Ritual Process and Cult Organization in Central Japan

UENO Kazuo

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

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

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

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

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