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Hell is Round the Corner

Religious Landscapes, People and Identity in Contemporary Japan

SETTORE SCIENTIFICO-DISCIPLINARE DI AFFERENZA: **L-OR/20**

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To whom is gone, but did not leave us alone

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Introduction

Representations of hell in Japan have only recently started to be studied, in particular by Western scholarship. A curiosity towards the topic has moved my steps into this study, since the times of my Graduation Thesis. As I proceeded through my investigation, I realized that most of the scholarship on Buddhist hells provided religious-philosophical or artistic historical perspectives, with nearly no reference to the practices connected to those narratives and to how people used to relate with them. Moreover, since those studies were basically textual ones, as deep as their analysis might be, they did not even mention contemporary narratives about hell and the afterlife in general, especially in the field of the so-called "popular" religion.

Nevertheless, representations of hell and the afterlife are extremely widespread and renown by people at all levels, on the whole territory of contemporary Japan. I started to wonder what their meaning was, what the practices connected to them and whether there were any local differences in them. These began the basic research questions for this Ph.D. Dissertation.

In order to provide an answer to these questions, I decided to carry out my fieldwork in places that presented symbolic connections to hell or – as I will call them – in "actual hells", in order to investigate the processes of meaning making. In this sense, I chose a somehow experimental approach, based on "multi-sited fieldwork".[1] Although this approach is normally a part of anthropological studies on globalization and it is referred to national and transnational levels, I tried to apply it on the interactions and negotiations of meaning between local and translocal ones, within the Japanese national territory.

The more I proceeded through my three periods of fieldwork, the more I realized that, since symbolic narratives about hell and the afterlife are basically linked to Buddhist discourses, in order to understand their processes of meaning making, I had to consider the

[1] See MARCUS 1998a. "Ethnography in/of the World System. The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." In *Ethnography through Thick & Thin*.

conceptions and significations of religious "tradition"[2] and memory. This became the first of the recurrent themes of my study. For my approach is an anthropological one, I considered narratives about "tradition" and "memory" as constantly re-elaborated and negotiated according to present social needs.[3] Therefore, on the one hand, since my study focuses on contemporary Japan, I will take into consideration historical narratives only in the cases in which they were an integral part of the processes of meaning making of religious symbolic narratives. On the other hand, this theoretical standpoint took me to wonder what social needs were at the time of my fieldwork.

Consequently, I started to investigate the processes of construction of identity and of "community",[4] in relation to religious "tradition" and to symbolic discourses about hell and the afterlife. Recent anthropological works have displayed how labile the concept of "identity" is, and how it is a fundamentally contested, ideological and political, both in general[5] and in the specific case of Japan.[6]

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[2] HOBSBAWM (ed.) 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*.

[3] APPADURAI 1981. "The past as a scarce resource."; ASSMANN 1995. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity."; FENTRESS 1992. *Social Memory*; GLUCK 1993. "The Past in the Present." In *Postwar Japan as History*; HOBSBAWM (ed.) 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*; HUI (ed.) 2005. *Perspectives on Social Memory in Japan*; JUENKE 2007. "Conceptualizing 'Collective Memory in a Global Age'. Theoretical Frames and the Example of the Civil War Memory in Contemporary Spain." In *Collective Memory and Collective Knowledge in a Global Age - An Interdisciplinary Workshop*, edited by Governance, Centre for the Study of Global. London. 1-14; KLEIN 2000. "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse."; MACDONALD 2001. "The Museum as mirror: ethnographic reflections." In *After Writing Culture. Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology*; RICOEUR 2004. *Memory, History, Forgetting*; VLASTOS 1998. *Mirror of modernity. Invented traditions of modern Japan*.

[4] ANDERSON 1983. *Imagined Communities*; COHEN (ed.) 1986. *Symbolizing Boundaries*; COHEN 1989. *The Symbolic Construction of Community (Key Ideas)*.

[5] AMSELLE 1999. *Logiques métisses: anthropologie de l'identité en Afrique et ailleurs*; ANDERSON 1983. *Imagined Communities*; ASSMANN 1995. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity."; COHEN (ed.) 2000. *Signifying Identities. Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*; D'ANDRADE 1992. "Schema and Motivation." In *Human Motives and Cultural Models*; ORTNER 1973. "On Key Symbols."; PRATT 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*; REMOTTI 1996. *Contro l'identità*

[6] BEFU 2001. *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*; BEFU 2008. "Foreword. Toward Zones of Hybridity in Japan." In *Transcultural Japan. At the Borderlands of Race, Gender and Identity*; BEN-ARI 1995. "Contested Identities and Models of Action in Japanese Discourses of Place-Making."; BEN-ARI 1990. *Unwrapping Japan*; HENDRY 2001. ""Who is Representing Whom? Gardens, Theme Parks and the Anthropologist in Japan"." In *After Writing Culture. Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology*; HOSHII 1993. *"Minorities" in Japan's pseudo-democracy*; HOWELL 1996. "Ethnicity and Culture in Contemporary Japan."; LIE 2001. *Multiethnic Japan*; MACDONALD 1995. "The Politics of Diversity in the Nation-State." In *Diversity in Japanese Culture and Language*; VALENTINE 1990. "On the Borderlines. The Significance of Marginality in Japanese Society." In *Unwrapping Japan*; WEINER 1997. *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*; YOSHINO 1997. "The Discourse on Blood and Racial Identity in Contemporary Japan." In *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*.

Yet, although scholarly works about construction of identity and religious "tradition" already existed, the studies that considered this relationship, tended not to investigate the signification of the religious symbolic aspects, focusing on construction of identity of a "traditional community", according to the broad concept of "religion" or religious practices.[7] Conversely, the works that focused on meaning making of religious symbolic narratives in contemporary Japan did not quite analyze their relationship with socio-economic and political dynamics.[8] One of the aim of my Dissertation is also to trying to fill this gap, by linking meaning making of religious symbolic narratives and religious "tradition", to processes of construction of identity and to the socio-economic contexts.

Although there were substantial local differences in the origin of narratives about hell and the afterlife and the practices connected to them, generally speaking, they were born in rural societies, namely in contexts in which migrations were relatively few and knowledge about religious narratives and practices was mostly localized in the original context. In order to analyze their signification processes in contemporary post-industrial and post-capitalist Japan, I had to take into consideration the negotiation of knowledge and signification in the interrelationship between local and translocal levels. Therefore I investigated how "actual hells" were promoted by the media at a translocal level and how mass-mediated narratives influenced the processes of meaning making in and of the "locality".[9] These implied issues about "displacement of meaning" and "disjuncture and difference" that I had to take into consideration.[10] In order to do so, I found a very useful

[7] See, for instance, BESTOR 1989. *Neighborhood Tokyo*; BESTOR 1992. "Conflict, legitimacy, and tradition in a Tokyo neighborhood." In *Japanese social organization*; MARTINEZ 1990. "Tourism and the Ama: The search for a real Japan." In *Unwrapping Japan*; ROBERTSON 1987. "A dialectic of native and newcomer: The Kodaira citizens' festival in suburban Tokyo."; ROBERTSON 1992. *Native and newcomer; Making and remaking a Japanese city*.

[8] GRAPARD 1982. "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions."; HORI 1968. *Folk Religion in Japan. Continuity and Change*; MULLINS 1998. *Religion & Society in Modern Japan*; READER 1991. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*; READER (ed.) 1998. *Practically Religious, Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* .

[9] APPADURAI 1996a. "The Production of Locality." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

[10] On "displacement of meaning" see IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. On "disjuncture and difference", APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*; HANNERZ 1996. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*.

tool in theories of cultural complexity and globalization, in particular in the concept of "ideoscape".[11]

In the First Chapter, I will provide an overview of the development of representations of hell, from a religious-historical and philosophical perspective. Starting from their early developments in India, I will trace them back through textual sources in early Buddhist cosmology, following their changes in the Chinese context, up to their introduction in Japan. Subsequently, I will take into consideration their development in Japanese Buddhist textual and artistic sources, with a particular focus on the processes that contributed to their diffusion, from the classic and medieval period, through the early-modern and modern ones. As ambitious as this project may be – and although I will probably not be able to completely accomplish this work with an exhaustive analysis – I thought that showing the processes of diffusion of these representations would be fundamental for an understanding of the historical depth of the topic. In this chapter I will also introduce my methodological approach, by attempting to link representations of hell and the afterlife to the early-modern and modern contexts.

The Second Chapter will focus on Osorezan, probably the most famous "actual hell" (or, to be precise "actual afterlife") in contemporary Japan. I will try to show the processes of meaning making of this sacred mountain in Aomori Prefecture, by investigating them both in local and in translocal narratives. Furthermore, I will show that the unquestioned symbolic authority of Osorezan legitimized a number of narratives about apparitions of ghosts in the close city of Mutsu. I will display that most of them were reported in places connected to a former Korean presence during World War Two, especially in a particular area of the town. The theoretical point of this chapter, therefore, will be the processes of construction of symbolic identity and difference, connected to social memory and imposed by "outsiders" on a "community" that was felt different.

The focus of the Third Chapter will be an area of Kyoto, called Rokuhara, also renown as "the entrance of hell". I will investigate the (re-)production of "traditional" narratives

[11] I based my theoretical standpoint in particolar on APPADURAI 1988a. "Putting Hierarchy in its Place."; APPADURAI 2003 (or. 1996). *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*; APPADURAI 2001. *Globalization*; HANNERZ 1992. *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*; HANNERZ 1996. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. The concept of ideoscape is defined in APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

connected to death and the afterlife, as well as of religious practices in the area. I will try to show that, because of these symbolic discourses, Rokuhara was identified as an outcaste area although it is actually not and, consequently, discriminated against. After a brief analysis of the outcast issue, I will show that processes of identification and discrimination against outcaste in 2008 and 2009 were no longer applied to people or groups, but to areas. In this chapter, therefore, I will analyze the processes of construction of identity and discrimination connected to signification of "traditional" narratives of death and hell and, again, imposed by "outsiders" on areas.

The Fourth Chapter will take into consideration the case of Ashikuraji, in Toyama Prefecture. This small mountain village was the centre of the cult of Tateyama, a sacred mountain that was considered an "actual afterlife" until the Meiji period. It also provided the setting for the Museum of Tateyama, built in 1992, that provided "contemporary-style" representations of hell and the afterlife, as well as of the cult of Tateyama. My analysis will focus on the conflict between the "native" religious symbolic narratives and the ones proposed by the museum. In order to do so, I will investigate the construction of the "community" of Ashikuraji, focusing on its relationship to processes of signification of "traditional" religious narratives. The main point of this chapter will be an investigation of processes of (re-)production, renewal and negotiation of signification of religious symbolic narratives, connected to construction of "community" identity, with a particular focus on its economic and political aspects.

The brief concluding Fifth Chapter will analyze two different places that, although far from each other, presented common features for the purpose of my analysis: Senkōji, a small temple in Hirano Ward in Osaka and Motohakone in Kanagawa Prefecture. These two places provided renewed representations of hell, basically with the purpose of didactic entertainment. I will focus my analysis on forgetfulness and oblivion, in order to show that the dynamics of (re-)production and renewal of religious symbolic narratives were tightly linked to the lack of historical information, in the first case, and the lack of processes of construction of identity of a "community" related to the place, in the second. I will maintain that, as a consequence of these processes, the meaning of symbolic narratives of hell and the afterlife, changed from "traditional" religious, to didactic and entertaining.

One last point I would like to make in this introduction, regards the objectivity of fieldwork, self-reflection and representation of the "other" in writing, issues that have been widely discussed in anthropology.[12] When possible, I decided not to use the so-called "ethnographic present" in my writing, because of the essentializing features it conveys. Therefore, I chose to use the past tense, also in order to provide a more spatially and temporally placed ethnological narrative. I decided to alternate more descriptive and discursive parts to theoretical reflections and suggestions, in order not only to give ethnographic evidence to my theoretical standpoint, but also to try to convey the personal experiences I made during my fieldwork. Moreover, since this Dissertation is the product of those experiences and of my own reasoning, interests and writing style, I decided to state most of the decisions I took during my periods on the field and the reasons why, linking them to my analytical standpoint. In doing so, I hope to convey a self-reflective representation of my fieldwork, as well as my own role in the construction of the narrative of this Dissertation, though remaining within the field of "traditional" academic writing style. As I have tried to do in this introduction as well.

[12] Among the vast literature on these issues, maybe the most relevant works are ALLISON James 2007 (or. 1997). *After Writing Culture. Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology*; BESTOR 2003. *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*; CLIFFORD (ed.) 1986. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*; ERVIN 2000. *Applied Anthropology: Tools and Perspectives for Contemporary Practice*; GEERTZ 1975b. *The Interpretation of Cultures*; MARCUS 1998b. *Ethnography through Thick & Thin*. On problematics contextualized in the Japanese case, see BESTOR 2003. *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*.

Chapter 1 – Spreading Hell

Before analyzing the specific cases of representations of hell in contemporary Japan, it might be helpful to briefly sketch the history of this complex symbolic system. It will be useful not only to have a grasp of continuities, differences and change, but also to present some of the main features of the representations of afterlife in Japan. It will also provide and understanding of the socio-economic variables that contribute to "make meaning out of hell".

In this chapter, I will firstly trace a historical overview of the conception of hell in Buddhist thought. In second instance, I will focus on its changes in Japan, starting from the Nara period up to the Meiji. Since considering all the socio-economic variables throughout a span of more than one thousand years would be an impossible task, I will try to focus in particular on the Edo period, when representations of hell spread out from a monastic context to enter the wider variety of practices of so-called "popular religion", through the print culture produced and consumed by laymen. In this period, hell's popularity originated also subversive uses of its symbolic structure, leading to various appropriations.

Representations of hell appeared in Japanese literature, painting, and performance beginning in the classical period.[1] Gruesome depictions of an infernal afterlife cautioned laymen to lead rightful lives, promoting rites for the dead and the sufferers, and exhorted monks to obey the precepts, based on the postulation of karmic retribution in the otherworld: the pain and suffering living beings cause to others, rebounds in the afterlife.

Numerous characterizations of damnation in the Buddhist canon provide threats combined with moral instruction. Judgement and retribution occur in actual places, precisely located in Buddhist cosmologies and the punishment is physical.[2]

[1] For a complete historical overview of representations of Buddhist hells in Japan, see HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination."; ISHIDA 1985. *Jigoku 地獄*; ISHIDA 1998. *Nihonjin to jigoku 日本人と地獄*; KAWAMURA 2000. *Jigoku meguri 地獄めぐり*; MATSUNAGA 1972. *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*; SAKAMOTO 1990. *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*.

[2] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination."; SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*.

Like all the realms of rebirth in Buddhist cosmology, hell is provisional. From a doctrinal perspective, Buddhist sources explain that delusions arising from attachment, evil deeds, and the resultant karma, cause living beings to create an entire kingdom of pain and suffering, dedicated to the task of ascertaining and administering suitable punishments. Occupying a relative position within Buddhist cosmology, hell was always linked to salvation, but the relationship between the two shifted over time. Needless to say, changes were not linear: old forms persisted, died out, and reappeared with new force. However, "in spite of this continual reconfiguration, consistent premises governed imaginations of this realm. Distinctions were made between what monks studied and what they taught to save others, but fundamentally clerics and commoners shared the same ambiguous paradigms."[3]

1.1 Indian Origins and Early Buddhist Developments

Hell (*naraka* or *niraya* in Sanskrit, meaning "devoid of happiness") originated in India and picked up new attributes and delineations as they entered and were elaborated in China and Korea. Although the chronological development of notions of hell in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist thought on the subcontinent is difficult to determine, the sparse descriptions in early texts clearly contain seeds of later elaborations.[4]

From the *Veda* to *Brāhmaṇa* and *Upaniṣads*, hell originated from a wider concept of afterlife: the *pitṛloka*, or "Place (*loka*) of the Fathers (*Pitr*)", a sort of heavenly place, in which worldly life would continue.[5] No distinctions between good and evil appeared in these texts: whoever died would eventually reach the *pitṛloka*.

The concept of retribution is a later one, firstly appearing in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, which recites: "For whatever food a man eats in this world, by the very same is he eaten again" and "a man is born into the world that he has made".[6] In the *Brāhmaṇa* a distinction

[3] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 2.
[4] On hell's early developments see LING 1997 (or. 1962). *Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil. A Study in Theravāda Buddhism*; MATSUNAGA 1972, 13-46 and SADAKATA 1997, 41-67.
[5] BODEWITZ 1939. "Pits, Pitfalls and the Underworld in the Veda."; BODEWITZ 2002. "The Dark and Deep Underworld in the Veda.".
[6] MATSUNAGA 1972. *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, 17.

between the *pitṛloka* and the gods' heaven of also appears. This realm is presented as a place that one can reach only by performing special rituals and sacrifices. According to the philosophical development of the concept of retribution in the *Upaniṣads*, action (*karma*) becomes more and more important as a determiner of the future after the disappearance of the physical self. The realization of this conception is to be found in the famous dialogue between Yajñavalkya and Jāralkārava Ārtabhānga:

> …"When a man dies, what does not leave him?"
> "The name. Endless, verily is the name. Endless are the All-gods. An endless world he wins thereby."
> …"When the voice of a dead man goes into fire, his breath into wind, his eye into the sun, his mind into the moon, his hearing into the quarters of heaven, his body into the earth, his soul (*ātman*) into space, the hairs of his head into plants, the hairs of his body into trees, and his blood and semen are placed in the water, what the becomes of his person (*puruṣa*)?"
> …The two went away and deliberated, what they said was *karma* (action). What they praised was *karma*. Verily, one becomes good by good action, bad by bad action.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad III. 2,12,13[7]

As long as the theory of karmic retribution developed, the *pitṛloka* and the realm of gods started to be considered subjected to the same rules as the human world. They gradually dropped into the realm of *saṃsāra* and they started to be considered no longer abodes of eternal rest, but only of temporary happiness.

In the *Upaniṣads* three different pathways to the afterlife were presented. One path led to the gods (*devayāna*), and was also called the path of light (*arcismārga*). The second way was the *pitṛyāna*, the third was the "Path of smoke and darkness" (*dhūmamārga*). The last pathway led to the realm of darkness and desolation.

The *Devayāna* was the path toward the oneness with the deity Brahmā and, subsequently, with the Absolute. The *pitṛyāna* led to a reward for good deeds, but it did not go on to further heights. Its followers eventually returned to earth, since they still remained within

[7] Quoted in Ibid., 18.

the realm of *saṃsāra*. Upon the third path creatures that live and die, worms, insects and creeping things were crawling along.[8]

The concept of retribution brought the conception of a world that was ruled by the law of actions (*karma*). Also representations of afterlife changed accordingly to it and representations of heavenly or infernal realms became clearer and more definite.

The first vivid description of hell appeared in the final section of the Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata*.[9] King Yudhiṣṭhira, the main character of the poem, is enabled by the powers of Indra to see hell and there to discover his brothers and his wife. "Hell is "shrouded in darkness" and it contains a large bird with an iron beak (perhaps a vulture), a copper pot, a tree whose branches are like blades, and the difficult-to-cross Vaitaraṇī River".[10]

This description is extremely similar to that of the *Manu Sṃrti* (*Laws of Manu*)[11] in Brahmanic tradition, which lists twenty-one hells, among which one is called *naraka*. Description of hell are also found in *Sūyagaḍa-sutta*[12] and the *Uttarajjhayaṇa-sutta*[13] of the Jainas, that are also remarkably similar to the Brahmanic ones.

