing was the tremendously popular and important cult of the rice goddess, Inari, and the relations of this deity with the fox. The most sustained work on this subject is the monograph by D. C. Buchanan.¹ But Buchanan is concerned with origins rather than with description or a discussion of function. Consequently his volume becomes a dissertation on the origin of Shinto and of religion itself as much as an account of the worship of Inari. Besides, Buchanan's observations concerning Inari worship were made mostly at the great shrine at Kyoto. He therefore acquaints us with Inari worship in its official and most sophisticated form and with the State Shinto manifestations rather than with the cult Shinto forms which the people know best and practise most constantly.

Another scholarly work which contains useful information on the subject is by M. W. De Visser.² The approach of this writer, however, is primarily historical. He has assiduously combed the ancient chronicles of Japan for any reference to the fox. His interests are theoretical and he has a point to make. He is chiefly concerned with proving that the fox deity was the first goddess of rice and was displaced in time by Inari, whose messenger she then became. Consequently, De Visser, in spite of his exacting research and rich documentation, never gives us a picture of Inari worship in the Japan of his day. Perhaps the most adequate essay on the theme has been written by Lafcadio Hearn.³ Yet this is a little too whimsical and literary in attack to be of greatest scientific value. More recently John F. Embree has contributed some valuable data in notes scattered throughout his general writings. However, he does not present

¹ Buchanan, 1935. (See bibliography at end of article.)

² Visser, 1908.

³ Hearn, 1901, pp. 310-342.

a systematic treatment of the Inari cult.⁴ There are also references to the fox and Inari in Chamberlain,⁵ Chamberlain and Mason,⁶ and Mitford.⁷

In gathering material concerning the fox and Inari, I was most fortunate in having the intelligent and earnest help of one of the more mature Americans of Japanese ancestry, a well-educated young man who spoke excellent Japanese (he had lived in Japan for a short time) and who understood precisely the comparative and scientific nature of my interest. He had a large fund of information himself and, because of his knowledge of Japanese customs and his perfect command of the Japanese language, had access to the discussion groups and councils of the old people. His own family had been prominent in religious activities in Japan, and the older members of his household were therefore particularly well informed concerning the topic under consideration.

The account which follows was obtained in this way. One evening my friend told me what he knew about Inari and the fox. His absorbing narrative led to a number of questions, some of which he could not answer with certainty. After obtaining satisfactory replies to these queries and supplementing his knowledge by talks with his elders, this young man organized his thinking on the subject and drew up an outline of points to be covered. For the next two evenings he dictated his account to me and I took down his words verbatim. When the results were typed, we went over them together to add any details that might have been forgotten and to correct any mistakes that might have crept in. Naturally I hoped that this man would allow his name to be used in connection with this article, at least as co-author. However, so uneasy have Americans of Japanese ancestry been made by some persons who point to any knowledge of Japanese culture as an evidence of sympathy with the late enemy, that my helper has requested that his name be not used.

Inari is supposed to be a goddess⁸ who came, according to myth (*shinwa*, "god story"), in the beginning during a famine at the time of the creation of Japan. She descended from Heaven riding on a white fox, and in her hand she carried sheaves of cereal or grain. *Ine*, the word now used for rice, is the name for this cereal. What she carried was not rice but some cereal that grows in swamps. According to legend, in ancient times Japan was water and swamp land.

In one way the worship of Inari is Shinto (i.e., State Shinto). Shrines in Japan are divided into three main groups, Empire sponsored (*kokuei*, "State managed"), ken sponsored (*kosha*, "old shrine"), and village sponsored (*sonsha*, "village shrine"). The highest of the four classes of shrines sponsored by the Empire is the *kampei taisha*

⁴ Embree, 1939 and 1941.

⁵ Chamberlain, 1890, pp. 87-91.

⁶ Chamberlain and Mason, 1901, pp. 49, 336-337.

⁷ Mitford, 1901, pp. 187-188, 243, 255-260, 261-269.

