
Perspectives on *Shokushu* (Eating Habits) as Part of Folk Traditions

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The purpose of this paper is (1) to examine beliefs revealed by past *shokushu* (eating habits) surveys of folk traditions, and (2) to analyze changes in eating habits and peoples' attitudes to eating habits, centered on *shokusei*, or food culture. We based our studies on the results of several surveys of eating habits, including the Eating Habits Survey conducted by the Folklore Society in 1941 and 1942 and the Emergency Survey on Folk Materials conducted by the Cultural Properties Protection Department (currently the Agency for Cultural Affairs) in 1962 - 1965.

People's diets and cooking methods changed after Japan's high economic growth period. Using the above-mentioned survey results, we investigated traditional ideas about food culture and how they have changed.

Our conclusions are based on the following examples. On New Year's Eve in December, when the entire family gathers and welcomes the *toshigami* (God of the New Year), people had a custom called *imigomori* (staying at home to avoid contact with worldly contamination), in which they ate white rice as part of the *toshitori* (welcoming in the New Year) ritual. On the anniversary of a family member's death, people selected a day for eating *shojinshoku* (vegetarian dishes). When people ate picnics outdoors or cooked out in a dry riverbed, there was a custom called *hokai*, in which people shared their food with spiritual entities in the natural world. However, the beliefs behind *imigomori* (staying at home to avoid contact with worldly contamination), *imitsutsushimi* (isolating oneself from impure things), feeling awe for nature, and sharing food with spiritual entities have been fading in recent years. This tendency is becoming more pronounced due to the changes in people's lifestyles that took place during Japan's period of high economic growth. However, although various ritual eating traditions are on the verge of extinction, we noted that there are still some cases in which people value and preserve these traditions. We thus conclude that folk traditions evolve and change, but never completely disappear.

Key words: *shokushu* (eating habits) survey, Emergency Survey on Folk Materials, *shokusei* (food culture), white rice and vegetarian dishes for the day of *toshitori* (welcoming in the New Year), *shojinbi* (a day for eating vegetarian dishes)