The word *niraya* also appears in a large number of early Buddhist texts, such as *Dhammapada*,[14] where they are simply used to indicate the destination of people who commit evil deeds: "Some people are born on this earth; those who do evil are reborn in hell; the righteous go to heaven; but those who are pure reach *nirvana*" (126).[15] In this texts, however, hell is described as a single entity, not yet divided and articulated.

An equally old text, the *Sutta-nipāta*,[16] also mentions hell in the same way: "Injuring someone with developed self, overwhelmed by ignorance, he does not know that

[8] MATSUNAGA 1972, 19.
[9] 4th Century B.C.E. – 4th Century C.E.
[10] SADAKATA 1997, 44.
[11] 2nd Century B.C.E. – 2nd Century C.E.
[12] Ca. 3rd Century B.C.E.
[13] 1st or 2nd Century B.C.E.
[14] 4th – 3rd Century B.C.E.
[15] MASCARÓ 1973. *The Dhammapada*.
[16] 3rd Century B.C.E.

defilement (is) the road which leads to hell" (277).[17] This text lists ten hells, although it does not provide any description of them or of the tortures and punishments inflicted in them.

The *Kokāliya*, in the same work tells how monk Kokāliya was reborn in the Paduma hell (red lotus hell) for censuring the teachers Sāriputta and Mogallāna and then describes the horrors of this hell, warning that those who malign teachers of the Way will "go to hell for one hundred thousand and thirty-six Nirabuddas and five Abbudas" (660).[18] Hell is described also in this texts, with its trees as sharp as blades, iron stakes, balls of heated iron, dogs, ravens and worms. These elements resemble the descriptions that can be found in some passages of the *Abhidharmakośa*,[19] the work that provides the most articulated and elaborated representations of hell in Buddhist thought, systematizing names and punishments.

1.1.1 Hell in Buddhist Cosmology

Hell functioned as part of an immense cosmology. As I tried to show above, its contours vary from text to text. Hereafter I will focus on the characterizations presented on the *Abhidharmakośa* (*Apidamo jushe lun* in Chinese, 阿毘達磨倶舎論 *Abidatsuma kusha ron* in Japanese),[20] since they were some of the most influent texts both in China and Japan, as I will show later in this chapter.

Seven rings of mountains ranges divided by seas surround an enormous mountain called Mount Sumeru[21] (Myōkōsen 妙高山 or Shuminsen 須弥山 in Japanese). A vast ocean encompasses the outer, seventh range. This sea, by an eighth rim of iron mountains called Cakravāda (Tetsurin'isen 鉄輪囲山 or Tetchisen 鉄囲山), contains four continents Mount Sumeru on the cardinal directions. The southern continent is the one we live in, called Jambudvīpa (Senbushū 贍部洲). These water and land masses rest upon a golden disc that

[17] NORMAN 1992. *The Group of Discourses (Sutta-nipāta)*.
[18] Ibid., 76.
[19] 4th – 5th Century C.E.
[20] On the cosmology described in the *Abhidharmakośa*, see SADAKATA 1990. "Bukkyō no jigoku no setsu 仏教の地獄の説." In *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*; SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*. On cosmology in other Buddhist sources, see ISHIDA 1985, 58-65.
[21] The name of this mountain appears for the first time in the *Mahābhārata*, as Mount Meru. Buddhism has probably adopted this name, adding the preffix "*su*-", "majestic". See SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*, 28.

sits upon a water disc supported by a wind disc.[22] Dozens of heavens occupy stages along Mount Sumeru and float above the mountain at increasingly astronomical altitude. Measurement of this universe is calculated in units called *yojana* (*yuzennna* 踰繕那 or *yujun* 由旬).[23] The seas are eighty thousands *yojana* deep and Mount Sumeru rises eighty thousands *yojana* above sea level.

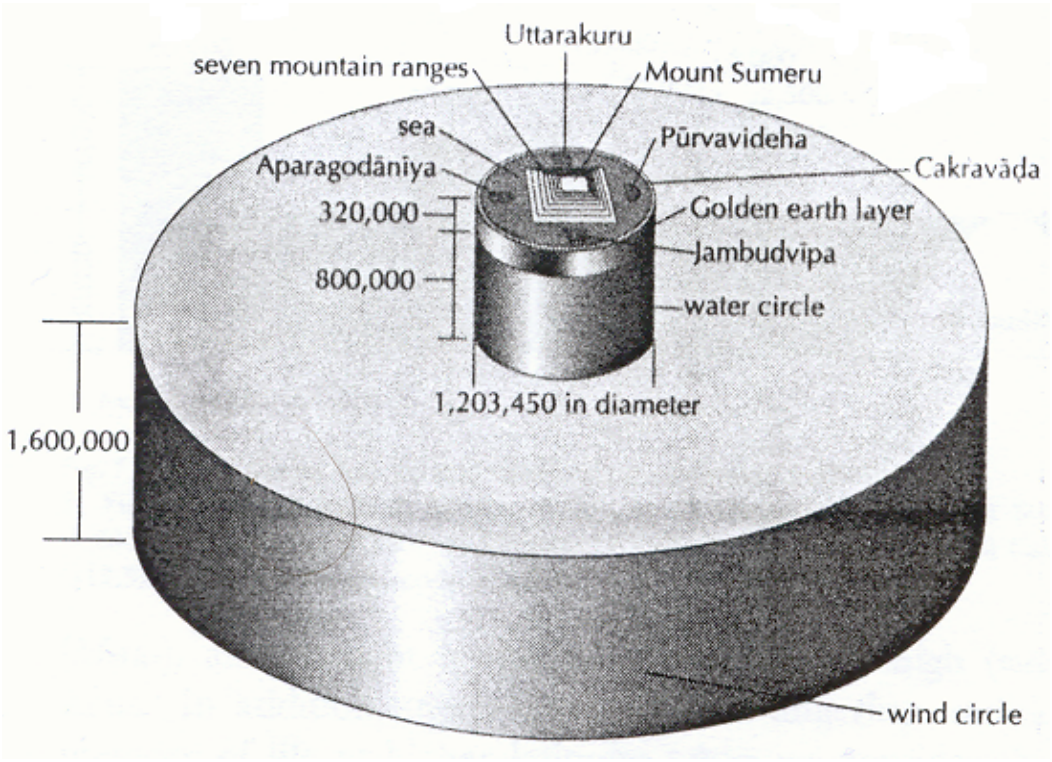

Fig. 1: View of the Mount Sumeru Realm

Buddhism divides living beings into six types of realms of rebirth: gods, human beings, demonic gods or titans, animals, hungry spirits, and inhabitants of hells.[24] These state of existence, among which living beings transmigrate (are reborn) depending on their karma, are called the "Six paths of rebirth" (*rokudō* 六道).

[22] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 3.
[23] The *Abhidharmakośa* describes one *yojana* as equal to about seven kilometres (from 6400 to 7200 meters). Measurements of *yojana* in other texts differ.
[24] Respectively, *deva*, *manuṣya*, *asura*, *tiryaṇc*, *preta*, *naraka* in Sanskrit. *Ten* 天, *ningen* 人間, *shura* 修羅 or *ashura* 阿修羅, *chikushō* 畜生, *gaki* 餓鬼 and *jigoku* 地獄 in Japanese.

Gods live in heavens, whereas human beings and animals occupy the surface of Mount Sumeru. Hungry spirits and demonic gods live 500 *yojanas* under the earth and the inhabitants of hells, even deeper.[25]

Hells are assumed to be placed below the Jambudvīpa, but their number is not institutionally determined and it changes according to the text taken into consideration. Although the *Abhidharmakośa* describes eight great hells, other texts claim four, six, ten, eighteen, thirty, forty-six or sixty-four hells. However many agree with the *Abhidharmakośa*, listing only eight of them and calling them the "eight great hells" (*hachi daijigoku* 八大地獄).[26]

Also their disposition varies: some works, like the *Dhīga-nikāya* (*Jōagon-kyō* 長阿含経) and one of the cosmological interpretations presented by the *Saddharma smṛti-upasthāna sūtra* (*Shōbōnenjokyō*正法念処経), describe their layout horizontally. Yet most of the texts, including the *Abhidharmakośa*, represent them as eight cubes vertically disposed. The first seven of them have identical dimensions, whereas the eighth, the deepest, is far wider than the others. On each side of the great hells there is a gate, which is surrounded by four satellite hells (or sub-hells). Therefore each great hell totalizes sixteen sub-hells, placed all around it.[27]

Listed from top to bottom, the names of the eight great hells are Saṃjīva (Tōkatsu jigoku 等活地獄, Hell of Revival), Kāla-sūtra (Kokujō jigoku 黒縄地獄, Hell of Black Ropes), Saṃghāta (Shugō jigoku 衆合地獄, Hell of Assembly), Raurava (Gōkyō jigoku 号叫地獄, Hell of Screams), Mahā-raurava (Daikyō jigoku 大叫地獄, Great Hell of Screams), Tāpana (Ennetsu jigoku 炎熱地獄, Hell of Incineration), Pratāpana (Dainetsu jigoku 大熱地獄, Great Hell of Incineration) and Avīci (Muken jigoku 無間地獄, Hell of No-

[25] See SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*, 41.
[26] See HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination."; ISHIDA 1985. *Jigoku 地獄*; ISHIDA 1998. *Nihonjin to jigoku 日本人と地獄*; KAWAMURA 2000. *Jigoku meguri 地獄めぐり*; SADAKATA 1990. "Bukkyō no jigoku no setsu 仏教の地獄の説." In *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*; SAKAMOTO 1990. *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*; UMEHARA 2007（or. 1981). *Jigoku no shisō 地獄の思想*.
[27] See Fig. 2 and 3.

Interval).[28] The distance from the bottom of Jambudvīpa down to the ceiling of Avīci measures twenty thousand *yojana*. This deepest hell is another twenty thousand *yojana* deep and wide.

There are also an additional eight cold hells (*hachi kanjigoku* 八寒地獄) and, although they are listed by most of the texts, very little attention is paid to their description.[29]

Further complicating the picture, Pure Land cosmologies that emerged with the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism refer to countless Buddha lands in every direction, the destination of all who attain buddhahood. Despite the infinite possibilities of this enormous universe, only a few of these lands warranted detailed description. One of these became a common subject of texts and paintings: the Buddha Amida (Amitāyus or Amitābha) Western Paradise, or Pure Land. Early texts do not specify the relationship between hell and the Pure Land, but they were normally paired in later areas. The accumulation of geographies gave rise to many discrepancies.[30]

[28] Translations from Sankrit into Chinese vary, some prioritizing pronunciation and others meaning. The deepest Avīci hell, for instance, was transliterated as Abi jigoku 阿鼻地獄 or it was indicated as Mugen 無間 basing the translation on its meaning: "No-Interval". See HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 3 and MATSUNAGA 1972. *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*. Gōkyō jigoku 号叫地獄 and Daikyō jigoku 大叫地獄 might also be found as Kyōkan jigoku 叫喚地獄 and Daikyōkan jigoku 大叫喚地獄, as well as Dainetsu jigoku 大熱地獄 might also be called Daiennnetsu jigoku 大炎熱地獄. These last versions of the names, deriving from the *Saddharma smṛti-upasthāna sūtra* (*Shōbōnenjokyō* 正法念処経) appear more often in Buddhist texts than the ones listed in the *Abhidharmakośa*. They have also become the standard names of hells in contemporary Japan. The Indian word for "hell" itself, *naraka* or *niraya*, was phonetically rendered as *naraka* 奈落迦 (also *naraku* 奈落), or translated as *jigoku* 地獄, "earth prison" or "underground prison".

[29] The names of the eight cold hells are Arbuda (Abuda 頞部陀), Nirarbuda (Nirabuda 尼剌部陀), At□at□a (Atada 頞听陀), Hahava (Kakaba 臛臛婆), Huhuva (Kokoba 虎々婆), Utpala (Uhara 嗢鉢羅), Padma (Padoma 鉢特摩) and Mahāpadma (Makahadoma 摩訶鉢特摩).

[30] For a complete analysis and description of the complexity of Mahāyāna and Pure Land cosmology, see SADAKATA 1990. "Bukkyō no jigoku no setsu 仏教の地獄の説." In *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*; SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*.

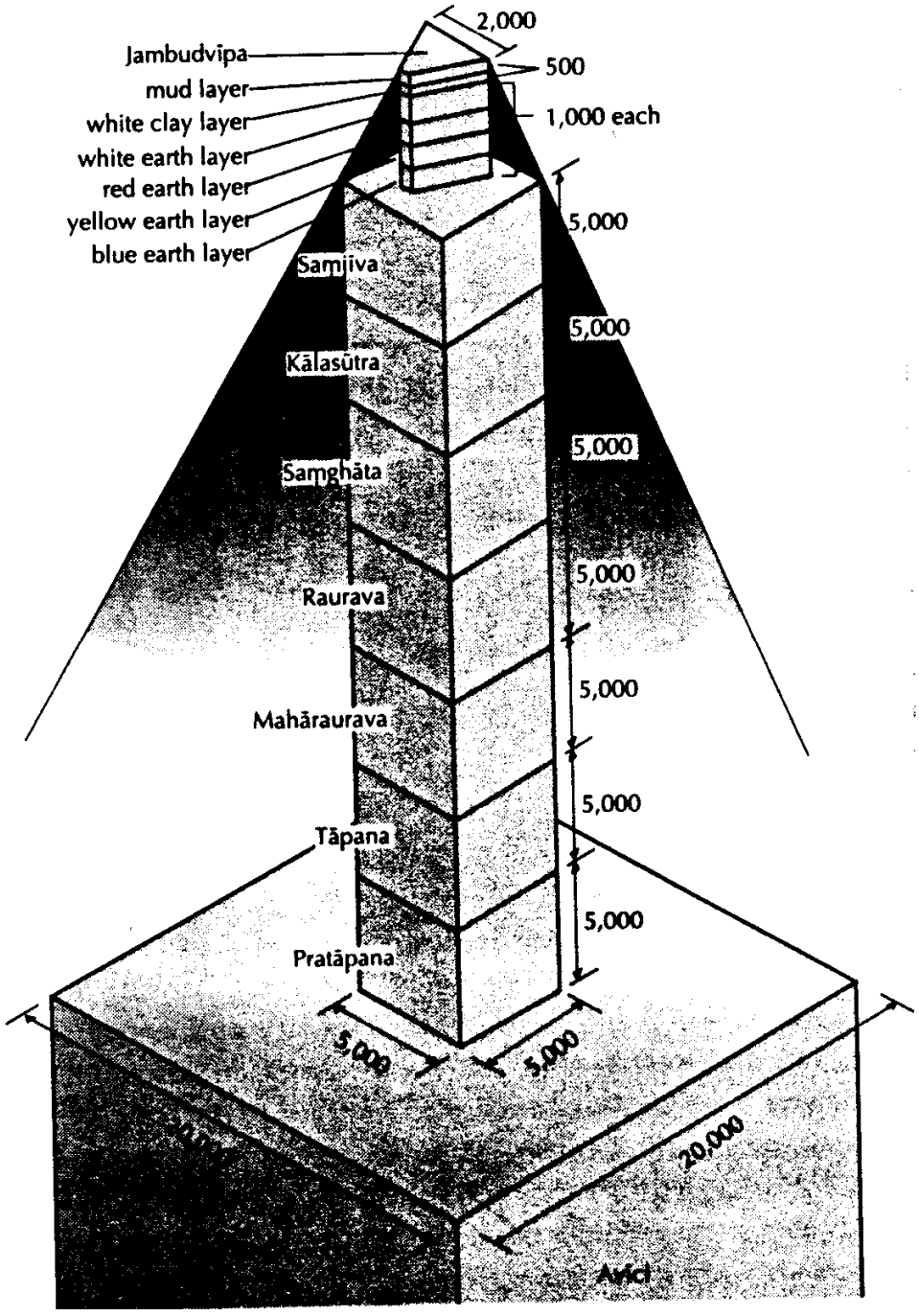

Fig. 2: Placement of the eight hot hells according to *Abhidharmakośa*. Measures are given in *yojana*.

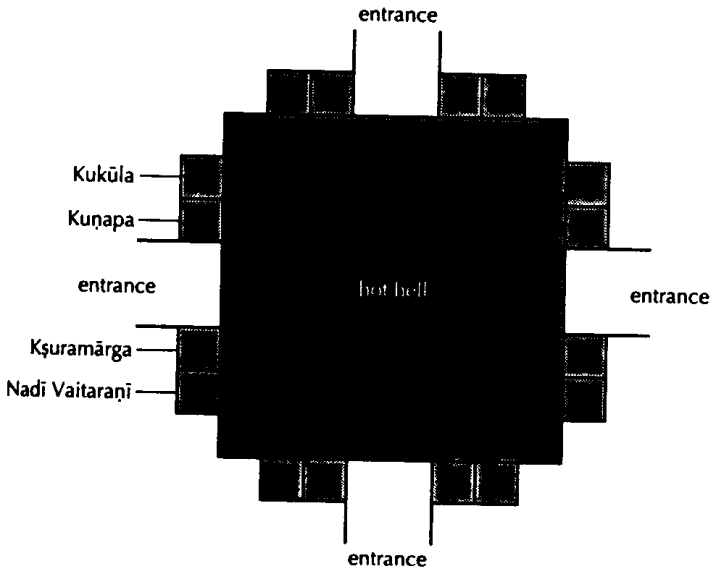

Fig. 3: Disposition of sub-hells according to *Abhidharmakośa*

Each of the eight great hells is associated to a fault which, according to the law of karma, not only constitute the identification element of the particular hell, but also the cause of its origin. According to the Buddhist doctrine, in fact, karma is the cause of the whole universe, that, because of karma, continues to exists. Hells are not an exception, especially if one considers that the *Abhidharmakośa* mentions "personal" hells, originated by the karma of small groups of people.[31] From this perspective, the faults expiated in a certain hell, might be considered the causes of the hell itself.

The *Saddharma smṛti-upasthāna sūtra* (*Shōbōnenjokyō* 正法念処経), an enduring influential treatise on the nature and repercussion of karma, for example, describes how psychological impetuses and desire manifest as physical consequences. The text explains damnation with a metaphor comparing the heart-mind or its working to a skilled painter who creates hell and other realms of rebirth just as artists create worlds through their paintings:

> All sufferings are merely the result of one's own
> karma And represent its reward. The places of hell
> are painted by the brush of the painter's desire, within

[31] See SADAKATA 1990. "Bukkyō no jigoku no setsu 仏教の地獄の説." In *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*; SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*.

> his mind. Improper discriminations are the various colours;
> wife and children are the paint containers and each individual
> is imprisoned by the cause and effect of his own clinging.[32]

"Black karma", evil acts that bring on suffering as retribution, lead the heart's painter to take up black pigment to depict hell with black iron walls and people bound and burnt until their bodies are blackened. One's own karma creates this "painting", not anyone else's actions.[33]

The gravity of faults determines the layout of hells, therefore, the heavier the karma associated to the hell, the deeper the hell is placed below the Jambudvīpa. Karma deriving from faults linked to psychological aspects is considered heavier than the one deriving from physical ones. Faults are divided into physical, vocal and mental ones:[34]

The text also describes all the other realms of rebirth in the same way. However, as Hirasawa maintains, "its most convincing argument against transmigration depends upon extensive, vivid descriptions of hell".[35]

The powerful depictions of hell provided in this *sūtra* inspired not only later Chinese and Japanese Buddhist works, like *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集,[36] written by the monk Genshin, that had an enormous influence in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism: they also gave rise to many efforts to convey and represent them in visual forms.