⁸ There is some dispute over the sex of Inari, though most authorities and most Japanese consider Inari (or the principal manifestation of Inari) to be a female. Actually at the main Inari shrine at Fushimi in the southern part of the city of Kyoto, nine deities, some female, some male, are enshrined as Inari. Buchanan and De Visser have extended discussions of this point.

which includes the shrines to emperors. The great Inari shrines belong to this class;⁹ this shows that Inari is very important. Since Inari is a bearer of food she is more or less taken as a goddess of commerce.

But in another way Inari is more or less for the common people. The shrines to Inari are about the most numerous in Japan and every village has one. Some hamlets are so small, perhaps with only twelve houses or so, that they have no shrine keeper or shrine master, but there will be one person who cares for the shrine and sweeps the court (*keidai*) each day. If someone in the village gets in trouble with the fox he can go to an Inari shrine which has a shrine keeper, one perhaps just a few miles away.

Any master or keeper of a Shinto shrine is called *kannushi*, "shrine or palace master." The shrine master (priest) of an Inari shrine is called this too. The shrine master's position is hereditary and descends from father to son. The oldest son would take it if there is more than one son; if there is only a girl, she can marry a man who takes her father's name and carries on the shrine work. This has been done lately. In very ancient times it was not permitted, however, I understand.

According to the thinking of the people, there is a great deal of connection between Inari and the fox (*kitsune*). As I have explained, Inari is said to have come from heaven riding on a white fox. They say a fox does not get white until it is very old, until it is a thousand years old; such a fox is very wise. The fox on which Inari rode was probably a female. Most foxes are referred to as female.

The association between Inari and the fox is shown in many ways. Fox is said to be the messenger for Inari. Invariably you find foxes carved out of stone set before large Inari shrines, on both sides of the shrine, as guards. Often they have the right paw lifted in a sort of beckoning gesture. Inside the shrine there is usually a scroll which says, "Inari, great goddess" (*Inari dai myōjin*). But since fox is the handmaiden to Inari, the Japanese people, though they know Inari is the goddess, seem to think that the fox herself, though not a goddess, is quite powerful. In fact the fox is often taken to be synonymous with Inari. *Kitsune* is the Japanese word for fox, but often the fox is called O-Inari. The "O" is honorific.

The connection between Inari and the fox is shown in another way, too. Since Inari is a bearer of food and goddess of commerce, nearly all the Japanese shops have a miniature shrine of Inari right there in the place of business. In these shrines there is always an image of a squatting fox with the right paw lifted in that beckoning gesture.

Because Inari and the fox are so closely related in Japanese thinking, the shrine master of Inari has great control over foxes and takes a great interest in them. During the winter time when living is hard he would call the foxes and feed them. He calls them by name and goes out in the hills and feeds them, placing dishes of food, of soybean cake, out for them. Perhaps there are twenty foxes in the region, in the vicinity of the hills around the shrine. There is a head fox (*oyagitsune*, "parent fox") who is the oldest, the wisest, and the one with the best record. The foxes are not exactly deities and therefore they get into trouble. They have better or worse records. The shrine master knows all about them and can call the head fox or another fox. He can request a fox to stop troubling someone or can ask the help of the foxes in finding some lost object. The fox may not manifest herself, but when the shrine keeper goes into a trance the fox can

⁹ On June 18, 1871, the Fushima Inari shrine was raised to the rank of *kampe taisha*.

show him where to find the lost object, the thief, or the lost horse. Also fox has the attribute of seeing what will happen in the future, and so many people, especially the farming people out in the country, will consult the fox through the Inari shrine keeper before any important event, such as going on a journey, or even when they want to get married.

Because the fox can see into the future and help people, those who planned to come to the United States from Japan used to buy a little image of a fox in a novelty shop and go with it to an Inari shrine. The shrine master mumbled some words over it and then it had power. The immigrants brought these with them. Very few people came to the United States without consulting an Inari shrine first to see whether it was going to be good luck.

