

Family Patterns and Child Training in Traditional Religious Behavior

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The present paper aims at exploring to what extent the training of primary school children in traditional religious behavior varies according to the kind of household in which they are brought up. Field interviews were conducted from 1964 to 1966 in three ecologically different localities, i. e., a rural community, an urban business area, and an urban residential area, the sample size being 92, 103, and 100 households respectively. Worshipping at household Shinto and Buddhist altars was selected as the most basic and popular among traditional religious practices of the contemporary Japanese.

Principal findings are as follows.

- 1) Agricultural families which best represent the rural population retain many elements of the traditional family system both in household composition and concepts of the family. The ratios of families keeping Shinto and/or Buddhist altars are the highest (97-98%) among farming families as compared to the residents of the other two localities. The ratios of children who had the experience of being instructed to worship at those household altars are also considerably high (55-65%). Among adult members of the family, mothers and grandmothers most often train children in this behavior.
- 2) Shop keepers' families composing the absolute majority of the

business area residents are intermediate in terms of household composition and concepts of the family. The ratios of families keeping the sacred altars are also intermediate (63-74%), while the ratios of children who were told to worship at them are the lowest (46-57%). Not only mothers and grandmothers, but also fathers share the responsibility of this training.

3) White-collar workers' families, typical of the residential area, are far from the traditional family system both in household composition and concepts of the family. The ratios of families retaining the household altars are the lowest (42-43%). However, the ratios of children who were instructed to worship at the altars are the highest (61-72%). Fathers as well as mothers are major figures in training their children in this traditional behavior.

Rural-urban, and occupational variations in the ratio of family altars suggest that their number is declining with the passage of time, and also indicate the declining frequency of instruction given to children to worship the sacred objects of the family.