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[32] *Saddharma smṛti-upasthāna sūtra* (*Shōbōnenjokyō* 正法念処経), 27. Quoted in MATSUNAGA 1972. *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, 79.
[33] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 4.
[34] For a complete analysis of the faults and the punishments inflicted to the damned, see MATSUNAGA 1972. *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, 75-106, KAWAMURA 2000. *Jigoku meguri 地獄めぐり* and SAKAMOTO 1990. *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*.
[35] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 4. For a complete discussion and analysis of representations of hells according to *Shōbōnenjokyō*, see MATSUNAGA 1972. *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*. This work also provides a summary of the causes and torments found in the minor hells of *Shōbōnenjokyō*.
[36] Composed from 984 to 985.

Hells caused by physical faults	**Causes**
Saṃjīva (Tōkatsu jigoku 等活地獄, Hell of Revival)	Killing
Kāla-sūtra (Kokujō jigoku 黒縄地獄, Hell of Black Ropes)	Stealing
Saṃghāta (Shugō jigoku 衆合地獄, Hell of Assembly)	Sexual indulgence
Raurava (Gōkyō jigoku 号叫地獄, Hell of Screams)	Intoxicants
Hell caused by vocal faults	
Mahā-raurava (Daikyō jigoku 大叫地獄, Great Hell of Screams)	Lying
Hell caused by mental faults	
Tāpana (Ennetsu jigoku 炎熱地獄, Hell of Incineration)	False views
Pratāpana (Dainetsu jigoku 大熱地獄, Great Hell of Incineration)	Sexual defilement of religion
Avīci (Muken jigoku 無間地獄, Hell of No-Interval)	Five sins committed with premeditation

1.2 Chinese Changes

In spite of numerous textual descriptions, no Indian images of hell seem to have survived. Consequently, the most ancient visual representations of hell we have are Chinese.

It is impossible to pinpoint when Indian ideas about hell entered China and started to influence autochthonous representations of afterlife and merge with them.[37] Buddhism was officially introduced in China around the first century, translations of Mahāyāna *sūtra* and commentaries into Chinese began during the second century, many texts were translated

[37] For a study about narratives on afterlife in pre-Buddhist China, see NEEDHAM 1975. "The Cosmology of Early China." In *Ancient Cosmologies*, YING-SHIH 1987. "«O Soul, Come Back!» A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China." and THOMPSON 1989. "On the Prehistory of Hell in China.".

during the fourth and fifth centuries and Chinese conceptions of hell were established during the Sui (581-619) and Tang (618-907) dynasties.[38]

Many studies agree on the fact that Chinese religions had not developed a clear notion of afterlife prior to Buddhism,[39] however many evidences of a conception of a "Celestial Court" can be found since the Shang (1766 B.C.E.-1122 B.C.E.). The Court was reserved to the most "long-lasting spirits", immortals and ancestors, at least of aristocratic families.[40] Yet punishments and tortures were not inflicted in this heavenly realm: the place that was dedicated to the most terrible pain was beneath the ground, in which corpses are buried and decompose.

In early China, the theory that the spirit of the deceased would ascend to the sky and, at the same time, would remain inside the buried corpse seems to have been very widespread.[41] This apparent paradox was solved by elaborating the conception that human spirits were composed by two separate parts: a "physical" one, called *po* 魄 and a "spiritual" one called *hun* 魂.[42] There are historical and textual evidences that this theory was very widespread and accepted by the end of the sixth century, at least among intellectuals. The two different spirits were believed to leave the body of the deceased at the moment of death, but their relationships was not clear.

[38] See PAS 1989. "Journey to Hell, A New Report of Shamanistic Travel to the Courts of Hell."; SCHIPPER 1971. "Démonologie Chinoise." In *Génies, anges et Démons. Sources Orientales*; TEISER 1988a. *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*; TEISER 1988b. "Having Once Died and Returned to Life: Representations of Hell in Medieval China."; TEISER 1993. "The Growth of Purgatory." In *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*; TEISER 1994. *The scripture on the ten kings and the making of purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*; VANDIER-NICOLAS 1960. "Le Jugement des Morts en Chine." In *Le Jugement des Morts. Sources Orientales*.

[39] For a discussion about the studies that support this hypothesis, see YING-SHIH 1987. "«O Soul, Come Back!» A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China.".

[40] Some evidences for this thesis can be found in PAS 1989. "Journey to Hell, A New Report of Shamanistic Travel to the Courts of Hell."; TEISER 1988b. "Having Once Died and Returned to Life: Representations of Hell in Medieval China."; TEISER 1994. *The scripture on the ten kings and the making of purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*; THOMPSON 1989. "On the Prehistory of Hell in China."; YING-SHIH 1987. "«O Soul, Come Back!» A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China.".

[41] See THOMPSON 1989. "On the Prehistory of Hell in China.".

[42] For a deep and exhaustive analysis of this theory see NEEDHAM 1975. "The Cosmology of Early China." In *Ancient Cosmologies*; THOMPSON 1989. "On the Prehistory of Hell in China."; YING-SHIH 1987. "«O Soul, Come Back!» A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China."

The most authoritative explanation was provided in 534 by the philosopher and statesman Tsu-Chan, whose words have become a *locus classicus* of the discussion about human spirit and the afterlife:

> When man is born, that which is first created, is called the *po* and, when the *po* has been formed, its positive part (*yang*) becomes *hun* or conscious spirit.
> In case a man is materially well and abundantly supported, then his *hun* and *po* grow very strong, and therefore produce spirituality and intelligence. Even the *hun* and *po* of an ordinary man or woman, having encountered violent death, can attach themselves to other people to cause extraordinary troubles... [43]

As a consequence of later Daoist influences, the two afterlives for *po* and *hun* became oppositional concepts. Respectively *yin* and *yang* characters were associated to the two different spirits. For *hun* spirits were associated to breath and air, they were believed to have a much greater possibility to move than the *po* ones, linked to earth and the ground. Therefore, when the body dies, the *hun* spirit of the deceased fluctuates up to the sky, while the *po* one sinks into the ground. The lasting time and conditions of *po* spirits were believed depend on the preservation of the corpse: the better the corpse was preserved, the longer the spirit lasted and the more peaceful its rest was. Consequently, during the Han dynasty, the conception of two separate afterlives, a celestial one for the *hun* and an underground one for the *po*, was developed.

In spite of the development of these two different afterlives, an idea of *post-mortem* retribution was missing until the introduction of Buddhism. However, the belief that human behaviour was judged by supernatural beings who punished evil deeds before death was very widespread.

The link between life and afterlife was constituted by Earth, that was personified in several deities. Although Buddhist influxes shifted the focus of retribution from life to afterlife, the link between retribution and deities of Earth remained, providing the basis on which Buddhist ideas entered popular religious contexts.[44]

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[43] *Tso Chuen*, p.618. Quoted in YING-SHIH 1987. "«O Soul, Come Back!» A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China.".
[44] See THOMPSON 1989. "On the Prehistory of Hell in China.".

At the same time, the conception of the afterlife underwent a strong bureaucratization. Earth deities were considered to be hierarchically organized and divided into four "Departments" (*cao* 曹). Each Department compiled extremely detailed documents about the life and deeds of human beings, as witnessed by the *Taiping jing*.[45]

Mountains were believed to be manifestations of Earth and, among the several Chinese sacred mountains, Mount Tai 泰山 in the Shandong province has always had an extremely important role. From the Han dynasty onwards Mount Tai was firstly believed to be the place in which the spirits of the dead gathered. Secondly, according to Buddhist influences, it started to be considered a site for judgement and punishment.

As a result of the diffusion of the cult of immortals (*xian* 仙) under the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty,[46] the conception of the afterlife, that was considered to be placed on Mount Tai, underwent further change.

Only the immortals who had embodied the great Dao were admitted in heaven. Immortals and *hun* spirits were believed to be essentially different, therefore they could not have access to the same celestial afterlife. Consequently, it was necessary to find a new reign for *hun* spirits, so the structure of the chthonic world and its government changed. From the first century, the belief in the existence of a supreme ruler of this world, called "Lord of Mount Tai" (*Tai shan fujin* 泰山府君) began to be widespread. He was believed to dwell on a small hill, close to Mount Tai, on which, traditionally, imperial sacrifices for the "Lord of Earth" (*Di zhu* 地主) took place. This deity gradually began to be consider the "Lord of the Underworld" (*dixia zhu* 地下主).

As the Emperor of the human world was assisted by a complex bureaucratic structure, the Lord of Mount Tai was believed to be the top of a hierarchical bureaucracy that used to govern the dead: the first thing a dead spirit was supposed to do, was to register at the

[45] C.a. 2nd century C.E. For detailed information about the process of bureaucratization, cults for the dead and for Earth deities, see YING-SHIH 1987. "«O Soul, Come Back!» A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China.".
[46] 140-87 B.C.E.

capital of the underground world.[47] Also ideas about *post-mortem* retribution started to appear:

> If a man commits evil unceasingly, his name will then be entered into the Register of Death. He will be summoned to the Underworld Government where his body is to be kept. Alas! When can we ever get out? His soul will be imprisoned and his doings in life will be questioned. If his words are found to be inconsistent, he will be subject to further imprisonment and torture. His soul is surely going to suffer a great deal. But who is to blame?[48]

When Buddhism started to influence representations of the afterlife in China, it was obviously adapted to the pre-existing narratives and hell, in particular, underwent a strong bureaucratization. In some of the first transcriptions of Buddhist *sūtra*, the term *niraya* was rendered as "Underground prison in Mount Tai" (*Tai shan diyu* 泰山地獄) and some of the translated texts mentions how *hun* and *po* spirits are terribly tortured in this place.[49]

Hells became ten, each one ruled by a king, called

1. Qinguang wang 秦広王 (Shinkō-ō in Japanese, "The Far-Reaching King of Qin")
2. Chujiang wang 初江王 (Shokō-ō, "The King of the First River")
3. Songdi wang 宋帝王 (Sōtei-ō, "The Imperial King of Sung")
4. Wuguang wang 五官王 (Gokan-ō, "The King of the Five Offices")
5. Yanluo wang 閻魔王 (Enma-ō, "King Yama")
6. Biancheng wang 変成王 (Henjō-ō, "The King of Transformations")
7. Tai Shan wang 泰山王 (Taizan-ō, "The King of Mount Tai")
8. Pingdeng wang 平等王 (Byōdō-ō, "The Impartial King")
9. Dushi wannng 都市王 (Toshi-ō, "The King of the Capital")
10. Wudao zhuanlun wang 五道転輪王 (Tenrin-ō, "The King who Turns the Wheel [of Rebirth] in the Five Paths")[50]

[47] See Ibid.
[48] *Taiping jing*, 615. Quoted in Ibid., 390.
[49] THOMPSON 1989. "On the Prehistory of Hell in China.".
[50] Translations of the names are quoted from TEISER 1988b. "Having Once Died and Returned to Life: Representations of Hell in Medieval China.", 433-434. Yanluo wang and Taizan wang have a long tradition

The Lord of Mount Tai became one of the Ten Kings, among which Yama, the Buddhist judge of the dead also appears. The so called *Sūtra of the Ten Kings* (*Shiwang jing* 十王経, *Jūōkyō* in Japanese),[51] provides detailed descriptions not only of the Ten Kings, but also the terrible tools for retribution, torture and mutilation in the afterlife. However, although the structure of hell changed, the faults and the punishments continued to be very similar to the ones listed in the *Saddharma smṛti-upasthāna sūtra*.

The texts, which was probably composed in China, advocates mortuary rites that assist passage through a series of judgements by ten kings at determined intervals. The kings also keep track of whether rituals are faithfully performed. The text illustrates the courts of each king, crowded with groups of assistants, people waiting to be judged and virtuous hell. After the last court, hell appears surrounded by high walls, guarded by a demonic warden.[52]

The conception of hell became extremely popular in China, especially during the medieval period, inspiring several representations, both in literature and in painting.[53] Extant Chinese imaged indicating hell date back to the early sixth century and *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, a collection of biographies of prominent monks originally compiled by Daoxuan (596-667), tells how the young monk Jing'ai was convinced to renounce the world by seeing some depictions of hell at a temple.[54] Hell paintings on the walls of temples in Chang'an and Luoyang are also mentioned in *Lidai mingshua ji*, a history of Chinese painting compiled in the ninth century by Zhang Yanyuan.[55]

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and history, whereas Chujiang wang and Wudao zhuanlun wang seem to have been named after two of the stages in the passage through the landscape of the afterlife. See KOMINAMI 2002. "'Jūōkyō" no keisei to Zui Tō no minshū shinkō 『十王経』の形成と隋唐の民衆信仰.".

[51] The complete name of this sūtra in Chinese is *Yanluo wang shouji sizhong nixiu shengqizhai wangsheng jindu jing*, translated into English as *The Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Prophecy of the Four Orders on King Yama Concerning the Seven Feasts to be Practiced Preparatory to Rebirth on the Pure Land*. See TEISER 1988b. "Having Once Died and Returned to Life: Representations of Hell in Medieval China.", 450.

[52] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 12.

[53] For an account and analysis of some of the representations of hell in medieval China, see ORZECH 1994. "Mechanisms of Violent Retribution in Chinese Hell Narratives."; TEISER 1988b. "Having Once Died and Returned to Life: Representations of Hell in Medieval China."; TEISER 1994. *The scripture on the ten kings and the making of purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* about hell paintings.

[54] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 5.

[55] See TEISER 1988b. "Having Once Died and Returned to Life: Representations of Hell in Medieval China."; TEISER 1994. *The scripture on the ten kings and the making of purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*.

Chinese translations of the Buddhist canon officially began entering Japan via the Korean peninsula in the sixth century. Buddhist ideas on the afterlife had taken their place alongside older Japanese beliefs by the first half of the ninth century, as *Nihon ryōiki* 日本霊異記 witnesses.

1.3 Enter Japan[56]

Buddhist representations and textual codifications of hell were superimposed to the pre-existing narratives of afterlife, resulting in a variegated complex.

The pre-Buddhist afterlife conception was basically a Other world of death (*takai* 他界), an indistinct afterlife in which the spirits of the deceased gathered. It was referred to by several names: *tokoyo no kuni* 常世の国 ("Land of Constant Darkness"), *ne no kuni* 根の国 ("Land of Roots"), or *yomi no kuni* 黄泉の国 ("Land of the Yellow Springs").

Japanese scholars have been debating for centuries over the location and character of that land. There are two major categories of answers: it is a land beyond the sea and the mountains, that reflects a horizontal view of the universe, or a land under the earth and above, that indicates a vertical view of the universe.[57]

According to Motoori Norinaga's *Kojikiden*, the term *tokoyo* has three meanings: (a) constantly obscure; (b) constant and without change; and (c) extremely distant and difficult to reach. This seems to be close to the definition of the Land of Roots, the source of life, perhaps the lost paradise of the people who had migrated to Japan and reflected on the country "beyond the sea" where their ancestors "survived".[58]

[56] The following historical paragraphs are largely indebted to HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", the only work in western language that summarizes the history of representations of hell in Japan.
[57] On pre-Buddhist representations of the afterlife, see RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*, in particular 194-200; GRAPARD 1982. "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions.", 200-204; HORI 1968. *Folk Religion in Japan. Continuity and Change*, 1-48.
[58] See MOTOORI 1978.

The horizontal view is considered to be of Malayo-Polynesian origin and some anthropologists[59] maintain it is older than the vertical one. In this view the land of the dead and the one of the gods coincided. It was a place beyond space and time, where all the spirits of the deceased were believed to gather, without distinctions, and gods reigned over them.

Among local legends of southern Japan, in particular the most famous Urashima Tarō 浦島太郎, is a perfect example of that other space where time is also other. In fact the fisherman (Urashima Tarō), who rescues a turtle, is rewarded for this with a visit to the Palace of the Dragon God under the sea. He is sucked under by a whirlpool and he finds the heavenly Palace on the bottom of the sea. He stays there for three days and, upon his return to his village, finds himself 60 years in the future.[60]

The vertical view, was probably was based on the burial mound or *kofun* 古墳.[61] There is ample evidence for a theory which links the presence of divinities in the mountains with the spirits of the departed.[62] After death, they were seen as undergoing a process of purification, at the end of which they became gods (*kami* 神). Then they acquired the power to decide upon crops and other human affairs. Some rituals performed on mountains today show definite traces of ancient funeral ceremonies.[63] Under Chinese influence, mountains started to be perceived as *axis mundi*, the centre of the universe. The verticalization of the conception of the afterlife provided the symbolic paradigm for interpretation and emplacing of Buddhist cosmology, including hell.

1.3.1 Introduction of Hell in Japan

Textual records of depiction of hell in Japan precede most of surviving paintings. *Nihon ryōiki* mentions a painting of the six realms of rebirth (*rokudō-e* 六道絵), as well as several stories about people who came back in the world of the living, after being dead for a brief

[59] See, for instance HORI 1968. *Folk Religion in Japan. Continuity and Change*, 1-5.
[60] See RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*, 196.
[61] *Kofun* date back to the so-called Kofun period: 250-552 A.D.
[62] On the relationship between the vertical view of the afterlife and *kofun*, see MATSUMURA 1971. *Nihon shinwa no kenkyū 日本神話の研究*.
[63] See GRAPARD 1982. "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions.", 201.

period in which they could see and experience hell.[64] The twelfth century *Konjaku monogatarishū* 今昔物語集 also includes a story in which about Kose no Hirotaka 巨勢広高, a Mid-Heian painter who painted hell on the wall of a temple.[65]

Screen paintings of hell were used in order to expiate faults during rituals, conducted at the place every twelfth month beginning in the ninth century.[66] Although the first time the screen was used is not clear, it certainly existed by 955:[67] *Makura no sōshi* 枕の草紙, the famous diary written by Sei Shōnagon 清少納言 during the mid-Heian period, reports that the author saw it when it was brought to the empress for viewing after a ritual performance. The author writes that the paintings were so horrific, that she could not help running away.[68]

However, as Hirasawa states: "In contrast to such documentary evidence, the actual hell imagery surviving from the Nara through the Heian eras consists on little more than a few sketches, such as those engraved on the mandorla of a sculpture of Jūichimen Kannon on Tōdaiji […] and that in a *Lotus Sūtra maṇḍala* at Tanzan Jinja."[69]

The earliest extant representations of hell are painted hand scrolls, known as *Jigoku zōshi* 地獄草紙. These scrolls may originally have been part of a set depicting the six realms of rebirth, which also included *Gaki zōshi* 餓鬼草紙 and *Yamai no sōshi* 病草紙.[70] Compared

[64] See NAKAMURA 1997 (or. 1973); N*ihon ryōiki 日本霊異記*. There are also several studies reporting and analyzing the stories about hell in *Nihon ryōiki*: ISHIDA 1985. *Jigoku 地獄*; ISHIDA 1998. *Nihonjin to jigoku 日本人と地獄*; KAWAMURA 2000. *Jigoku meguri 地獄めぐり*; KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは*; SADAKATA 1990. "Bukkyō no jigoku no setsu 仏教の地獄の説." In *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*; SAKAMOTO 1990. *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*.

[65] *Konjaku Monogatarishū 今昔物語集*, 444-445. On representations of hell in literary works in Japan, see IENAGA 1966. *Jōdai bukkyō shisōshi kenkyū. Shinteiban 上代仏教思想史研究・新訂版*. As controversial as his theoretical approach may be, also UMEHARA 2007（or. 1981). *Jigoku no shisō 地獄の思想* provides a good amount of literary sources related to hell.