One man brought a little image over to this country. He set it up and said it helped him and told him what he wanted to know. He used to get advice about gambling from it. Once he went into a Chinese gambling house and lost a lot of money, so he went home and scolded the fox image for not warning him or helping him. That night the fox came to him in a dream. She explained that she had not helped him because she had not been able to stand the smell of the joss sticks in the Chinese place. The Chinese burn these to keep out the evil spirits, and the fox said she has no power in these Chinese places.

When there are shrines to Inari or to fox, if a visitor brings candy or food, some of this is put in the shrine and is eaten later by the people. Putting it there is just a gesture; a food offering is common in any shrine.

As I have said, most foxes are thought of as females. Most foxes are called *sadagitsune*. Sada is a female name; you find it in the common girl's name, Sadako. It emphasizes the feminine characteristic. It is a name something like Reynard the fox of the English-speaking people. It tells something about the characteristics of the animal. You can see that the fox is thought of as a woman because a man whom we would call a "sly fox" or "foxy" in English is not called that in Japanese, though a woman with such characteristics is called this. A man with such characteristics is called *tanuki*, "badger," or *furu tanuki*, "old badger."¹⁰ A gold-digger or a sly woman is often called *megitsune*, "female fox." Sometimes *furu gitsune*, "old fox," is used of a troublesome woman.

Foxes are noted for their tricks. In the time when my folks were back in Japan, thirty-five or forty years ago, it was only a brave person who went out at night and traveled to a different village. This was because in travel at night the fox might try tricks on him, especially if he were carrying food and the food was oily.

Fox can assume almost any form, animate or inanimate. The special trick of the fox is to change into a beautiful maiden. The traveler is met by this beautiful girl who asks directions of him. When he gets home he finds that he has only rocks or something like that in his carrying cloth (*furoshiki*). He has lost his belongings. He doesn't know what happened but he remembers meeting this girl. Most meetings with the fox end in such tricks.

There is a way of counteracting this. If a person thinks he is meeting a fox in some other form, he should turn around and look at the being through his legs. If he sees a

¹⁰ Badger, like fox, can deceive and possess human beings. Foxes and badgers are sometimes classed together under one term, *kori*, according to Visser.

fox, then it is really a fox. If it is a human being he will see a human being. People who were traveling used to do this..

Another way is to put saliva on the eyebrows. Then you can't be fooled. "Put saliva on the eyebrow" (*mayuge ni tsuba o tsuke*) is a command, even in colloquial expression. If you think someone is being fooled you say, "Put saliva on your eyebrows." Or if you realize that someone is trying to deceive you, you can say, "He was telling me this but I put saliva on my eyebrows."

There is another thing to do if you meet a fox. Call out the name of a god or goddess. Invoke the name of one you believe in. In Japan it would be the personal deity of the village where you were born.¹¹ These patron deities are called *ujigami* ("master deities"). Calling the name of the deity is done to help in any great danger. Some of the American-born, especially the Buddhists, do it even today. They will call the name of Buddha during a thunderstorm or when it lightens. This does not concern the fox particularly but it shows how strong the belief is and why it is used against the fox. Those who were going to come to America, before they started, used to get, at the village shrine, a piece of paper with the name of the village god on it. It is supposed to protect you wherever you are. I remember the case of a neighbor of ours (in America) whose boy got pneumonia; it turned to pleurisy and the boy went to the hospital. His mother, though she was an *issei* (alien, born in Japan), was young, about twenty-eight years old then. She got up and prayed to her village god every morning. She thinks that helped a lot, for the boy got well.

An especially mischievous fox will do things more serious than taking away food. The fox can make things appear to be what they are not. In the middle of a Japanese rice paddy usually there is fertilizer in liquid form in a barrel. Fox will make it appear to the traveler like a bathtub, and the next morning he will be found bathing in the filth. He will explain that he was invited into a beautiful home and after a delicious meal was invited to take a bath. Or he walks all night long in a circle in a rice paddy thinking he is going somewhere. When people are found in this condition the shrine master of Inari is called "to get the fox off him" (*kitsune wo noku*). This is why anyone who sees a fox gets worried. He thinks that perhaps he has met one of these mischievous ones.¹²

Foxes have weddings. No one has actually seen one of these weddings, but they say there is a wedding procession. At night people see a procession of paper lanterns in the

¹¹ Another way to expose a disguised fox, I was told, is to watch its shadow. The shadow of a fox which has assumed human form will retain the animal shape.

