

## The Religion and Social Structure of Paddy-Growing Communities

—A Case study of a 'Mura' in the  
Westernpart of Shiga Prefecture—

HIROYUKI SHIMIZU

The main findings of existing studies on mutual relation of religion and social structure in Japanese rural communities has indicated that Shintoism, traditional Buddhism, Christianity or new religion which have respective relations to villages, 'ies' (the Japanese homes) and individuals involve complicate arrangements.

Taking this assumption, one analytical framework becomes to be possible from my research study. Accordingly, in this article the author attempts to describe the various aspects of religious lives in the paddy-growing communities and hamlets in the westernpart of Shiga Prefecture. The first place, some issues concerning this study are taken up. The second, the ecological and historical background of this Adogawa district is summarized from extensive viewpoint. Besides, I intend to clear up the characteristics of relationship between hamlets and Buddhist-temples. The third, from the intensive viewpoint, will be grasped the existing state of 'Jidan-system' (ie-temple interrelationships) and 'Ujiko-system' (ie-Shinto shrine interrelationships), moreover 'Dōzoku-system' (main family-branch family interrelationships) and 'Kumi-system' (same rank combination of ies) in four villages of that district. The fourth, I focus

my glasses on the 'Yokoe-village' to inquiry the changing process of the systems and religious life and behavior of these village people.

The data of this study is based mainly from my field research of rural communities from 1976 to 1978. The following are the main findings of my research ;

- (1) The rural villages in the Adogawa district take the shapes of peculiar microcosm.
- (2) Intense solidarity and cooperation have been constituted through the religious doctrine.
- (3) Especially, this peculiarity of the common burial ground in 'Yokoe-village' corresponds to the system of rural communities life of this district.

The conclusion will be that in spite of the changes of the socio-economic situations of this districts Japanese religion fixes itself and continues as ie-religion, and then it functions to unify the fellowship and integration of village people. It would be said that the actual condition of religion in rural communities of Japan signify the prototype of Japanese religion.