[66] See HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 5.

[67] A discussion of the various theories on dating the screen can be found in Ibid., 5-6.

[68] *Makura no sōshi 枕の草紙*, 88.

[69] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 6.

[70] For some studies about these scrolls see FUKUI 1999. *Fukui Rikichirō bijutsushi ronshū 福井利吉郎美術史論集* and TANAKA 1985. *Tanaka Ichimatsu kaigashi ronshū 田中一松絵画史論集*.

to later illustration, *Jigoku zōshi* do not convey any sense of space of hell or its architecture and lack any of the visual referents that subsequently became common and popular.

The late twelfth-century Anjūin 安住院 *Jigoku zōshi* graphically shows the awful tortures awaiting the damned. In this scrolls the brutal torments inflicted to the people who violated Buddhist precepts are displayed. Based on the descriptions provided by *Saddharma smṛti-upasthāna sūtra* (*Shōbōnenjokyō*正法念処経), explains the faults that were perpetrated by the damned: killing, stealing, sexual indulgence and mixing alcohol with water (intoxicants).[71]

> The sinners, their bodies unceremoniously exposed, sustain too much pain to notice one another. They have not a moment's peace to look around, much less console anyone else. Although sometimes depicted in numbers, the damned in these images are alone. Atoning for sin is a solitary process.[72]

Conversely, Hirasawa defines the "most social interaction […] version of *Jigoku zōshi*"[73] the twelfth Masuda-ke *kō* 益田家甲 *Jigoku zōshi* focuses on the torturers. On the ground soaked with blood and scattered with bones, three demons mince human bodies with enormous knives on cutting tables. Another takes a portion of stewed bodies, while a fifth one chats cheerfully, delicately holding a plate filled with something pink, probably human flesh. Small groups of human beings look terrified, while huddling one another, waiting for their turn. As the demons consume the smallest human piece, they say "Revive! Revive!", restoring the bodies of the damned, illustrated as infants. This scene represents Geshin jigoku 解身地獄 (Hell of Dissection), a specific hell for monks who broke the precepts against killing by butchering, cooking and feasting on animals.[74]

Although these images highlight demons or other creatures that torture human bodies, at the same time, they depict the damned as the ultimate agent of his/her condition. No judging institution is represented, thus confirming the perspective expressed by the monk

[71] See MATSUNAGA 1972. *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*.
[72] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 7.
[73] Ibid.
[74] On the specific history of this scroll and the hell for monks in Masuda-ke *kō*, see KOBAYASHI 1974. *Kobayashi Taichirō chosaku shū 小林太市郎著作集*, 275-350.

Kyōkai 景戒[75] in *Nihon Ryōiki*: "Recompense [adheres to] acts of good and evil the way that shadows follow forms."[76] It is clear that, in this brief statement, retribution is believed to be a natural, causal law, independent from any kind of judgement, issued by any kind of authority.

Fig. 4: *Jigoku zōshi*, published in SHINBO 2001

During the medieval period, hell paintings became more articulated. Hell is depicted as a terrifying prison, with enormous walls, demonic guards, half human and half beast and terrible watchdogs. As Hirasawa notes:

> Soteriological concerns coincided with disciplinary interests in maintaining a lawful society. One cannot, however, portray the role of hell without decreasing the ratio of human size to environment. As in the *Jigoku zōshi*, generic representation allows each

[75] 782-824.
[76] NAKAMURA 1997 (or. 1973). *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: The Nihon Ryōiki of the Monk Kyōkai*, 101. The name of the monk can also be read Keikai or Kyōgai.

person to stand in for a multitude of similar sufferers. Yet because we cannot get close to those depicted, the impact of shared experience decreases. Artists negotiated various proportional compromises as they enlarged their window on hell, but despite the increase in population in these later works, compared to the earlier *Jigoku zōshi* hell seems smaller, resembling a little factory or workshop.[77]

Fig. 5: *Jigoku zōshi*, published in SHINBO 2001

Many among such representations of hell reflect the influence of *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集, completed in 985 by Tendai monk Genshin 源信 (942-1017).[78] The text, divided into three *maki*, is articulated in ten chapters:

[77] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 8.
[78] For a discussion on Genshin's work and some fragments of English translation, see ANDREWS 1973; MARRA 1988a;b; REISCHAUER 1930; RHODES 2000.

1) *Onri edo* 厭離穢土 (Loathing the Defiled Realm)
2) *Gongu jōdō* 欣求浄土 (Longong for the Pure Land)
3) *Gokuraku shōko* 極楽証拠 (Authorities of the Pure Land)
4) *Shōshū nembutsu* 正修念仏 (Proper Practice of Nembutsu)
5) *Jonen hōhō* 助念方法 (Aids to Nembutsu)
6) *Betsuji nembutsu* 別時念仏 (*Nembutsu for Special Occasions*)
7) *Nembutsu riyaku* 念仏利益 (Benefits of Nembutsu)
8) *Nembutsu shōko* 念仏証拠 (Authorities of Nembutsu)
9) *Ōjō shogyō* 往生諸業 (Sundry Practices for Birth)
10) *Mondō ryōken* 問答料簡 (Interpretation of Problems)[79]

In the first two, Genshin describes Buddhist cosmology, focusing on the six realms of rebirth in the first chapter. The first part of this chapter provides the vivid description of tortures inflicted to the damned in hell.[80] Although these description are based on scraps of several *sūtra* like *Ta chih tu lun* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā śāstra*), *Yogacārbhūmi*, *Abhidharmakośa* (*Abidatsuma kusha ron* 阿毘達磨倶舎論), *Yu po sai chieh ching* (*Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi for Contemplating the Buddha*) and *Chu ching yao chi* (*Essentials for Various Sūtra*), they heavily rely on the representations of hell presented in *Saddharma smṛti-upasthāna sūtra* (*Shōbōnenjokyō* 正法念処経).[81] Genshin uses the representations provided by these *sūtra* and he weaves them into a narration advocating salvation through belief in the Pure Land and practicing the *nembutsu*.[82]

[79] See RHODES 2000. "Imagining Hell: Genshin's Vision of the Buddhist Hells as Found in the Ōjōyōshū.", 22-23.
[80] On the remaining five realms of rebirth described in Genshin's work, see RHODES 1996. "Hungry Ghosts, Animals, Humans, Fighting Spirits and Heavenly Beings: Genshin's View of the Five Realms in the Ōjōyōshū.".
[81] See MATSUNAGA 1972. *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*; RHODES 2000. "Imagining Hell: Genshin's Vision of the Buddhist Hells as Found in the Ōjōyōshū.".
[82] Rhodes (2000) highlights two opposed processes of narrative construction: selection and abridgment. By selection, the author refers "to those cases where Genshin, confronted with multiple descriptions of the hells in the scriptures and authoritative treatises, selects what he saw as the most relevant points of the most comprehensive descriptions of hell and weaves them into his own unique vision" (RHODES 2000. "Imagining Hell: Genshin's Vision of the Buddhist Hells as Found in the Ōjōyōshū.", 46). By abridgment, the author indicates the cases in which Genshin , although he recognizes the text he is using as an important source, "he felt compelled to abridge the sūtra when citing it in the *Ōjōyōshū*" (RHODES 2000. "Imagining Hell: Genshin's Vision of the Buddhist Hells as Found in the Ōjōyōshū.", 49). For a complete discussion of these two processes, see RHODES 2000. "Imagining Hell: Genshin's Vision of the Buddhist Hells as Found in the Ōjōyōshū.", 46-55.

Scholars of Heian Buddhism frequently assume that Genshin's work had a great influence on Pure Land thought and practice and on representations of the afterlife during the eleventh-century. In fact, since the Kamakura period, numerous literary works like Buddhist stories ot *setsuwa* 説話, *nō* 能 dramas and the *Heike monogatari* 平家物語, were clearly influenced by *Ōjōyōshū*'s representations of hell.[83] However, as Horton states: "these arguments usually fail to note that at least fifty and often over one hundred years passed between the composition of the *Ōjōyōshū* and most of the evidence for its popularity […]. Yet, during those years, the influence of Pure Land Buddhism spread enormously."[84] Horton's work aims to demonstrate that "the role of Genshin's work in the eleventh-century was smaller than is usually assumed"[85] in the spread of Pure Land thought throughout Japan. This is different from stating that *Ōjōyōshū* did not influence representations of afterlife and, in particular, of hell during the same period. However, we need to contextualize the diffusion and the use of the text, in order to understand its importance.

> The earliest known printing of the *Ōjōyōshū*, in 1168, was made almost two hundred years after its composition. Not surprisingly, this was the time when Hōnen was active. Therefore, although it is true that the *Ōjōyōshū* was one of the earliest and most frequently printed texts, this could not account for the popularization of Pure Land Buddhism in the hundred years immediately after it was written.[86]

In fact, among surviving illustrations of Genshin's representations of hell, the thirteenth-century *rokudō-e* in Shōjuraigōji 聖衆来迎寺 in Ōtsu is certainly crucial. These four scrolls influenced the later hell through numerous copies made for other temples and regularly displayed.[87] Each of the main hells in these scrolls is contained behind an imposing gate. Tortures and torturers are portrayed with striking realism, further emphasized by the fact that the tools used by the demons come from artisans workshops and other workplaces. As Kuroda points out, there is a wide display of blacksmiths' tools

[83] For a clear account of the influence of *Ōjōyōshū* in literary works, see NAGASHIMA 2003. "La diffusione delle immagini dell'Inferno in Giappone: L'influenza dell'*Ojoyoshu* (*sic*) (trattato di *ars moriendi* scritto nel X secolo dal monaco buddista (*sic*) Genshin)." In *Visioni dell'aldilà in oriente e occidente: arte e pensiero*.
[84] HORTON 2004. "The Influence of *Ōjōyōshū* in Late Tenth- and Early Eleventh- Century Japan.",30.
[85] Ibid..
[86] Ibid., 37.
[87] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 8.

in tongue-pulling iron tongs, carpenter's instruments are used to draw straight lines on bodies and to cut them in pieces, from fish handlers come cutting blocks and knives. Mortars, pestles, grinders, boiling pots, are familiar in every kitchen. Kuroda observe that nobody better understood the effects of these tools than the people who used them.[88]

1.3.1 Genshin's Influence, Hell Narratives and Landscapes

The shallowest of the eight great hells is Tōkatsu jigoku, the Hell of Revival. In the Shōjuraigōji the damned, guilty of killing, attack one another with iron fingernails, scratching and tearing their bodies apart. They are forced to climb trees with blade-leaves that pierce them and slice them up.

> The inmates there always harbour in their hearts the desire to harm others. If they happen to see each other, they are like hunters who have encountered deer. They each size and tear at one another with iron claws until the blood and flesh are all gone and only the bones remain. […] Or else (the wardens) slice the flesh (of the hell dweller's body) into pieces with extremely sharp knives, like a cook butchering the flesh of fish. When a refreshing wind blows, they soon revive and return to their previous state. […] Or else it is said that there is a voice in the sky which cries out, "These sentient beings should once again revive as before." Or else it is said that the wardens strike the ground with an iron trident, shouting, "Revive! Revive!"[89]

Those who killed and stole descend into Kokujō jigoku, the Hell of Black Ropes, where demons mark black lines with burning iron ropes on their bodies. They are forced to lie down on the scorching iron ground and the wardens hack them along the lines with axes or saws, or they butcher them with knives into thousand of pieces. The damned are also forced to walk into a large net of burning iron ropes, that scorches their flesh and sears their bones. Another torture consists of shimmying across a hot iron rope suspended between two iron mountains over a boiling iron cauldron. Iron weighs on the damned's back inevitably causes them to fall down.

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[88] See KURODA 2002. *Zōho sugata to shigusa no chūseishi. Ezu to emaki no fūkei kara* *増補姿としぐさの中世史・絵図と絵巻の風景から*, 258-263.

[89] *Ōjōyōshū*, 33a-b, quoted in *Ōjōyōshū* *往生要集* in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*:84; RHODES 2000. "Imagining Hell: Genshin's Vision of the Buddhist Hells as Found in the Ōjōyōshū.", 29.

While describing Kokujō jigoku Genshin introduces a theme that is echoed continuously in his work: the tortures damned receive in hell are the retribution of the evil deeds they committed in the past. The point is explicated in the words the wardens of hell address to the beings here:

> Your mind is your foremost enemy.
> This enemy is most detestable.
> This enemy binds people
> And sends them to Yama's palace.
> You, and only you, are burned by the fires of hell
> And are devoured by your evil karma.
> Neither your wife, children or brothers –
> (None of) your relatives can save you.[90]

People who killed, stole and committed adultery, fall into Shugō jigoku, the Hell of Assembly. Here, the damned are driven by demons into a crevice, between two of the many iron mountains that are to be found in this hell. The mountains crash into each other, crushing the people between them. Then iron mountains fall down from the sky, grounding the damned to minced meat. Demons also throw the damned into a river of molten copper, they place them on stone slabs and pound them with stones, or they place them in iron mortars and mince them with iron pestles. Their bodies are devoured by demons, beasts and birds of hell.

In Tōyōrin 刀葉林 (Sword-Leaf Wood), one of the sub-hells, a beautiful woman beckons to male damned from the top of a tree. Driven by desire, men climb up the tree, while the sharp leaves slice and lacerate their flesh. According to Genshin's description, they reach the top of the tree, bleeding and ragged, only to find out that the woman has disappeared. As they look down, they see the woman on the ground below, calling: "I came to this place because of my thoughts of you. Why won't you come close to me now? Why won't you embrace me?" The damned climb down, as the leaves slice their bodies like razors all over again.[91]

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[90] *Ōjōyōshū*, 33c, quoted in Ibid., 33.
[91] Tōyōrin became one of the hells most favourite by artists. See HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 9.

The two further hells, Kyōkan jigoku (Hell of Screams) and Daikyōkan jigoku (Great Hell of Screams) await people who committed the above mentioned faults and, also drank alcohol and lied. As Hirasawa notes:

> His narration is too spare or repetitive to have inspired many distinctive images – and the Shōjuraigōji set does not include scrolls devoted to these hells – but many other paintings lavish attention on a satellite called Jumuhenku 受無辺苦 (Undergoing Limitless Agonies) that features tongues torn out with pliers. The tongues grow back and are ripped out repeatedly […].[92]

As for Daikyōkan jigoku, Genshin focuses in particular on lying, quoting the following lines, that demons address to the inmates:

> Lying in the supreme fire,
> It can burn up even a great ocean.
> How much more easily (can it burn) a liar.
> (It's as easy as) burning a bundle of stick and grass.[93]

Also the two following hells, Shōnetsu jigoku (Hell of Incineration) and Daishōnetsu jigoku (Great Hell of Incineration) are omitted in Shōjuraigōji *rokudō-e*. However Genshin explains that in the first, people are thrown onto the scorching iron ground and are beaten with burning iron staves, until they are reduced to a mound of flesh. Others are fried in a large sizzling iron skillet, impaled and roasted, boiled in cauldrons or placed in a burning tower and scorched until the flames consume their bones and marrow. Murderers, thieves, adulterers, drunkards, liars and people with false views are tortured in this hell.[94]

[92] Ibid., 10.
[93] *Ōjōyōshū*, 34c, quoted in RHODES 2000. "Imagining Hell: Genshin's Vision of the Buddhist Hells as Found in the Ōjōyōshū.", 38.
[94] See Ibid., 39-40.

Fig. 6: Kokujō jigoku, Shōjuraigōji *rokudō-e*, published in SHINBO 2001

Fig. 7: Shugō jigoku, Shōjuraigōji *rokudō-e*, published in SHINBO 2001

People who committed all the above mentioned faults and defiled pure nuns who kept precepts fall into the Daishōnetsu jigoku. The whole hell is full of flames, wails and screams of the tortured damned never stop and the demons scold the people bind for this hell, by saying:

> You, hearing the voices from hell,
> Are already fearful like this.
> How much more so shall the fires of hell burn,
> Like fire burning dried kindling and grass.
> The fire burns, but it is not that (the fire) burns.
> It is (your) evil *karma* which burns.[95]

Beneath this hell, at the very bottom of the Realm of Desire, the deepest, widest and most terrible of hells lies: Abi jigoku, also known as Mugen jigoku (Hell of No Interval).

[95] *Ōjōyōshū*, 35b, quoted in Ibid., 41.

> There is nothing but flames.
> They fill the sky and there is no space (between the flames).
> In the four directions, in the four intermediate directions
> And on the ground, there is no place which is free (of flames).
> Every place on the ground
> Is filled with evil people.
> I can't rely on anything.
> I am alone, with no companion.
> I am within the darkness of this evil realm
> And will (soon) enter the mass of flames.
> In the sky, I can
> See neither the sun, the moon nor the stars.[96]

Here people who committed the most horrible sins, like killing their parents or the Buddha, with premeditation, suffer. Images of bodies falling upside-down into a conflagration tend to denote this hell. After two thousand years precipitating through an enormous abyss, the damned fall into the iron net marking Abi jigoku's upper boundary. Fierce beasts, fire breathing worms and poisonous snakes await them. The tortures are the same as the ones in upper hells, but the demons conduct them again and again and scold the damned, by uttering:

> Great fire will roast you.
> Being a foolish person, you have already committed evil acts.
> Why do you feel remorse now?
> (The suffering you will experience) is not (the fault of) heavenly beings, *asuras*,
> *Ghandarvas*, dragons or demons.
> (It is the result of your) being bound up in the net of your karma.
> There is no one who can save you.
> Suppose, from within the great ocean,
> You scoop up a handful of water.
> This suffering (that you are experiencing now) is comparable to this handful of water.
> The suffering you will later receive (in hell) is comparable to the great ocean.[97]

[96] *Ōjōyōshū*, 35c, quoted in Ibid., 42.
[97] *Ōjōyōshū*, 35c, quoted in Ibid., 42-43.

According to *Ōjōyōshū*, the monstrous demons in Abi have sixty four eyes and eight ox-heads crowning their own, each one emits fire from eighteen horns.[98] This hell is surrounded by seven concentric iron walls and seven iron nets. Below them are fences and forests of sharp blade-leaved trees and plants. In each of its four corners an enormous bronze dog stands. Its eyes are like lightning, its fangs are like swords, its teeth resemble mountains of knives and its tongue is as sharp as a thorn. Flames burst out from all of its pores and the smoke stenches like nothing on earth.

The Shōjuraigōji scroll concentrates on a demon, dropping molten iron into the open mouth of a damned and on another's tongue stretched out and nailed to the ground, while insects attack it.[99]

Hell paintings did not become popular until the middle of the Kamakura period. As Horton notes:

> In fact, concentration on avoidance of rebirth in the six undesirable paths, and *rokudō e* (*sic*) based on this, did not spread rapidly until the end of the twelfth century, when the famous *Jigoku zōshi*, *Gaki zōshi* and *Yamai zōshi*, all of which survive, were made […] There are no known *rokudō e* that date to the of Genshin. Moreover, illustrated copies of the *Ōjōyōshū* in which the drawings incontestably are related to the text, did not appear until the late 1600s, and did not become popular until the Edo period.[100]

However, visual transpositions of the *Ōjōyōshū* presented in the Shōjuraigōji set, became leitmotivs in later representations of hell and its tortures, although they where not the only influences in this narrative.