¹² A case in which his father feared he was being approached by a mischievous fox was related to me by an American of Japanese ancestry: "My father was pretty hard-headed. He didn't believe in this and that like some people. He had only one experience with the fox,—not with fox directly but with fox fire (*kitsune bi*). It was when he was a young man going to college. He was about nineteen years old. The college was nine miles from his home. This time he was walking home in the evening for the weekend. Quite a ways ahead of him he saw what looked like a paper lantern (*chōchin*) in the dark. He thought someone was traveling toward him. Then he lost sight of it. Pretty soon he saw it behind him. Then he saw it in front again. It kept on like this. It was never very close to him. He took this to be fox fire. He told me he had a notion that the fox was trying to fool (*damasu*) him. He thought of different things he would do if fox appeared before him, like knocking it out with a blow and running. But nothing happened to him. He was glad when he got to the place where he was going."

distance. Foxes' weddings were a very common occurrence in the old times. Children would peek out when lights were seen in the distance and say, "It is a fox's wedding." Even the elders would dash out to see. The people don't actually see the procession; they just see the lights. They are afraid to get close; they might get possessed (*nori usuru*) by the foxes. There is another belief about foxes: the barking of the fox is considered to be bad luck. The sound is like sawing and is said to mean the sawing of wood for coffins.

But what people really fear about the fox is that it can take possession of a person's mind and body. People are very much afraid of this because they say that even if the fox is exorcised by the shrine master and the patient returns to normal, his life is shortened by what has happened. The experience takes away a certain amount of animation or life force and the person may die young, perhaps ten or fifteen years later, when he otherwise would have lived much longer. The Japanese have a phrase, *ki ga nukeru*, "vitality (spirit) leaks out," which is used about this. They also say *jumyo ga chijimu*, "his life is shortened."

Both men and women can be possessed. Usually it is a female fox that plays the dirty tricks. Of course this possession is usually carried on by a renegade fox. This kind of fox gets into the habit; once she does it, she keeps on possessing people.

Among the foxes a few may turn out to be renegades like this and are expelled from the court of foxes. They are usually banished because they took possession of a human body or mind for spite or for revenge or out of pure mischief. When the shrine master or keeper of the shrine calls the head fox for an accounting, if the reason the offending fox gives does not justify what she did, she is banished and becomes a renegade. A fox may be a renegade but the head fox and the shrine master still have great power over her. That is why the shrine master of Inari can help you if you are possessed by a fox.

When a person's mind and body are possessed by the fox, he acts as though he had amnesia. He doesn't quite know what is going on and is vague about things. He has a voracious appetite for *age* (fried soybean cake). Often *age* is referred to as Inari, because it is fox's food and the fox likes it so much. The patient has an enormous appetite for bean cakes, since that is the fox's favorite food. There have been cases where a man who is possessed by fox has eaten a bushel of these bean cakes although ordinarily they are hard to eat by themselves because they are oily.¹³

Or a person possessed by the fox may act like a fox. My father says he saw this and my grandfather saw it. This man who was possessed by a fox jumped over a *torii* (gateway before a Shinto shrine) which was about twelve feet high. He could do it while he was possessed because he had the ability of the fox to jump.

As soon as these signs are noticed, the Inari shrine master is called by relatives or friends to perform certain rituals such as waving *gohei* (sacred wooden wands with paper streamers attached), the symbol of a god's power, over the patient. He calls out certain incantations. He calls out to Inari and then goes into a trance.

¹³ Another favorite food of the fox which those possessed by fox often crave is *inarizushi*, "inari packed." Bean curd is cooked in oil until it is *kitsuneiro* or "fox color," that is, yellowish. Then the square is cut into two triangular pieces. Rice and vegetables are cooked separately and then are mixed together with vinegar and sugar. The bean curd triangles are stuffed with this mixture.

