

The fundamental beliefs underlying Ancestor Worship are five in number:—

- (1) The dead remain in this world. They haunt their former homes and share in the life of their descendants.
- (2) All the dead become "Superior Ones"—Kami—but retain the character they had in life.
- (3) Their happiness depends on the attention given them by the living, and, conversely, the happiness of the latter depends on their giving that attention.
- (4) Every event, good or evil, fair season or foul, typhoon or earthquake, abundance or famine, is the work of the dead.
- (5) All human actions are finally controlled by the dead.

So powerful are these beliefs that we may fairly say that in all matters it is the dead rather than the living who have been the rulers of Japan. It is they who have controlled the lives of her people in matters both great and small, and who have thus been the shapers of the national destinies.

The domestic rite of the home affects most intimately the life of the people and is the most kindly in character. The departed are regarded as being part of the household, still in need of the affection and respect of their kindred. In return they guard the home and watch over the welfare of its inmates. But the departed also observe and hear all that happens in the home. They can read thoughts. Any infringement of the law or tradition of the past is a sin against the dead, and, if persisted in, is the supreme crime. From this conception rose the intricate code of "Filial Piety." This code applies not only to the behaviour of children to their parents, but also to the conduct of the individual in relation to the entire household.

Though this rite, no doubt, has its charming and domestic side, it cannot help but restrict the development of the character of the individual. He must always regard his own conduct in relation not only to those about him, but also to the vast cloud of ancestors stretching far back into the past. His every action is dictated by tradition and by family



desires. He can make no individual decision lest it adversely affect those about him. Nor is this the full range of his inhibitions. These can only be fully realized by consideration of the further restrictions on individual thought and action exercised by the Communal and State cults of Shinto.

When speaking of the Japanese "family" do not think of the term as being limited to a man's wife and children, as it is in the West. It is a large group, more nearly approximate to the Scottish clan, and all united by a common devotion to the founder ancestor, known as "Uji-no-kami." The shrine of the "Uji-no-kami" became a separate building, round which the different households would be gathered. It became, in fact, the "Parish Church." In old days the authority of the head of the family was absolute, extending even to life and death. In the modified form of to-day, implicit obedience is expected, and given, by younger to elder, by female to male throughout the group. Thus, in the intimate circle of the home, the Japanese