1.4 Main Characters and Landscapes in Hell Narratives

Along with the changes in narratives and representations of hell, also the narratives on a series of characters who populated this place of torture and retribution developed. They are deeply tied to topical landscapes and locations, that mark the necessary steps the spirits

[98] See *Ōjōyōshū*, 35c-36a, quoted in HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 10.
[99] See Ibid., 11.
[100] HORTON 2004. "The Influence of *Ōjōyōshū* in Late Tenth- and Early Eleventh- Century Japan.", 49.

have to walk through the landscape of afterlife, before reaching their final condition. Most of them, Datsueba 奪衣婆 and her male counterpart Ken'eō 懸衣翁, who stand on one side of the Sanzu no kawa 三途の川 – the river that separates the world of the living from the one of the dead – and Enma Daiō 閻魔 (the Great King Enma) are in charge to judge the dead and to decide their destinations. One of them, the *bodhisattva* Jizō 地蔵, performs the role of the merciful saviour, releasing the damned, in particular dead children trapped in Sai no kawara 賽の河原, from all the pain, the suffering and the restraints of hell.

They not only recur in narratives of hell. Although they are always associated to the reign of pain and retribution, they also developed their own independent representations and cults, with paintings, statues and halls dedicated to them scattered all around the territory of Japan.

1.4.1 Sanzu no Kawa, Datsueba and Ken'eō

When the spirits of the dead find themselves in the afterlife, the first hindrance they have to face is the large river which separates the world of the living from the one of the dead. This is the Sanzu no kawa, the "river of the three ways".[101] The idea of a river that has to be crossed after death firstly appeared in *Ōkagami* 大鏡,[102] as *watarigawa*, in the fourteenth century *Genpei Seisuiki* 源平盛衰記, as *watarigawa* and as Sanzu no kawa in *Taiheiki* 太平記.[103]

Sanzu no kawa is not an orthodox Buddhist concept. It does not appear in the *Abhidharmakośa*, not in any later Indian writings. It started to appear at a time when Buddhism was declining in India, namely around the 10th century. Sadakata suggests that the idea entered Buddhism form another region, possibly at the borders of India or in China. Another possibility is that the idea arouse within Buddhism itself in later times.[104]

[101] It can also be found as *souzugawa* 葬頭川, *watarigawa* 渡り川 and *mitsusegawa* 三ッ瀬川, see *Nihon minzoku daijiten*, 727. For a more specific tractation on this river, see also SADAKATA 1990. "Bukkyō no jigoku no setsu 仏教の地獄の説." In *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*; SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*.
[102] Ca. 1119.
[103] Ca. 1371.
[104] See SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*, 162-163.

In fact, the *Abhidharmakośa* mentions a sub-hell called Nadī Vaitaran□ī ("Burning River"), shaped as a river or moat. The name itself means has the connotation of "to cross". Maybe this hell took the connotations of a river to be crossed and became the forerunner of Sanzu no kawa.

According to the definition of Sanzu no kawa in Mochizuki's Buddhist dictionary, based on *Jizō bosatsu hosshin innen jūō kyō* 地蔵菩薩発心因縁十王経, a text that was probably compiled in Japan before the mid-thirteenth century,

> Near the Sōzuga [Sanzu no kawa], in the vicinity of Shokō, stretching together are the offices of the officials receiving those who cross. The great river in front is the Sōzuga. The dead who cross are called "forders of the river of hell". There are three crossing points: (1) the shoals of the upper stream [*sansui* 山水 in Japanese]; (2) the depths of the lower stream [*kōshin'en* 江深淵]; and (3) the bridged crossing [*ukyōto* 有橋渡].[105]

Demons sort the spirits according to the faults they committed during their lives. People who had a righteous conduct, are allowed to easily cross the river on the bridge. People who committed evil deeds that are considered light, can cross the river where the water is shallow and the stream is not strong. The ones who committed great faults must cross the river where the water is deep and it runs in fast and violent streams. Although they have to endure enormous suffering for seven days and seven nights, they finally reach the riverbank on the opposite side.[106]

> In front of the official building is a large tree, called *eryōju* 衣領樹. Two demons live in its shadow, one called Datsueba ["the old woman who rips out robes"], and the other Ken'eō ["the old man who hangs out robes"]. The female demon admonishes against thieving actions and breaks the fingers of both hands, and the male demon abhors lapses in rituals and bends the head against the feet. And men [who are first-time offenders in adultery] bear their women on the backs, and the ox-headed [demons who are the guardians of hell] bind the shoulders of two people with iron poles and chase them across the swift current. All gather under the tree. There the female demon rips off their robes and the male demon

[105] See *Mochizuki bukkyō daijiten*, 1621, quoted and translated in English in Ibid., 163-164. I added the *kanji* from the original.
[106] See *Nihon minzoku daijiten*, 727.

> hangs the robes on the branches. They weigh their sins by the degree of bending [of the branch], then send them to the court of judgment.[107]

This is the first step of a series of judgements the dead must undergo when they reach the afterlife. The next judgment, the definitive one, is in front of the terrible Enma.

1.4.2 Enma Daiō

Deities that were born in India assumed new and different roles, as they moved across Asia, becoming topical characters in hell narratives. The most renown among them is Enma,[108] the judge of the dead.

Originally called Yama, he firstly appears in the Vedas, as the first man to be born and the first to die. Being the first to reach the afterlife he was reborn as a deity, becoming the ruler of that realm and, subsequently, the judge of the spirits of the deceased.[109]

Enma and his role as a ruler of hell were absorbed in China, but during the Sui and Tang dynasties they were re-elaborated in a more local context. Notions of Enma were linked to pre-Buddhist believes and cults and the judge of the dead was associated to Mount Tai.[110] He also picked up new associates, associations and apparel in China.[111] The *Sūtra of the Ten Kings* from the tenth century discovered at Dunhuang display rudimentary iconographical components that redefined Enma and that maintained their currency for over a millennium.[112]

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[107] See *Mochizuki bukkyō daijiten*, 1621, quoted and translated in English in SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*, 163-164. I added the *kanji* from the original.

[108] Enma has many names. In the Veda is Yama; as a heavenly being in Buddhist cosmology he is often called Yamaten 夜摩天; in esoteric Buddhism he is Enmaten, finally his name as a judge or king of the dead is often Enma or Enra. He has also several names in Indic languages. See WAYMAN 1959a. "Studies in Yama and Māra (1).."; WAYMAN 1959b. "Studies in Yama and Māra (2).".

[109] For a complete analysis of early Yama in India and in Buddhist sources, see PIANTELLI 1988. "Riflessi del «Demonico» nello Specchio dell'India (e dell'Iran)." In *L'Autunno del Diavolo"Diabolos, Dialogos, Daimon"*. Torino: Bompiani; WAYMAN 1959a. "Studies in Yama and Māra (1)."; WAYMAN 1959b. "Studies in Yama and Māra (2).".

[110] On Taishan and the ten kings, see above.

[111] On depictions and pictorial representations of Enma in China, see MOTOI 2004. "“Yoshū jūōkyō” no shohon 『預修十王経』の諸本."; TEISER 1994. *The scripture on the ten kings and the making of purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*.

[112] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 12.

Fig. 8: Statue of Enma at Rokudō Chinnōji, Kyoto

Esoteric Buddhist images of the heavenly being Enma, arrived in Japan probably around the early ninth century, in *maṇḍala* of the two worlds.[113] In early Japanese *maṇḍala*, he wears *bodhisattva*-like clothing, as well as Taizan Fukun, and he appears as a graceful deity, in sets of scrolls dedicated to heavenly beings in the first half of the Heian period. The first apparition of Enma as judge of the dead, are to be found only in later Heian devotional paintings, whereas evidence that Enma in esoteric Buddhism was associated to hell, can be found in descriptions of Daigoji hall commissioned by Retired Emperor Go Shirakawa's daughter and completed in 1223. Documents report that the hall, dedicated to Enma, contained sculptures of him and of other figures portrayed in esoteric images of Enma and paintings of the surrounding walls of the hall represented hell.[114]

[113] On Enma's visual transformations and history in Japan, see NAKANO 1989. *Rokudō-e no kenkyū 六道絵の研究*, 124-149.
[114] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 13.

Enma distinctive, often independent representations in texts and images reflect his Indian origins, but his appearance and his character were strongly influenced by Chinese texts, like *Shiwang jing* and its illustrated versions. These texts, however, do not elaborate on Enma's actions and the details of his court. Japanese representations of the afterlife, thus, did not exclusively derive from this text. Also a recension of the *Shiwang jing* called *Jizō bosatsu hosshin innen jūō kyō*, that circulated widely, had a great influence on the development of Enma's narratives.

The section of Enma describes his great palace as having four iron gates, each flanked by banner stanchions, on the top of which beings shaped like human heads rest, that can see every human action. Moreover, the text explains that each living being is born together with a deity, called Dōshōjin 同生神 (together-born deity), that constantly record everything the living being does. Such witnesses report their findings to the king, who then forces the spirit of the deceased to look into the *Jōhari no kagami* 浄頗梨鏡 (Pristine Crystal Mirror) or *Gō no kagami* 業鏡 (Mirror of Karma). In the mirror every act, both evil and good, committed by the dead, is reflected and shown to the king, who judges the dead.[115]

In many Japanese hell paintings that portray such mirrors, the fault mostly displayed is killing, associated to vocational and culinary customs, such as the butchering of animals, fishing and hunting games. Other mirrors depict warriors engaged in sanguinary battles. Such iconography warned people engaged in certain professions and occupations of the retribution awaiting them.[116]

Enma is only briefly mentioned in Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū*. Nevertheless, the cult of the ten kings became firmly linked to hell from the thirteenth century onwards and even pictorial works that adhered to the narration of *Ōjōyōshū*, included a judgement scene.

[115] See Ibid; ISHIDA 1985. *Jigoku 地獄*; ISHIDA 1998. *Nihonjin to jigoku 日本人と地獄*; KAWAMURA 2000. *Jigoku meguri 地獄めぐり*; SADAKATA 1990. "Bukkyō no jigoku no setsu 仏教の地獄の説." In *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*; SAKAMOTO 1990. *Jigoku no sekai 地獄の世界*.
[116] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 16.

1.4.3 Sai no Kawara and Jizō

Also Sai no kawara, the "Riverbank of Suffering" seems to be a product of late Buddhism. It is located somewhere near the entrance of hell, although its connection to Sanzu no kawa is unclear. Many scholars place the origins of this concept in the village of Sahi, a burial ground for common people at the confluence of the Kamo and Katsura rivers in Kyoto, during the early Heian period,[117] however its origins are unclear. The original meaning of the word Sahi is also uncertain: it might derive from "rust" (*sabi* 錆), or "astringent" (*shibu* 渋), but it appears to be linked to the gods of boundaries (Sae no kami, Dōso-jin) in later times. Among the features of this deity, there is the power to prevent evil spirits from entering villages.[118] Other sources connect the origins of Sai no kawara to Saiin 西院 ("Western Temple") that marked the western border of medieval Kyoto. Rivers or dry riverbeds often constituted the boundaries of settlements, therefore "Saiin no kawara" might indicate the dry riverbed on the western outskirts of Kyoto.[119]

Sai no kawara first made its appearance in the *otogizōshi* 御伽草子 of the Muromachi period. It subsequently became popular as a place in which dead children and aborted foetuses gather and are tortured. According to Buddhist ideas of retribution, children cause suffering and restraint to their mother while in her womb. Yet they die without returning any of the kindness and efforts they received, thus causing further grieve to their parents. For this reason, they are reborn in Sai no kawara, where they have to build up small stupas by piling up stones and gravel, while tormented by the demons of hell. As soon as the stupa is nearly finished, the guards knock it down and the child has to start to build it from the beginning again and again.[120]

The association between dead children and Sai no kawara is also witnessed by "hymns", called *Saiin no kawara jizō wasan* 西院河原地藏和讚, that originated during the medieval period. These are often attributed to a great Buddhist monk, named Kūya 空也 (903-972), famous for his attentions for the needs of common people, although some scholars

[117] Its existence is mentioned in records dating back to the latter half of the ninth century. See *Mochizuki bukkyō daijiten*, 1422.
[118] See SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*, 166.
[119] See HAGA 1980. *Sōgi no rekishi 葬儀の歴史*, 117-118.
[120] On Sai no kawara see *Nihon minzoku daijiten*, 679; LAFLEUR 1992. *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan*, 56-66; SADAKATA 1990;1997.

maintain this attribution is fallacious, being the hymns clearly of a fourteenth or fifteenth century origin.[121]

> We devote ourselves to the Three Treasures […]. In this world ass is transient. In the fact that children may die before their parents, there are various kinds of sadness. Young children, one or two, or three, or four, or younger that ten, are separated from their mother's breasts, gathered together on the riverbank of Sahi, where for all the hours of the day they carry big stones and pile them into mounds. For all the hours of the night they pick up small stones and pile them into stupas. They pile the first layer [of stones] for Father, the second for Mother. On the third they face the west and place their tiny hands together, for their brothers and sisters in their native towns and themselves. Oh, how pitiful, young children crying and crying as they carry stones. Their hands and feet are lacerated by the stones, blood streams from their fingers, staining their bodies red. "I miss you, Father! I miss you, Mother!" Crying for their parents they fall down, crying as though they were in pain. The fearsome guards of hell with their eyes as mirrors reflecting the sun, glare at the young ones. "The stupa mounds you have built are crooked and displeasing to the sight. They will bring you no merit as they are. Build them again, praying for your buddhahood." Thus howling at the children they flail their iron scourges and break down the stupa mounds. The poor little children throw themselves down and weep…
>
> A stream runs between the banks. The thought of the grieving parents in the Sahā world reaches there, and their shadows are reflected [on the stream]. Wishing to relieve their hunger, the children crawl and approach, longing for the [mother's] breast. At that moment MAHER shade immediately disappears, and the [stream] water burns as bright as a flame, scorching the children's bodies, and the children fall down. Uncountable are such unbearable things.[122]

Another example was translated by Lafcadio Hearn in one of his works, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*:

> Not of this world is the story of sorrow.
> The story of the Sai no kawara,
> At the roots of the Mountain of Shide;
> Not of this world is the tale; yet 'tis most pitiful to hear.

[121] See Ibid., 62-64, where one of these hymns is also translated. Other scholars maintain that most of the *wasan* originated in the eighteenth century. See, for instance, HAYAMI 1975. *Jizō shinkō 地蔵信仰*, 152-156.
[122] The original poem can be found in *Mochizuki bukkyō daijiten*, 1422-1423. This translation in English prose is in SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*, 167-168.

For together in the Sai no kawara are assembled
Children of tender age in multitude,
Infants but two or three years old,
Infants of four or five, infants of less than ten:

In the Sai-no-Kawara are they gathered together.
And the voice of their longing for their parents,
The voice of their crying for their mothers and their fathers
-- “Chichi koishi! Haha koishi!" --
Is never as the voice of the crying of children in this world,
But a crying so pitiful to hear
That the sound of it would pierce through flesh and bone.
And sorrowful indeed the task which they perform.
Gathering the stones of the bed of the river,
Therewith to heap the tower of prayers.
Saying prayers for the happiness of father, they heap the first tower;
Saying prayers for the happiness of mother, they heap the second tower;
Saying prayers for their brothers, their sisters, and all whom they
loved at home, they heap the third tower.
Such, by day, are their pitiful diversions.
But ever as the sun begins to sink below the horizon,
Then do the Oni, the demons of the hells, appear,
And say to them:

What is this that you do here?
Lo! your parents still living in the Shaba-world
Take no thought of pious offering or holy work
They do nought but mourn for you from the morning unto the evening.
Oh, how pitiful! alas! how unmerciful!
Verily the cause of the pains that you suffer
Is only the mourning, the lamentation of your parents.
And saying also, "Blame never us!"
The demons cast down the heaped-up towers,
They dash the stones down with their clubs of iron.
But lo! the teacher Jizō appears.
All gently he comes, and says to the weeping infants:

Be not afraid, dears! be never fearful!

Poor little souls, your lives were brief indeed!
Too soon you were forced to make the weary journey to the Meido,
The long journey to the region of the dead!
Trust to me! I am your father and mother in the Meido,
Father of all children in the region of the dead.

And he folds the skirt of his shining robe about them;
So graciously takes he pity on the infants.
To those who cannot walk he stretches forth his strong shakujo;
And he pets the little ones, caresses them, takes them to his loving bosom
So graciously he takes pity on the infants.

Namu Amida Butsu![123]

If the parents mourn their children, their voices sound like the scolding cries of demons to the children. The hot tears of the fathers become boiling water raining down on the children and the mother's tears become ice, imprisoning them.

This painful landscape populated by demons and suffering children is associated also to the *bodhisattva* Jizō (Skt. Kṣitigarbha, "Earth Storehouse"). This deity originated in India, but it became the focus of an independent cult in China, where he was known as Ti Tsang, during the Tang dynasty. The Indian *Jūrinkyō* 十輪経 is one of the most influential texts on this *bodhisattva*, emphasizing his efficacy in saving living beings throughout the six realms of rebirth – hell in particular – and promoting his ability to provide merits in this world. [124]

Texts about Jizō were copied in Japan during the Nara period, but, in early centuries, the *bodhisattva* was important primarily as a subject of esoteric prayers and practices. His role as an intermediary and saviour from the depths of hell became prominent only in the tenth century, when notions of *mappō* 末法, the period of the "End of the (Buddhist) Law", hell and Pure Land became widespread.[125] A key role in promoting faith in Jizō was played by

[123] HEARN 1894. *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, 9.
[124] On the development of Jizō and the cult dedicated to him, see HAYAMI 1975. *Jizō shinkō 地蔵信仰.*
[125] See Ibid., 37-42, 63-73 and HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 19. On the notion of *mappō*, see MARRA 1988a. "The Development of Mappō Thought in Japan (1)."; MARRA 1988b. "The The Development of Mappō Thought in Japan (2).".

mid-eleventh century *Jizō bosatsu reigenki* 地蔵菩薩霊験記, considered a source for miraculous stories about Jizō included in the twelfth-century *Konjaku monogatarishū*.[126]

Also handscrolls based on these stories and dating from the thirteenth century, as well as and illustrations of temple-foundations legends,[127] contributed to offer a testimony of Jizō's mercy and powers to save people from hell. In these narratives, the *bodhisattva* often sacrifices himself, by exchanging his body with the damned (*migawari* 身代り), undergoing the tortures in his/her place and thus permitting him/her to escape from hell.

The role of Jizō became more complex, as he was associated to Enma, who, in turn, came to be perceived as a manifestation of the *bodhisattva*. The source of this connection is thought to be *Jūrinkyō*, which describes Enma among forty-two manifestations of Jizō. Already in the ninth-century, *Nihon ryōiki* reports a story in which Enma tells a visitor from the world of the living that he is called the *bodhisattva* Jizō in his country.[128]

With the affirmation of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 ("original ground/manifestation") associative processes, thought in the eleventh to twelfth centuries,[129] Japanese paintings of the ten kings came frequently to represent a floating Jizō above Enma's head, as well as other buddhas or *bodhisattva*s suspended above the other nine kings as well.[130]

Hirasawa traces a brief account of the development of the concept of *honji suijaku* in paintings, in particularly referred to the ten kings:

> The inclusion of *honji* above the kings attest that wisdom and compassion underlie their seemingly harsh verdicts. As correspondences of originals of originals to manifestations settled into standard formulae, the importance – and size – of *honji* increased. […] The late

[126] Valuable translations of some of these stories are pre provided in KURATA DYKSTRA 1978. "Jizō the most merciful: Tales from *Jizō Bosatsu Reigenki*.".
[127] See, for instance *Yata Jizō engi emaki* 矢田地蔵縁起絵巻 and *Yūzū nenbutsu engi* 融通念仏縁起 , in HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 22.
[128] *Nihon ryōiki* 日本霊異記 3:9, 143, 269. See also NAKAMURA 1997 (or. 1973); 234.
[129] The *honji suijaku* associative paradigm is still subject of debate. For a better understanding of it, see TEEUWEN (ed.) 2003. *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*. A brief account of Enma-Jizō association can also be found in HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 23-27.
[130] On ten-kings paintings, see MIYA 1992. "Jūō kyō-e shūi 十王経絵拾遺.".