When the shrine master is going into a trance to find out why a person is possessed or where some lost object is he sits in a folding chair (*shōgi*). In Japanese homes they don't have chairs. You usually find *shōgi* only in shrines and places like that. The shrine master sits in his chair. He gets pale. He doesn't talk in a normal voice. He goes into a semi-trance and asks the victim what is the reason for the possession. Then he goes into more of a trance, and the fox in the patient answers through the shrine master's voice and tells what the offense was. You can tell by his tone whether it is a male or a female fox that is causing the trouble. Usually it is a female fox. Sometimes the offense is a very little thing, like stepping on a fox hole or frightening the baby foxes away. Then the shrine master asks the fox to leave the body, and when it does usually the patient gives a loud cry and falls over. When he revives he is sane and normal again. He does not remember what has happened during the time he was possessed.

A fox can travel with the speed of thought. That is why the Inari shrine master is the one to go to about lost objects. To find it he sits in a *shōgi* in the same way and goes into a trance. First he goes into a semi-trance. He tells the fox to go out and find the missing object and says it will take a few minutes. He sends out the fox leader and other foxes. They can travel fast and go in all directions. Then he goes into more of a trance and tells what the fox says. The foxes find whatever is lost and report it to the shrine master. For instance, they tell that the lost horse is in such or such a place.

When a shrine master helps you, you give him a gift called *rohaid*. What is given depends on a person's wealth and is usually in money. No sum is asked for; the shrine master would not do that.

Historically, there was only one time that the fox did anything important enough to be noticed nationally. In the old days every feudal lord had a fort and every fort had a five-storied tower. This particular lord, *Osaka jōshū*, "Lord of Osaka Castle," happened to have a tower built over a fox's home. Later, people claimed that a ghost lived up there. People who saw something in the tower went crazy and everyone was afraid to go there. Finally a Buddhist priest went up to find out what it was. He found a fox there. She was in the form of a beautiful woman and talked to him. She told him that the tower had been built over her home and that she had no place to go. A compromise was finally reached whereby a fox cairn (*kitsunetsuka*) was built nearby. There was no more trouble. This happened during the rule of the sixth or seventh Tokugawa Shogun, about 250 years ago. I once saw a Japanese movie in which this episode was shown. The movie was not on this theme, but it appeared as a side issue. It is a nationally known story. I've heard it from people of different ken.

In order to determine whether the beliefs and practices concerning Inari and the fox which immigrants describe for the Japan of their youth¹⁴ exist today, I showed this account to a young friend, Robert Seido Hashima. Mr. Hashima, who lived in Japan from 1932 to 1940, assured me of the vitality of the Inari cult in present-day Japan and gave me the following remarkable story of fox possession and a cure involving trance which occurred in 1938.

¹⁴ A law providing for the total exclusion of Japanese from the United States was passed by Congress in 1924. Consequently, the Japanese immigrants' memories are of Japan as it was before this date.

Shrines to Inari and fox are very common in Japan, in fact so common that worship of Inari is almost like a distinct religion or cult by itself, instead of being lumped together with various other kinds of shrines that are found in the towns and villages. To give you an idea of what the beliefs about Inari and the fox are and how the ceremonies for these two are carried out, I'll tell you a story about possession by fox.

This happened in a town in Hiroshima-ken about seven years ago. I was seventeen years old at the time. There were about seven villages and towns in the area where I lived. The girl who was possessed lived in the town next to ours. She was twenty-three years old and single when it happened. I didn't know her personally but I have seen her and know who she is. There was nothing peculiar about her. She was a girl of average appearance and average intelligence. When she was cured of fox possession it caused a big sensation. Everyone was talking about it. So I asked a man I knew who lived in this girl's town about it. I said to him, "I heard such and such. Do you know anything about it?" He was an older fellow, in his thirties when this happened. He told me, "Yes, I know all about it. I was right there and saw it myself." It turned out that his family lives close to the girl's family. When the girl was cured her relatives and the neighbors were invited to see the *kitsune harai*, "fox chasing away," performed by the *kannushi*. He saw the whole thing. People who are invited like this are supposed to help by hoping for a cure, by concentrating, and by never interfering with the *kannushi's* meditations. What he told me about the case, as I remember it, was this:

The family of this girl noticed that she was getting very absent-minded and dreamy. Others noticed it too. She couldn't remember things and acted as though someone were leading her around and directing her movements. In her village was an Inari shrine with a court. It was not a large shrine and it had no regular *kannushi* taking care of it. A carpenter and his family lived next to it and he kept the court cleaned up. This girl used to wander down to this Inari court and stay there. That's why they thought that her trouble had something to do with Inari or fox.

At another town there was a larger Inari shrine. Two *kannushi* took care of it. So these *kannushi* were asked to come and see what was the matter with this girl. They decided on a day that would be lucky. They always do that. On the day they had named they came to the patient's home. They were dressed in the white robes of Shinto priests and brought *gohei* (sacred staff with pendant paper cuttings) and the things they needed.

The principal priest (*jinjo*) knelt to the south of the room with his assistant beside him. His assistant was the one who moved around, who led the girl around and took care of everything. The girl knelt at the west while the family and friends were at the north. This all happened in the daytime.

First the *kannushi* did the usual things they do at a ceremony of almost any kind. They waved the *gohei* to drive away evil and chanted a long prayer or *norito*. Then the head *kannushi* began to meditate. He sat there for a long time. He began to go into a trance (*gyo*). The people recognized this because he sat motionless, with not a muscle moving. He grew pale. When he spoke it was not in his natural voice. His lips scarcely moved when he talked and his eyes were closed.¹⁵

¹⁵ In his study of the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii, John Embree has an excellent account of a state of trance and fox possession into which a priest of Inari went. See pp. 154-157 of this work.

He asked the girl questions, but it was the fox in her that answered. He asked the fox if it had taken possession of her and why. The fox replied through the girl but everyone knew it was not the girl speaking. The voice was much higher pitched and stronger than hers. Fox said that she had possessed the girl because she had broken off a branch of a tree at the Inari shrine and had thrown it away. Fox said that if it had been a little child who had done this she would not have punished the person in this way, but that a grown girl should have known better.

The *kannushi* tried to persuade the fox to leave the girl, but the fox refused. Every once in a while the girl would try to go out of the room. The fox was making her do this. The assistant would keep her there. Finally the assistant *kannushi* took a small piece of rice paper, crumpled it up, and put it right on the surface of the mat in the center of the room. He then lit a piece of rope made of twisted white rice paper (*koyori*) from a candle and ignited the rice paper with this.

Now something wonderful happened. A great fire that filled the center of the room blazed up from that little piece of paper. It reached to the ceiling and came within a foot or so of the people along the side of the room. But nothing was burned.

Then the assistant led the girl to the southwest corner and tried to make her walk through the fire diagonally across the room. The fox that was in her tried to keep her from doing it and said, "No, don't do it! Don't do it!" The girl struggled and it took the assistant a long time to force her through. But he struggled with her and finally got her to the fire. As soon as she got into the fire and was in about the center of the room she gave a cry "*kwei*," and fainted. It was a cry such as an animal gives when it is shot. It was the fox leaving her body. At the moment she fainted the *kannushi* recovered from his trance. And as soon as she fainted the flames died down and there was nothing but some ashes in the middle of the room. The spirit of the fox had left its own body and had gone into this girl's body. With that cry the spirit of the fox was driven from the girl's body again. Maybe it got back to its own body, but the fox probably died after this. The whole ceremony took about two hours.