> medieval period, reflecting in art the impact of the Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281, saw a heightened sense of what was indigenous and as increased interest in the guardianship of Japan's kami. Repudiating the fruits of centuries of self-imposed cultural colonialism, some intellectuals began to reverse traditional *honji suijaku* hierarchies, recasting native kami as "originals," with buddhas and *bodhisattva* as their mere manifestations.[131]

With time, although paintings the ten kings tend to disappear and only Enma and Jizō are represented, their association remains. In *Kumano kanjin jikkai zu* 熊野観心十界図 (or *Kumano kanjin jikkai mandara* 熊野観心十界曼荼羅), pictorialization of the six realms connected to esoteric Buddhism, used by itinerant priests to explain the doctrine from late Kamakura to late Edo periods, although Jizō and Enma are depicted in different locations of hell, they look in each other's eyes, to symbolize their connection.[132]

The link with Enma was not the only association with Jizō. Indeed, this *bodhisattva* was also associated to liminal spaces. As LaFleur points out:

> images of this *bodhisattva* were frequently assembled in groups of six (*roku-Jizō*) and placed either along the sides of roads or, especially, at junctures, where two or more roads would meet. In this sense the metaphysical landscape or cosmology was copied back onto the physical one in a very graphic way. […] Equally important in the history of Jizō, however, was its iconographic downgrading. The early sculptures, for instance those of the ninth and tenth century still extant in Japan, […] were exquisitely crafted, but also austere – distant and holy rather than proximate and imperfect. This, of course, was precisely what changed with time and with the movement of Jizō into and within the lives of the common people of Japan.[133]

Liminal spaces like riverbeds, seacosts or wastelands outside settlements boundaries were often burial sites. This provided the connection of Jizō with death and Sai no kawara.[134]

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[131] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 26-27.
[132] *Kanjin* can also be pronounced *Kanshin*. There is an enormous deal of research on this kind of *mandala*. See, for instance, NEI 2007. *Kumano bikuni wo etoku 熊野比丘尼を絵解く*; OGURISU 2004. "Kumano kanjin jikkai mandara no seiritsu to tenkai 熊野観心十界曼荼羅の成立と展開."
[133] LAFLEUR 1992. *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan*, 49.
[134] See IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, 156-157.

In *Konjaku monogatarishū*, this figure appears like a little or young monk, who helps people not only to find a way out of home, but also in everyday life problems. Although it is often thought that the identification of Jizō with children is based on the concept that he is their special protector, this is not found in Buddhist scriptures, nor in Chinese stories, conveying the fact that this association developed in Japan. Over the centuries of the medieval period, the images of Jizō became more and more childlike. Originally portrayed as an adult and dignified character, the *bodhisattva* changed into a child-monk, a benign figure always ready to help people in restraint.[135]

1.5 Medieval and Premodern Developments

From the introduction of the conception of hell in Japan, it changed through time, from a place of automatic, unmediated retribution based in the law of karma, to an increasingly articulated and hierarchically structured authoritarian system of judges. Every guilt was meticulously recorded and each fault required eons of indescribable pains and tortures to burn away the karma it caused, in order to let the damned be reborn out of hell.

There were also, however, ways of compassionately assisting deceased loved ones, "improving one's change and getting around the system. Such methods for securing leniency accommodated the needs of believers, while simultaneously serving the interests of religious officiants".[136]

If, during the classical period, narratives of hell were produced and consumed inside an inner circle of monks and aristocrats, during the medieval period, commissioners and consumers of hell paintings grew to include also non-aristocratic classes.

The estate system gradually deteriorated and temples faced a critical loss of income from their land holding. This pushed many to draw commoners into their economic support system. The well-established monastic institutions, namely the Shingon and Tendai sects in Kyoto and the six schools in Nara, had gradually secured financial independence from

[135] See HAYAMI 1975. *Jizō shinkō 地蔵信仰*, 158.
[136] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 17.

aristocratic patrons, by becoming tax-collecting landowners. They started to forge their own authority system, by adopting a secular economic and militaristic structure.[137]

Another way to ensure economic independence, was promoting the powers of the main deities of the temple, using painted handscrolls. A key feature among these merits was saving people from hell.[138] By the late medieval and early premodern periods, in fact, itinerant preachers, both monks and nuns, practiced used images of hell, performing in outdoor marketplaces and on the streets, a practice called *etoki* 絵解き. This was not a new practice in the medieval period, but in the thirteenth century, a division between temple *etoki* preachers and itinerant ones emerged. The itinerants who directly approached commoners reflect a new, or renewed attitude concerning soteriology on the one hand, and a critique of clergy on the other. As Kaminishi points out, "by convention, clerics were not allowed to preach to nonaristocracy; only resignating from the clergy were they able to offer a soteriological path for lay commoners".[139] Itinerants also used to sell ritual services and talismans, in order to guarantee salvation and release from punishments to their customers.[140]

These practices provided not only direct income for the temples or the itinerants. They were also a source of indirect earnings, since they attracted visitors, tourists and pilgrims to the temples and the places sported and promoted through *etoki*.[141]

By the Muromachi period, in fact, processes of mandalization of mountains were widespread. As soon as esoteric Buddhist was introduced to Japan, a complex interaction between Shinto and Buddhism provoked the emergence of sacred areas, namely sites of the

[137] See PAYNE (ed.) 1998. *Re-visioning Kamakura Buddhism*.
[138] See SATŌ 1987. *Nihon chūsei no kokka to bukkyō 日本中世の国家と仏教*, 43-46.
[139] KAMINISHI 2006. *Explaining Pictures. Buddhist Propaganda and Etoki storytelling in Japan*, 75.
[140] See FUKUE 2005. *Tateyama mandara. Etoki to shinkō no sekai 立山曼荼羅：絵解きと信仰の世界*; KAMINISHI 2006. *Explaining Pictures. Buddhist Propaganda and Etoki storytelling in Japan*; WATANABE 1995, 227-279.
[141] The relationship between religious practices, pilgrimages and tourism has been studied in several works. An extensive bibliography can be found in FORMANEK 1998. "Pilgrimage in the Edo Period. Forerunner of Modern Domestic Tourism? The Example of the Pilgrimage to Mount Tateyama." In *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*; READER 2006. *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning And Practice in Shikoku*; READER 1997. "Editors' introduction: Pilgrimage in the Japanese religious tradition.".

realization of buddhahood.[142] Differently from other Buddhist schools, which considered buddhaood something to be achieved in a space that was not of this world, esoteric Buddhism proposed an idea of salvation to be realized in this world, in this life, with this body. The result was the sacralisation of actual spaces around Japan.

Buddhist cosmology was superimposed to and visualized on mountains and valleys, merging with earlier mountain cults. Grapard points out three categories of sacred mountains that were chosen as holy sites of practice in pre-Buddhist times: the ones that were "revered for their importance in agriculture", the ones that, "possessing a main hall or *honden*, may be seen simply as a contact place of the divine" and, third:

> […] there is a […] crucial factor in the formation of early mountain creeds: the notion of the mountains as the real of the dead. In Shinto, just as the nature in time-in-life is seen as being different from the nature of time-in-death, so a distinction is made between the space-of-life and the space-of-death. This is precisely the same distinction that is made between the plains and the mountains.[143]

Thus, mountains began to be considered an actualization of Buddhist cosmology, not only of hell and the six realms of rebirth, but also of the four realms of Pure Form,[144] totalizing the ten stages (*jikkai* 十界) in which mountains were divided.

Whether associated with the travel of ascetics, the journeys of the aristocrats of the Heian period, the wanderings of impoverished or sick Tokugawa peasants on the pilgrimage route around the island of Shikoku, these sacred sites have been an enormous attraction throughout the history of Japan. Overtime, the two main Shingon *maṇḍala* were projected over geographical areas to create actual and natural ones. The number of these sites grew gradually and systematically, attracting an increasing number of practitioners and pilgrims, especially during the Edo period.[145]

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[142] GRAPARD 1982. "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions.", 202.
[143] Ibid., 200-201. On the cult of the mountains, see also RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*.
[144] See SADAKATA 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins*.
[145] See GRAPARD 1982. "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions.", 210.

During the Edo period, not only pilgrimages, but also images of hell proliferated like never before. As Hirasawa points out:

> Artists have a prescribed image bank to draw on; iconographical elements in countless paintings remain traceable to templates established by the Ningbo-style and Shōjuraigōji hell paintings. The performance of hell involved a standard set of players, backdrops, and props, and a pithy, repetitive visual vocabulary. Artists freely combined or isolated components to suit the tastes and demands of patrons and audiences.[146]

Representations of hell were routinely displayed at temples, festivals, and marketplaces. In the late medieval and early modern periods, Kumano *bikuni* ("Kumano nuns") used portable *Kumano kanjin jikkai zu* for *etoki*, contributing to the presence of hell in the streets. "These paintings incorporated new hell for women, such as the Hell of the Blood Lake, the Hell of Barren Women and the Hell of Two Women, further transforming Japanese conceptions".[147]

Among these newly emerged hells, the Hell of the Blood Lake (chi no ike jigoku 地の池地獄) is probably one of the most represented. It firstly appeared in the *Sūtra of the Blood Bowl* (*Xuepen jing* 血盆経 *Ketsubonkyō* in Japanese), an apocryphal scripture of Chinese origin that describes the *arhat* Mulian (Skt. Maudgalyāyana) descending to hell to look for his mother. As he discovers a pond full of blood, in which several women were drowning, he asks a warden whether there are no men in this hell. The warden replies that this hell is reserved for women, who have defiled the gods with their blood. Having found his mother, Mulian is unable to help her out. In despair, he goes to the Buddha and asks her to save her mother. The Buddha preaches the *Sūtra of the Blood Bowl*, that firstly explains the cause of women's sufferings: women who died in labour fall into a blood pool formed by the accumulation of female menses and are forced to drink that blood. This is caused by the fact that the blood women spill during parturition contaminates the ground and provokes the wrath of the earth god. The text continues explaining that blood contamination and pollution occurs in two different ways: when the blood shed at childbirth touches the

[146] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 31-32.
[147] Ibid., 32.

ground and when the garments stained with that blood are washed in the river, thus polluting the water used to prepare tea offerings to the buddhas and other worthies.[148]
The *Sūtra of the Blood Bowl* seems to have spread in Japan during the medieval period. However, commentaries emphasized menstrual blood, rather than parturition blood, leading to some misleading translations of the scripture's title as "*Menstruation Sūtra*". As Faure points out: "in this interpretation, the pollution caused by blood now affects the entire pantheon, and it becomes the symbol of woman's cardinal sin".[149] This *sūtra* played a promint role in Jōdo shinshū and Sōtō schools, also inspiring devotional hymns (mainly in Jōdo), like the above-mentioned *wasan*, that where sung and chanted by women associations (*kō* 講), especially linked to Jizō cults.[150]

These types of images and practices rendered hell in shorthand, managing to standardize its representations. Scenes of Enma sitting at his desk, sinners chased by demons, pulled away tongues, pulverized or minced bodies were immediately recognizable, so they became extremely popular among commoners all over the country.

1.6 Emplacing Hell in Localities

During the Edo period, however, not only representations of hell, but also of monsters (*bakemono* 化け物, *obake* お化け or, in more general terms, *yōkai* 妖怪) and demons (*oni* 鬼), became extremely popular. Several studies tried to show a relationship between symbols of monstrosity and periods of social, economic, political unease. This led the ethnologist Komatsu[151] to suggest a link between representations of monsters/demons in narratives, visual, performative art and "times of crisis".

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[148] A translation of the *Sūtra of the Blood Bowl* can be found in NAKANO 1998. "Women and Buddhism: Blood Impurity and Motherhood." In *Women and Religion in Japan*, 80-82. On the Blood Pond Hell and the this sūtra, see also FAURE 2003. *The Power of Denial. Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*, 73-78.
[149] See FAURE 2003. *The Power of Denial. Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*, 77.
[150] These hyms are not only *Ketsubonkyō wasan*, but also *Chi no ike jigoku wasan*. See NAKANO 1998. "Women and Buddhism: Blood Impurity and Motherhood." In *Women and Religion in Japan*, 78. On the cults of Jizō, see HAYAMI 1975. *Jizō shinkō 地蔵信仰.*
[151] Komatsu Kazuhiko is possibly the most famous ethnologist who carries out this approach and develops these ideas. See, for instance, KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは*, in which he discusses his ideas with Naitō Masatoshi. A more recent study that analyzes the relationship between monstrosity and social deviance, especially during the end of the Edo period and the beginning of the Meiji is in relation is FIGAL 1999. *Civilization and Monsters. Spirits of Modernity in Meiji*

In his analysis, power and authority had, from the imperial government in the seventh century to the founding of the military rule of the Tokugawa in the seventeenth century, relied not only on the conquest of real enemies, but subsequently on the maintenance of symbolic control over "demon" enemies, placed in peripheral areas of the realm or concentrated in determined zones within the borders, that were charged with religious meaning. In order to draw an aura of authority and awe on those areas, religious ceremonies were performed in the sites. If such symbolic control was inadequate – for instance during times of famine, epidemics and other natural catastrophes, or in case of invasions – the outside demons would escape control, getting in touch with elements of mainstream society, usually those who, for some reasons, could be identified as possible threads to the imposed order. Therefore, this elements of potential deviance could be indirectly controlled by stigmatizing the demons, in a scapegoat mechanism aimed to uphold the integrity of a ordered social and power system, whose authority laid on calming the fears of its subjects, whether those fears be of natural or supernatural origin.[152]

According to Komatsu, then, from the Nara period to modern times, an "other world" – be it demonic or monstrous – associated to the dark outer lands of the realm, was managed by emperors as well as shōguns through religious symbolic practices, in order to secure and display power and authority. It has also been used by discontented factions (peasants, disgruntled samurai, religious groups, opposition parties) as a means of protest, through reversal processes, namely carnivalesque practices and parody, or by directly representing authorities themselves in demonic terms. In this sense, representations of monstrosity "were consciously being used as signifiers in a discourse while they were being produced as commodities to gratify morbid fascinations in the marketplace".[153]

Komatsu's interpretive model certainly presents several limits, because of its generalizing features and a certain lack of analysis of historical changes that undermines its general applicability. Yet it doubtlessly provides a starting point for an analysis of symbolic

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Japan, in particular the first chapter, "*Bakumatsu Bakemono*", 21-37. As far as I understand, this is the only monographic study in Western a language on the monstrous and modernization.

[152] See KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha* 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは, in particular 9-72.

[153] FIGAL 1999. *Civilization and Monsters. Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan*, 23.

representations of monstrosity in relationship with the socio-economic and political structure. According to Figal, Komatsu's model

> […] does offer a way other than the grossly economic to explain, for example, the licensing of pleasure quarters, the strict regulation of itinerant travel, and the increasing number of sumptuary laws applied during the last part of the Tokugawa reign, when the means of central government control rapidly decayed.[154]

This kind of approach is a holistic one, that shows correspondences and refrains among symbolic, social, economic and political levels. In this sense, Figal, following Komatsu's approach, presents, as a test-case Ryōgoku Bridge in Tokyo, "the site of the most famous late-Tokugawa-period form of popular entertainment, known as the *misemono* (exhibitions, sideshows)", in which freaks and monsters were displayed as an attraction.

> A whale washed ashore and advertised as a monster sunfish, a hideously ugly "demon girl," a scale-covered reptile-child, the fur covered "Bear Boy," the hermaphroditic "testicle girl," giants, dwarfs, strong men (and women), the famous "mist-descending flower blossoming man" who gulped air and expelled it in "modulated flatulent arias," and the teenager who could pop out his eyeballs and hang weights from his optic nerve […].[155]

Figal's interests lies in narratives about the weird (*fushigi* 不思議), whereas Komatsu's analysis focuses on symbolic discourses about *oni*. Both of them, though, consider these symbolic narratives on the place, focusing on sites that were linked to those symbolic narratives. The topic of this study, representations of hell, might be considered a subset of Figal's analysis, since it is much more determined and specified, as well as it is certainly linked to Komatsu's analysis of the demonic.

If, on one hand, images and representations of hell spread all over the country during the Edo period, together with itinerant monks and nuns, *etoki* performers, and the growing number of pilgrimage practitioners; on the other, emplacing hell in actual spaces implied a production of meaning and an attribution of value to the place and the people connected to

[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid., 21-22.

it. In this sense, the theoretical approach proposed by Komatsu seems to perfectly fit my topic as well. However, there are at least two reasons why his paradigm is not always applicable to my test-cases.

The first reason lies on the fact that actual hells are scattered around the territory of Japan. Therefore, the ways and the reasons why those places were associated to hell change not only according to the areas, but they also depend on the period they started to be considered as such. Therefore, it is impossible to find out a holistic model that explains in general terms why those places were considered hell, what their meaning was and is and how it has been produced throughout history.

It is true that, generally speaking, actual hells are, in first instance, obviously associated in some ways to death and/or rituals for the dead. They are often placed on the mountains and present some volcanic activities, with sulphuric springs and desolated landscapes. However, only some of them (i.e. Kumano, Osorezan and Tateyama, in Present-day Toyama Prefecture) are connected to the mandalization of mountains and their cults (*sangaku shinkō* 山岳信仰).

Other places – like the Valleys of Hell (*jigokudani* 地獄谷) in Hakone, Nagano and Beppu – present the same geomorphic characteristic, but they are not a part of any *maṇḍala*. They were considered hell simply because they were liminal spaces difficult and dangerous to reach, as well as perfect sites for ambushes, thus causing the death of several travellers.

Another example is Rokuhara in Kyoto, the place in which the whole pollution was supposed to concentrate, in a city that was built according to the principles of divination (*onmyōdō* 陰陽道) as a *maṇḍala* itself. It actually was a liminal space, since it was on the outskirts of the city on the eastern side of the Kamo river, but it is not a mountain area, nor does it present any volcanic activity.

Even more different is the case of Hirano, presently a quarter of Osaka, that does not even present any characteristics of spatial liminality.[156]

Another significant difference among the test-cases taken into consideration in this study concerns the presence of people in each site. This is linked to Komatsu's ideas of representations of alterity or liminality as monstrous or the demonic. Needless to say, this model is applicable only in cases in which symbolic narratives of the weird are emplaced in a site that is linked in some ways to some groups of people, as Figal shows in his analysis of the Ryōgoku Bridge case.

In the test-cases I will take into consideration, this happens only twice directly (groups of people actually "living in hell", in Rokuhara and Hirano) and twice indirectly (people living in villages or neighbourhoods symbolically linked to Osorezan and Tateyama). In this cases, especially the direct ones, Komatsu's theory is applicable, since people connected to hell used to deal with death and funerary rites and were, therefore, stigmatized. Thus, representations of hell result related to construction of identity and/or discrimination, as Komatsu suggests. Yet, in fact, there are differences even among these cases: people connected to Tateyama have never been stigmatized,[157] nor discriminated, but I am going to discuss these differences in the next chapters. So far, suffice it to say that, in some cases, symbolic representations of hell are indeed linked to symbolic construction of identity.

However in other places, like Hakone, there are no people related to the Hell Valley, but some small religious groups (*kō*) that used to perform cultic practices in the site, without being necessarily connected to it in their daily lives. In this case, Komatsu's paradigm is not applicable, since there are no groups of deviants to be stigmatized as *oni*.

In other words, what I am trying to do with this study is modelling the relationships between the symbolic level, the socio-economic one and meaning making in contemporary Japan in a heuristic way, starting from Komatsu's generalizing assumptions. Therefore,

[156] In the next chapters, I will present one example for each of these categories. I will also try to make each process of actualization of hell clearer. So far, I would only like to present the macro-differences among the various sites, in order to deconstruct the generalizing features of Komatsu's approach.
[157] See FUKUE 2005. *Tateyama mandara. Etoki to shinkō no sekai 立山曼荼羅：絵解きと信仰の世界.*

given Komatsu's theoretical standpoint, I will try to show that each situation, taken case by case and placed in space and time, can be analyzed holistically, since the meaning historically accorded to and produced by determined symbolic discourses is not independent from socio-economic variables in the place.

Moreover, representations of hell spread around the territory of Japan through *etoki*, paintings, *maṇḍala*, and prints, especially during the Edo period, as stated above. They became a part of a shared knowledge among commoners, as well as a way to promote cultic practices, pilgrimages and tourism in some places. This contributed to create complex ideoscapes, ethnoscapes,[158] and economic dynamics that modified the meaning making of the places themselves.

Yet, the direct correspondence between the symbolic and socio-economic levels, that can be noticed during the medieval period, can be found, at latest, until the end of the Edo period: hell had to surrender to modernization and progress.

1.7 Bakumatsu *and Modernization*

If, on one hand, emplacing hell and considering it on a local scale presents the above mentioned methodological problem, the fact that the *bakumatsu* 幕末 and early Meiji period witnessed a rich flourishing of representations of the monstrous and of hell on a national level remains a matter of fact. From the array of disruptive events of *bakumatsu* Japan – earthquakes, fires, rice riots, disease epidemics, the arrival of Commodore Perry's "blackships" and the civil wars leading to the Meiji reforms – catastrophic change itself was often portrayed as a monster to be feared.

The development of an economically powerful, but politically not represented merchant class and of a thriving, but officially disdained so called "popular culture", had also contributed to a social existence among the populace that had become increasingly disjointed from the official ideological representations of social order and the organization

[158] For a definition and a discussion of the terms, see APPADURAI 1988a. "Putting Hierarchy in its Place."; APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

of society in the Confucian hierarchical division in classes (*shi-nō-kō-shō* 士農工商: warriors, farmers, artisans and merchants), informed by these representations.

Beginning from the mid-1860s, a number of protests appeared all around the national territory and thongs of pilgrims gathered in religious sites, especially the temple complex at Ise, where the regalia of the mythical past of Japan's imperial house resided. This phenomenon was not new *per se*, since public pilgrimages to sacred places periodically occurred throughout Japanese history. What was new in the 1860s was the massive intensity of pilgrimages, that were often characterized by carnivalesque and nearly orgiastic practices.[159] In the 1860s new or revitalized religious sects exploded onto the scene in central Japan, along with the usual crowds of pilgrims. Peasant uprisings (*hyakushō ikki* 百姓一揆) rose in number, until food riots and rent riots reach their peak year of 1866, displaying utopian narratives of *yonaoshi* 世直し, "world renewal", that were extremely intense during this decade.[160] At the same time, urban carnivals competed with riots, burnings and rioters or revelers made a shamble of several downtown areas, as they sang and danced about a better world to come.[161]

A famous example of *yonaoshi* narratives that spread out during the *bakumatsu* is represented by *namazu-e* 鯰絵, a genre of prints representing a catfish (*namazu*) that began to circulate in great numbers in Edo, after several wards were devastated by the Ansei earthquake in 1855. Based on the belief that the earthquake was caused by the anomalous activity of an enormous and prodigious catfish that laid beneath the *kanameishi* 要石

[159] On peasant uprisings and protest in late Tokugawa and early Meii Japan, see NAJITA 1982. *Conflict in Modern Japanese History. The Neglected Tradition*; VLASTOS 1986. *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan*; WILSON 1982b. "Pursuing the Millennium in the Meiji restoration." In *Conflict in Modern Japanese History. The Neglected Tradition*; WILSON 1992. *Patriots and Redeemers in Japan. Motives in the Meiji Restoration*.

[160] *Yonaoshi* and millenarian movements have been analyzed by an impressive amount of studies. See, for instance, BLACKER 1971. "Millenarian Aspects of the New Religions in Japan." In *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture (Studies in the Modernization of Japan)*; HORI 1968. *Folk Religion in Japan. Continuity and Change*; MULLINS 1998. *Religion & Society in Modern Japan*; NAJITA 1982. *Conflict in Modern Japanese History. The Neglected Tradition*; OUWEHAND 1964. *Namazu-e and Their Themes. An Interpretive Approach to Some Aspects of Japanese Folk Religions*; SHIMAZONO 2004a. *From Salvation to Spirituality. Popular Religious Movements in Modern Japan*; VLASTOS 1986. *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan*; WILSON 1982a. "New Religions. A Resposte."; WILSON 1982b. "Pursuing the Millennium in the Meiji restoration." In *Conflict in Modern Japanese History. The Neglected Tradition*; WILSON 1992. *Patriots and Redeemers in Japan. Motives in the Meiji Restoration*.

[161] WILSON 1982b. "Pursuing the Millennium in the Meiji restoration." In *Conflict in Modern Japanese History. The Neglected Tradition*.

(pivot stone) at Kahima shrine about sixty miles east of Edo, the prints portrayed a monstrous catfish in the role of a *yonaoshi* god destroying Edo, so that it may be renewed.[162]

Many more examples of protests and revolts that assumed narratives of monstrosity to connote themselves can be found all around the national territory during this period: so-called "monster riots" (*yōkai sōdō* 妖怪騒動) in Osaka, goblin riots (*tengu sōdō* 天狗騒動) in Mito and Shimōsa (present day Ibaraki and Chiba prefectures)[163] are only two of them. Among these uprisings, the *eejanaika sōdō* (ええじゃないか騒動) is mostly famous, occurred in 1867, an orgiastic movement that spread across a wide band of Japan's most densely populated geographic heartland, from Hiroshima in the west, back in an easterly direction to Nagoya and Inland Sea and Tokushima in Awa Province on the island of Shikoku.[164]

Another striking appearance of representations of monstrosity is the daily appearance of dozens of big *bakemono* kites flying above the art district of Azabu.[165]

> According to one anecdotal account, the flying of kites with pictures of ghosts, monsters, bloody heads, and skulls became a frequent means to draw business among the competing artists, further attesting to the extent of which the grotesque and the supernatural figured in the economy of imagination and desire of consumers and producers alike. […] Motives behind the hoax are unreported, but it could have been a simple practical joke done out of boredom, or a sensationalistic advertisement of the supernatural artistic productions in the area, or a conscious gesture of civil disobedience done in a truly carnivalesque spirit. What

[162] On *namazu-e* and their interpretation and analysis, see OUWEHAND 1964. *Namazu-e and Their Themes. An Interpretive Approach to Some Aspects of Japanese Folk Religions* and KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは.*

[163] For a complete explanation of these riots, see KOSCHMANN 1982. "Action as Text: Ideology in the *Tengu* Insurrection." In *Conflict in Modern Japanese History. The Neglected Tradition*, 83.

[164] The *eejanaika sōdō* has been widely studied and reported in several studies. See, for instance, BLACKER 1971. "Millenarian Aspects of the New Religions in Japan." In *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture (Studies in the Modernization of Japan)*; HORI 1968. *Folk Religion in Japan. Continuity and Change*; RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*; TAKAGI 1979. *Eejanaika ええじゃないか*; WILSON 1992. *Patriots and Redeemers in Japan. Motives in the Meiji Restoration*, 95-121.

[165] KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは*, 26.

> is clear in these examples of cultural productions […] is a preeminent appeal to creatures of another world, whether gods or demons, to instigate a change in the present one.[166]

The response of the government to these uprising and spreading of symbolic discourses of the demonic was repression of the uprisings on one side, regulation on the other, especially according to the Meiji reforms: "Despite the hideousness of some exhibits, the *misemono* during the Edo period were free from official censure and boomed in the nineteenth century, suggesting that authorities did not consider them particularly threatening".[167] Yet, within five years after the Meiji reforms, *misemono* themselves became the targets of a series of restrictive laws and ordinances that started their decline. The Ryōgoku carnival did not suit the new morality, technology and economy that the Meiji establishment was pursuing for the country. In 1870 fraudulent displays were banned by law; an ordinance in 1872 prohibited the display of deformities on the ideological basis of human rights; in 1872 government requisition of lands for the building of telegraph offices appropriated the western Ryōgoku plaza and ordinances in 1873 banned the makeshift construction of temporary screen booths such as those used in *misemono*, which were not subject to property taxes.[168]

Moreover, the Meiji reforms, that consisted in first instance in a progressive centralization of political and bureaucratic power, together with a progressive industrialization of the country, with subsequent migrations from the countryside to industrial areas, had further consequences on the life and economy on the rural areas of Japan. In 1868 feudal domains were confiscated and substituted with prefectures (ken 県) in 1871. Compulsory conscription was introduced in 1873 and a massive taxation policy was imposed on rural areas: in 1882 land taxes constituted the 80% of the total income of the state, then they progressively decreased, to reach 45% in 1893.[169]

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[166] FIGAL 1999. *Civilization and Monsters. Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan*, 31.
[167] Ibid., 25.
[168] Ibid., 25-26.
[169] On modernization of Japan and Meiji reforms, see GLUCK 1985. *Japan's Modern Myths. Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*; HARDACRE 1989. *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988*; HARDACRE 1997b. *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*. On land taxes and reforms see in particular ERICSON 1997. ""Poor Peasant, Poor Country!" The Matsukata Daflation and Rural Distress in Mid-Meiji Japan." In *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*; KIM 1997. "Meiji Polity in View of the Land Tax Reform." In *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*.

If land reforms and industrialization progressively affected socio-economic contexts and lives in the countryside, new ideological narratives weighed upon symbolic and religious aspects. *Shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離 (division of Shinto and Buddhism) provided the ideological legitimization of the power of the Emperor, who was believed to be a direct descendant of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大御神, while Shinto was promoted to state religion.

Buddhism was stigmatized as foreign and prosecuted, according to *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 (literally "Abolish the Buddha, destroy Shakyamuni"), the anti-Buddhist riots of the late 1860s. In this movement, Buddhism was demonized as a corrupt and decadent foreign cult. The powerful Buddhist temples, that were tied to control and bureaucratic power of the Tokugawa estate, were systematically destroyed, together with statues and images, while several Buddhist monks were killed or forced to secular life. Beginning the Meiji era with this sense of crisis, Buddhist leaders often overcompensated to prove Buddhism's usefulness to the Japanese state or its compatibility with modernity.[170]

At the same time, scientific narratives were promoted by the Meiji estate through the media. As part of the climate of modernization, foreigners, government officials, and the press increasingly identified Buddhism as superstitious and backward. In response, Buddhist leaders divided traditional Buddhist cosmology and practices into the newly constructed categories "superstition" (*meishin* 迷信, literally "errant beliefs") and "religion" (*shūkyō* 宗教).[171] Superstition was deemed "not really Buddhism" and purged, while the remainder of Buddhism was made to accord with Westernized ideas of religion.[172]

[170] See KASHIWAHARA 1990. *Nihon Bukkyōshi: Kindai 日本仏教史—近代*, 20-42.
[171] For an analysis of the term, chosen to render the Christian concept of religion, in contrast with previously used concepts, see ISOMAE 2002. "Kindai ni okeru "shūkyō" gainen no keisei katei 近代における「宗教」概念の形成過程." ; ISOMAE 2005. "Deconstructing "Japanese Religion": A historical survey."; SHIMAZONO 2004b. *"Shūkyō" saikō 〈宗教〉再考*.
[172] For a better understanding of this process, see JOSEPHSON 2006. "When Buddhism Became a "Religion". Religion and Superstition in the Writings of Inoue Enryō.".

> [Buddhism is] full of superstitions, its effects upon the morals of the nation is most pernicious, it is involved with false science, and modern science will cut it up root and branch […].[173]

Buddhist philosopher Inoue Enryō 井上円了(1858-1919) was crucial to this process: his book, *Meishin to shūkyō* 迷信と宗教, firstly published in 1916, was fundamental in rehabilitate Buddhism as a proper "religion", in contrast to backward "superstition"(i.e. "popular religious" practices, beliefs and representations of monstrosity and the demonic). He claimed that Buddhism, as a "religion", was an essential part of "civilization" and could be beneficial for the nation.[174]

At the same time, not only did he indicate and accuse previous "popular" syncretic religious cults, practices and representation of monstrosity as superstition, but he also investigated them to prove their untruthfulness, as they were not appropriated to the new westernized and modern Japan:

> monsters [*yōkai* 妖怪] are nothing but superstition, and to the same degree we could say superstitions are nothing but monsters.[175]

Instead of giving a clear definition of "superstition", though, he proceeds through family resemblances, listing in what cases one can step into superstitious practices:

> 1. Do not say that foxes or badgers deceive or possess people.
> 2. There is no such thing as goblins (*tengu* 天狗).
> 3. There is no such thing as curses.
> 4. Do not believe in dubious ritual prayers (*kaji kitō* 加持祈祷).
> 5. Do not trust in the efficacy of magic or holy water.
> 6. Do not put your trust in divination, whether by written oracles, physiognomy,

[173] G. M. Meacham, Osaka, 1883. Quoted in THELLE 1987. *Buddhism and Christianity in Japan: From Conflict to Dialogue, 1854–1899*, 165.

[174] Because of his interests in monstrosity and as a founder of "monsterology" (*yōkaigaku* 妖怪学), Inoue would become renown as "Doctor Monster" (*yōkai hakase* 妖怪博士 or *bakemono hakase* 化け物博士) all over the country. A complete analysis of Inoue's career, works and biography can be found in FIGAL 1999. *Civilization and Monsters. Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan*, in particular 38-73; as well as in JOSEPHSON 2006. "When Buddhism Became a "Religion". Religion and Superstition in the Writings of Inoue Enryō.". Useless information about this fascinating figure can also be found on the website of the Inoue Enryō Center, at Tōyō University: http://www.toyo.ac.jp/enryo/.

[175] INOUE 2000 (or. 1916). "Meishin to shūkyō 迷信と宗教." In *Yōkaigaku zenshū 妖怪学全集*, 131.

> geomancy, astrology, or ink stamp.
> 7. It is wrong to be concerned with omens and auspicious or inauspicious days.
> 8. Do not otherwise believe in anything that is generally similar to these things.[176]

Inoue carried out a sort of "purification" of Buddhism from all the practices that were not directly connected to institutions and institutionalized rituals. As Josephson points out:

> It should be apparent that Inoue has radically re-conceptualized Buddhism. By ceding to his version of scientific authority and purging superstitions, Inoue selectively eliminated much of Buddhism's cosmological structure. Gone are the various realms of existence and their attendant hungry ghosts and hell beings. Also eliminated are all the darker creatures in the Buddhist pantheon. The only remaining entities are the buddhas and the gods; however, even they have been transformed into merely temporary names for an abstract truth. They are no longer capable of interaction. Existing as metaphors, they seem to have no purpose or autonomy in Inoue's larger religious model. The physical world is completely controlled by scientific laws and the spiritual plane, while mentioned, is never adequately described.[177]

Moreover, in *Meishin to shūkyō* Inoue represented religion as a series of beliefs, rather than practices. This was basically the opposite what "religion" was in the medieval and pre-Meiji period, in which Buddhism was largely understood as a series of practices, something that one did, rather than something someone believed. It was only under the influence of the Western concept of religion that Buddhism became a commitment to a series of propositions.[178]

Thus, Meiji ideological discourses completely dismantled symbolic narratives that had previously characterized especially rural contexts all around the territory of Japan, whereas social and economic reforms played the rest, affecting the reciprocal correspondences in

[176] Ibid.
[177] JOSEPHSON 2006. "When Buddhism Became a "Religion". Religion and Superstition in the Writings of Inoue Enryō.", 161-162.
[178] See ISOMAE 2002. "Kindai ni okeru "shūkyō" gainen no keisei katei 近代における「宗教」概念の形成過程." ; SHIMAZONO 2004b. *"Shūkyō" saikō 〈宗教〉再考*, 192-196.

many cases and contributing to create a series of new symbolic narratives and significations on both national and local levels.

1.8 Consuming Hell

Dating back at least to the early eighteenth century, *nozoki karakuri* 覗機関 were another innovation in the public display of hell. Viewers peeked into a box at a series of painted scenes for which transparent paper placed over scored sections and lit from behind provided depth and drama. Hell and heaven were among the most represented and oldest themes displayed. Mostly seen at the preaching and *etoki* performed by Kumano *bikuni*, *nozoki karakuri* might have originated as an attempt to teach Buddhist doctrines to commoners, but it rapidly became a form of entertainment.[179]

This was not an exception: board games called *sugoroku* 双六 that presented paradise or buddhahood as a goal and hell as a trap, also originated from teaching and proselitizing, but it eventually became entertainment, as well as the model for secular version of similar games.[180]

Numerous illustrated woodblock-printed editions of Genshin's Ōjōyōshū circulated, further spreading representations of hell. Instead of using the original *kanbun*, used by Genshin to compile his work, these versions (the oldest known dates back to 1663) were written in *kana*. This made the work more accessible and popular also among the commoners.[181]

> The availability of woodblock-printed books and rising literacy rates during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries helped to create fundamentally new forms of interacting with hell. Widespread private ownership of texts and images enabled ordinary people to gain access to knowledge once only available through exclusive channels – in expensive painted scrolls or handwritten books – or through images occasionally displayed, their reception

[179] See NEI 2005. "Nozoki karakuri no "jigoku-e" 「のぞきからくり」の地獄絵.".
[180] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 33-34.
[181] On the diffusion of Ōjōyōshū and the role of woodblock prints in relationship to its popularity, see HORTON 2004. "The Influence of *Ōjōyōshū* in Late Tenth- and Early Eleventh- Century Japan." and NAGASHIMA 2003. "La diffusione delle immagini dell'Inferno in Giappone: L'influenza dell'*Ojoyoshu* (*sic*) (trattato di *ars moriendi* scritto nel X secolo dal monaco buddista (*sic*) Genshin)." In *Visioni dell'aldilà in oriente e occidente: arte e pensiero*.

> often mediated through *etoki*. People read books instead of only listening to selections and interpretations, allowing a more active, individually paced engagement with the material, and they procured or borrowed books through bookstores or lending libraries – both completely secular demains.[182]

As representations of hell stopped being under the exclusive control of religious institutions and became widespread, new spaces opened for elaborations of new meanings, humour, satire and play.