The girl was put to one side of the room in a cool place. It took her three hours to come back to her senses. After she recovered, the *kannushi* asked her if she remembered what had taken place in the ceremony. She didn't know about any of the things that had happened. He asked her if she remembered cutting a branch at the court of the Inari shrine. She remembered doing this and explained that the branch was sticking out into the court from a tree which stood nearby. She thought that someone would run into it and hurt himself, so she cut it off. The *kannushi* said that her intentions were all right but that there was a proper way to do these things, and the next time she wished to change something at an Inari shrine she had better consult a *kannushi* of Inari first.

The family of the girl gave some pay to the *kannushi*, whatever they thought right. The girl received a piece of paper from the *kannushi* which had on it the words *Inari dai myōjin*, "Inari, great goddess." She put this up in her home. After this the girl took a great interest in Inari. She prayed often at Inari shrines and gave offerings there.

The girl was back in her right mind as soon as she recovered from the fainting. But she was physically weak for three weeks after that. She seemed to be quite normal from then on and not long afterward she married.

I told my friend that it was hard to believe what he told me about the great fire and

how it died down so suddenly. He said that he also had not believed such things before but that he had been present and seen it with his own eyes. He said it was like a miracle performed before him and he could not deny it. He said that everyone present had seen the same thing and had been agreed on what he saw.

Mr. Hashima also confirmed a point made by Buchanan and others, that the worship of Inari and fox, because it is so popular, often is carried on at places primarily devoted to other functions. To make this clear he told of a spot in Hiroshima-ken, not far from his home, where the main attraction is a Buddhist temple, but where a hut at which offerings to Inari can be made is also found. A tree around which a sinister legend has grown up is also located here. His description of the place is no less notable for what it reveals about a form of black magic than for what it adds to the study of the Inari-fox complex:

Sometimes there are places where Inari or fox can be worshipped which are not regular Inari shrines but are near a Buddhist temple. At a town near the one where I lived in Hiroshima-ken there was a place like this near a Buddhist temple of the Jōdōshu (jōdo sect). I just went there at the time of their festival so I don't know so much about it. The place is famous for a cryptomeria tree (*sugi no ki*) about which there is a story well known in the vicinity.

A samurai was betrayed and killed by another man. His wife, being a woman, was weak and couldn't take revenge directly, but she swore to avenge her husband's death. She practised a ceremony of *noroi kugi* ("hate nail") against her enemy. She went to a blacksmith and asked him to make her five nails. This is a dangerous thing for a blacksmith to do because he says a *norito* (prayer) over everything he makes and if something goes wrong with the ceremony it comes back on him and kills him. You would have to convince a blacksmith that he should do a thing like this. It's secret.

When this woman had the nails she painted the outline of her enemy on white paper with *sumi* (black ink). Then she pinned the paper on this tree. She stood about fifteen feet away and threw the five nails at the figure. She vowed to do this for one hundred days. You have to keep a vow like this. If she had done it for only ninety-five days it would have come back on her and she would have died. The more times you hit the black image the worse it is for the victim. The woman kept it up for the 100 days. She prayed each time that she would accomplish her purpose. The man who had betrayed her husband sickened. He grew very restless. Though he ate his body wasn't nourished. He finally died in great pain. The marks on the tree where the nails hit show even today. Nails used like this are a little longer than ordinary ones. They have to be made especially for the purpose; any nails won't do. It is women who are described as carrying on *noroi kugi*. Men can settle things out in the open, with weapons.

Every once in a while you hear of a case like this. Not long ago some people were saying this about a woman who lived in our village. They didn't accuse her openly; someone would just whisper it to someone else when she passed. I just took it as gossip. I didn't know whether there was anything to it. Her husband died in terrible agony all right and she had not been getting along with him. There was some other man mixed up in it. So some thought that she had used *noroi kugi*.

But to get back to the Inari place near the tree and the Buddhist temple. I don't

know whether the tree or the temple and this Inari place was there first. It's a hut (*koya*) with the lower part of stone. In this lower part there is only one small opening in the stone. On the ledge of this opening people put soybean cakes as an offering. No one sees the bean cakes being taken, but they always disappear. They say there is a cave under the hut and that a fox who eats them lives there. So those who want Inari or the fox to help them go to this place and pray and leave food offerings in the hole.

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