Hell was taken as a model of worldly life and parodied: parody depends upon shared values to be effective. Audiences must be familiar with the so-called hypotexts (the original works) and conventions refered, in order to make the parodistic effect happen. Moreover, they must be competent interpreters of the complex layers of intended meaning.[183]
Parodistic representations of hell exploded after the modernization of Japan. This can be understood accordingly to the above-mentioned ideological and symbolic narratives, along with social and economic reforms. However, some parodistic conflations of hell and the world we inhabit can be found in late Edo period as well. These, according to Hirasawa, "can be seen as a symptomatic facet of early modern tendencies to secularization".[184]

In *Oni no shikogusa* 鬼の趣向草, an illustrated book from 1778 that relays how faith in Zenkōji 善光寺 and its icon conveyed certain salvation, hell suffers recession. With no damned to punish, the cauldron of hell is covered, while Enma tweezes his nose hairs to let time pass by. Similarly, an early Meiji work, *Hima jigoku no zu* 閑地獄之図, similarly depicts hell's functionaries with nothing to do, since the Buddha provided salvation for everyone. Worldly professions and predilections of the time were used as warnings in the hells portrayed by Nichōsai 耳鳥斎 (1802-?). He seems to traditionally depict brutal hells, but he places damned in "professional" hells, like the soba noodles-makers hell, where

[182] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 34.
[183] For this discussion is the very basis of theories of parody, it can be found in any dedicated work. In this case, I was informed by HUTCHEON 1985. *A Theory of Parody. The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. I am mostly grateful to my colleague Caterina Mazza, Ph.D. Student in the University of Venice for her precious advice.
[184] HIRASAWA 2008. "The Inflatable, Collapsible Kingdom of Retribution. A Primer on Japanese Hell Imagery and Imagination.", 35.

demons grate, knead and roll out bodies like pasta dough. There is also a tobacco hell, where demons smoke the damned like pipes. “While familiarity sometimes served to increase hell’s frightfulness, in these examples similar exercises become a source of humor”.[185]

Conversely, parody also brought hell’s conventions into our world, suggesting that determined professions were hellish and, thus, enabling people to laugh about their problems. Illustrated books portrayed hells in which the damned were boiled, grated and mashed. They are not human bodies, though. They are potatoes. Others compared the tribulations of courtesans to certain hells. Also expressions complaining about the opportunism of people who preached about hell, as well as authorities became diffused: “hell is a branch office of heaven” or “even hell is all about money”.[186]

However, representations of hell were not only used to convey parody and humour. During the Meiji period, they were also a powerful means of satire, especially in the works of Kawanabe Kyōsai 河鍋暁斎 (1831-1889), a painter who acerbically commented on the rapid westernization and modernization of the country.[187] In *Jigoku no bunmeikaika* 地獄の文明開化 (“The civilization of hell”) Enma is having his hair cut in Western stile, with a new suit and a top hat at his side. Nearby, wardens of hell are selling out his infernal tools: the sceptre and the flames, whereas demons, who lost their horns, were forced to get dressed like Shinto priests.

Needless to say that these representations were a harsh critics towards the new policies and ideology of the Meiji government, which caused Japanese people to abandon the traditional living stile, symbolized in this case by Enma’s hair and paraments.

Initially freed from the control of religious power and eventually charged with “superstition”, hell had changed with modernization, acquiring new roles and meanings. If, on one hand, it remained a powerful metaphor of this world, it was no longer something to

[185] Ibid., 36-37.
[186] Ibid. 38.
[187] On Kawanabe Kyōsai see KINOSHITA 2003. "La trasformazione dell'immagine dell'Inferno a cavallo tra l'Epoca Edo e la Restaurazione Meiji." In *Visioni dell'aldilà in oriente e occidente: arte e pensiero*; LINHART 2004. "Hell and its Inhabitants in *Ukiyoe* Caricatures of the Late Tokugawa and the Early Meiji Period." In *Practicing the Afterlife. Perspective from Japan*.

believe in: it was independent, no longer necessary connected to religious practices and rituals. Apparently, on a national level, it had become a commodity to be consumed, at least for most of the population of Japan.

However, their subsequent development, as well as the changes of all the symbolic, social and economic connections, so common during the Edo period, are still open problems. In the next chapters, I will try to provide some possible solution to these issues.

Chapter 2 - Liminal Spaces and Ghastly Memories – Osorezan and Mutsu-*shi*

I could not start my analysis of places linked to hell in contemporary Japan from any other place than Osorezan 恐山.[1] This mountain, in fact, is probably the most famous "actual afterlife" in Japan, thanks to the media that spread outnumbered narratives about it, from local legends to ghost stories.

As I will point out below, the mountain has been widely studied, mostly by Japanese scholars, particularly ethnologists (*minzokugakusha* 民俗学者), but also by Western anthropologists and historians. All of these studies, yet, mostly focused on ritual practices connected to Osorezan as a religious site, only briefly analyzing the processes of signification and (re-)production of the mountain as an "actual afterlife".

Deconstructing and analyzing these processes will be the first main purpose of this chapter. I will try to show how the meaning of the mountain – not only as a religious site and an "actual afterlife", but also as a touristic area – was negotiated by the actors on local and translocal levels, through the interaction of processes that involved belief, local knowledge, as well as mass-mediated representations that actually had an influence on the perception of the mountain and, consequently, on behaviour of people towards it and on the afflux of tourists.

[1] I conducted my fieldwork in Osorezan and Mutsu during fall 2008. The mountain opening season goes from the first of May to the first of November, when it closes because of the hardships of the weather conditions. After the closing of the mountain, I continued my fieldwork in Mutsu. This chapter is based on archival and bibliographical research, as well as on data I produced during my stay. My fieldwork consisted in participant observation on Mount Osore, as well as interviewing visitors (both tourists and religious practitioners) and workers in Osorezan and monks in the temples. As for Mutsu, I conducted surveys in schools, interviewed specialists of the City Hall and people living in the city through snowball sampling. As for the interviews I conducted, they were semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions. I used to stop people on the terrain in Osorezan, introducing myself as a researcher of Ca' Foscari University of Venice and, obviously, I asked for their informed consent. I used to record formal interviews, whereas, in case of informal ones, I used to take notes while talking, when I could, or immediately afterwards. My approach was based on ANGROSINO. 2002. *Doing Cultural Anthropology: Projects for Ethnographic Data Collection*; BERNARD. 2002. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*; BESTOR. 2003. *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*; ERVIN. 2000. *Applied Anthropology: Tools and Perspectives for Contemporary Practice*; READER. 2003. "Chance, fate, and undisciplined meanderings." In *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*. The narratives I recount here come from these encounters and conversations.

In second instance, I will focus on the representation of the mountain on a local level. I will point out that symbolic religious discourses about Osorezan had an influence also on the close city of Mutsu, in which Entsūji 円通寺, the temple that managed the mountain, lay. In fact, they legitimized outnumbered ghost stories and narratives about apparition of ghosts, that were reported not only on the mountain, but also all along the road that connects it to the town, and invested the whole Mutsu.

Starting from Komatsu's paradigm,[2] that relates representations of the weird and the supernatural to social liminality, I will link ghost stories to processes of construction of identity and memory, showing how reports of apparition of ghosts were more numerous in places linked to a presence of Korean labourers during World War Two, in particular in the neighbourhood where they used to dwell. I will show, therefore, processes of construction of identity and memory, linked to signification of places, through symbolic narratives of death and pollution referred to a group of people that is no longer on the area.

Furthermore, I will take into consideration the processes of (re-)production of ghost narratives and their signification, linking them to socio-economic dynamics in the area and to the generational divide, in order to display their role in the processes of meaning making of religious symbolic narratives.

2.1 Narrating the Site

Osorezan (or Mount Osore) – literally "Dread Mountain" – is a mountain located in the Shimokita 下北 Peninsula, in the northernmost tip of Honshū, the main island of the Japanese archipelago, in North-East Aomori Prefecture. This borderline territory is one of the most remote places in Japan. Dense forests cover the peninsula, characterized by a combination of wild coastlines and mountain terrain.

[2] See KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは*

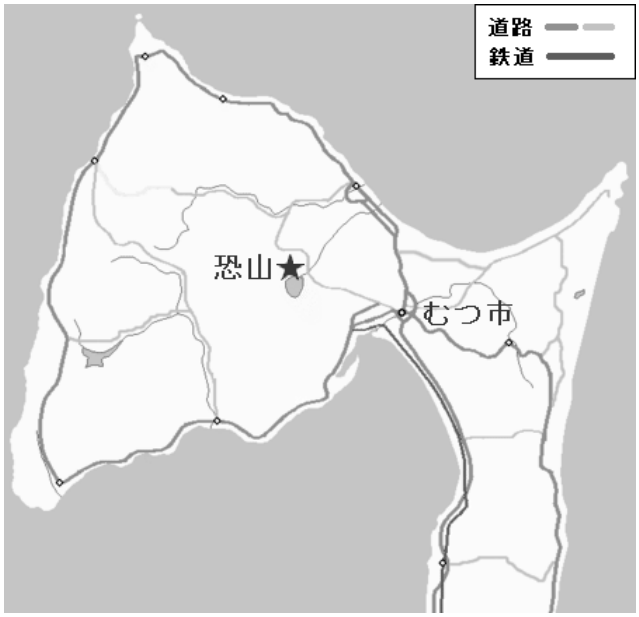

Fig. 9: access to Osorezan, in the Shimokita Peninsula. From SHIMOKITA NABI

Mount Osore is a singular site, covered in thick cypress forests, that rises out of the centre of the peninsula, but steeple reverses its slope at the summit. In fact, local people use to say that although the place is called "Mount Osore", there is actually no mountain. The overwhelming and overpowering smell of sulphur almost coincides with the precipitous decline, for Osorezan is a crater, and the mountain itself a 879 meters high dormant volcano.

The crater's landscape appears like a grey and deadly plain scattered with of porous volcanic rocks, gas emanating from various steam vents, sulphuric ponds of several colours (from light yellow to deep red), hot water gushing out into four springs and a still acidic lake. At the centre of this terrain is a temple-shrine complex called Bodaiji 菩提寺, is made up of several halls and buildings. Some of the buildings have stainless steel roofs, to avoid the effects of sulphur, that would corrode them in a relatively short time.

In 2008, the mount was provided with a small souvenir shop and a refectory, placed before the entrance of the temple complex, equipped with vending machines, in which visitors

could buy food and drinks at a reasonable price. Bodaiji also provided a place to stay overnight, a *shukubō* 宿坊, that had recently been renewed.[3]

The deadly landscape contributed to give Osorezan the reputation of an approach to the "otherworld" in Japan. In 2008 the mountain was known to many contemporary Japanese through images of the media, that portrayed it as a site where folk traditions for managing unsettled spirits of the dead remained strong despite an overall decline in traditional, Buddhist temple-based ritualization of the dead in modern Japan. The mount is ranked among the "three great holy places" (*sandai reijō* 三大霊場) in Japan, together with Mount Kōya and Mount Hiei. However, compared to these two Buddhist institutions, the Bodaiji complex in Osorezan appeared modest and the atmosphere of the place is due more to the natural landscape, rather than to architectural grandeur.

On the North-Eastern side of the terrain, just outside the precincts of temple, marked by a bare palisade, the otherworld extended as far as the lake. Gravel and small stones were piled up on the rocks, on the side of the marked path. Jizō statues were grouped here and there, around big rocks or ponds, marked and identified as particular places in the afterlife – generally with names of hells – by plastic signs. These names ranged from the institutional ones, found in Buddhist texts, to ones linked to local cults and beliefs: "Hell of no interval", "Hell of the Blood Pond", "Hell of the Lord of *Aśura*" (Shuraō jigoku 修羅王地獄), "Hell of the Salt Shop" (Shio-ya jigoku 塩屋地獄), "Hell of Serious Faults" (Jyūzai jigoku 重罪地獄), "Hell of Gold Mining" (Kinbori jigoku 金掘地獄).

Among the scattered hells, places for cults of the dead appeared: a site dedicated to the cult for dead children (Mizuko kuyō gohonzon 水子供養御本尊), a pagoda for *muenbotoke* (Muen-tō 無縁塔)[4] and statues of the *bodhisattva* Kannon 観音. Beyond the narrow brook

[3] People who work in Osorezan range from a minimum of 31 to a maximum of 44 in total. There are 5 monks in Bodaiji, 8 people who clean up the site, from 10 to 20 people working in the *shukubō* and in the ticket office. There are also 3 shopkeepers and from 5 to 8 women working in the restaurant, depending on the day. All the workers come form the confining areas, especially from Mutsu and Ōma 大間. They are not necessarily affiliated to Entsūji, even though they have various kind of relationships with the temple.

[4] *Muenbotoke* 無縁仏 (literally buddhas with no ties) are a particular category of spirits of the dead. Spirits of the deceased are generally defined as "buddhas" (*hotoke* 仏) in Japan. Generally speaking, a person who dies becomes an "ancestor" (*senzo* 先祖) if he/she leaves a son, who, in turn, generates a son. Namely, ancestors are people who carry on the patriarchal line of their family. However, people who die before (or without

that identified the Sai no kawara, on the "Shore of heaven" (Gokuraku hama 極楽浜), the boundary of the terrain was marked by the lake, towards the mountains on the horizon, that enclose the whole site.

Fig. 10: Kinbori jigoku.

Fig. 11: Chi no ike jigoku.

having being able to) take part to this category, become "buddhas with no (familiar) ties". These spirits must be pacified and helped to reach the afterlife through special rites. For classifications of the spirits of the dead in Japan, see RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*; SMITH 1974. *Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan*.

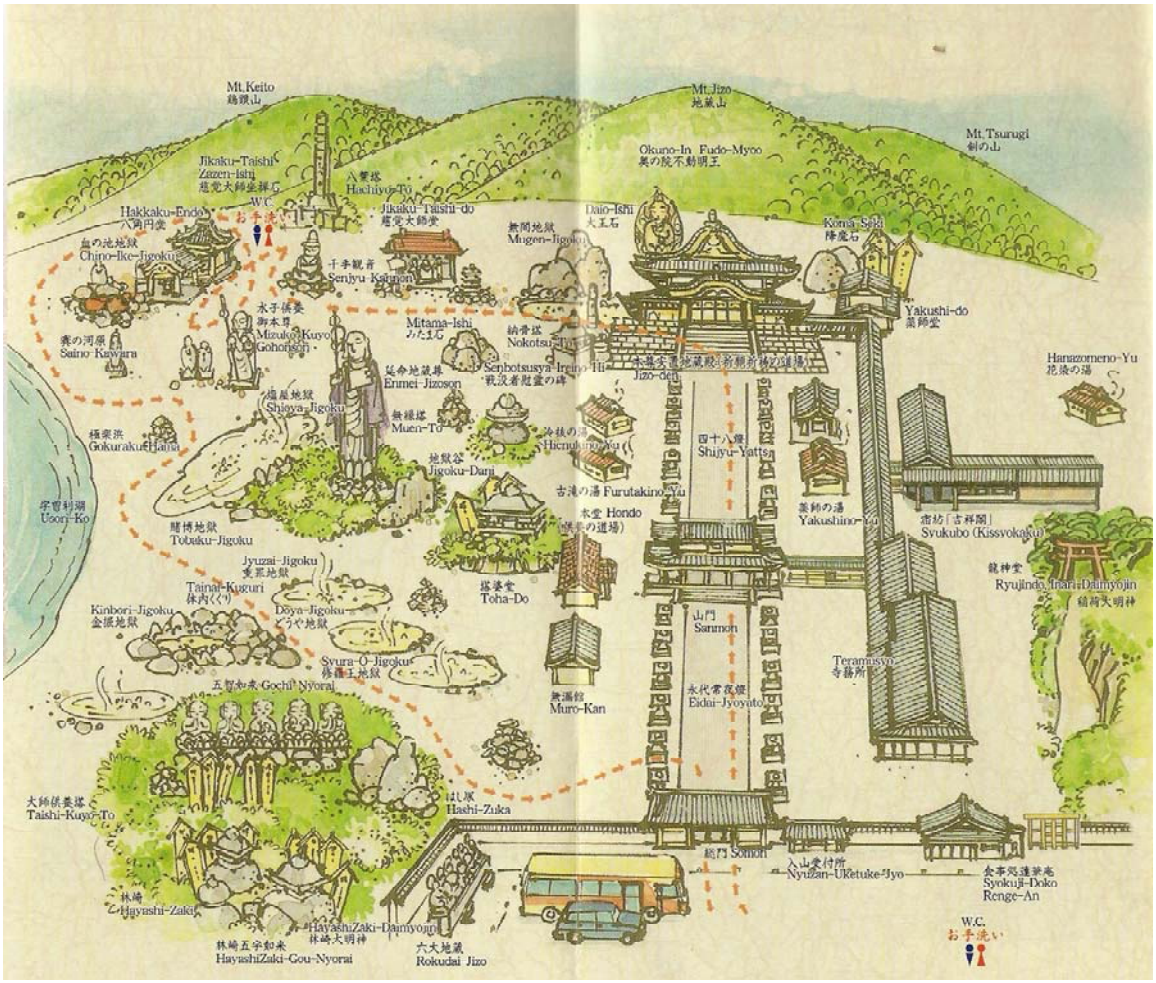

Fig. 12: Map of the Bodaiji precintcs and the terrain in Osorezan. From Reijō Osorezan 霊場恐山, pamphlet.

Because of the change in the administration of this region during the early Meiji period as well as to the Meiji government's religious policies affecting Shinto-Buddhist sites that resulted in the destruction of a substantial historical record, primary historical sources are nearly missing. Moreover, in 1903, the navy established a torpedo base at Ōminato 大湊, at the coast of the Shimokita peninsula and in 1906 the harbour was declared of vital importance to the national interest. Because of military secretiveness, the peninsula was excluded from most of scholarly research, until the end of World War II.[5]

Nevertheless Osorezan is doubtlessly one of the most famous religious sites in Japan and it inspired a huge number of narratives in the so-called "popular culture", both at local – with

[5] See MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986d. *Mutsushishi. Minzoku-hen むつ市史民俗編.*

legends and especially ghost stories – and translocal levels – especially in the media – and, last but not least, in scholarship.

The dominant image of the site as a borderland between this world and the other world has prompted several decades of fieldwork about the mountain and its cultic practices by ethnographers, folklorists, religion specialists, and mass media reporters.[6] Marilyn Ivy's description of Osorezan highlighted the modern fascination with the mountain as a site where the dead can appear and communicate with the living, especially through the *itako* イタコ, the female mediums[7] who gather on the mountain particularly during the summer festival (Osorezan *taisai* 恐山大祭) season, held in recent years between 20 and 24 July, and during the fall festival (Osorezan *aki mairi* 恐山秋詣り) in mid-October.

> It is a terrain deadly enough to deserve its name, for the object of dread or terror (*osore*) at this place is death. In northeastern Japan, Mount Osore has long been the final destination of the spirits of the dead, the ultimate home where the dead continue to live a parallel life. Yet more than just the home of the dead, the mountain is a place of practices for consoling, pacifying, and communicating with them, particularly during one delimited period of the summer […]- Blind female mediums (*itako*) become critical in these allegories of loss and recovery through their spirit recollections […] through their bodily voicings of the words of the dead […]. Although Mount Osore now operates within a national, mass-mediated array of images and ideas about the folkic marginal, historically it was a specific local topos of death.[8]

[6] See, for instance, KUMAGAI 1967. *Osorezan Honbu Entsū-ji shi 恐山本部円通寺志*; KUSUNOKI 1968. *Shimokita no shūkyō 下北の宗教*; KUSUNOKI 1984. *Shomin shinkō no sekai. Osorezan shinkō to Oshirasan shinkō 庶民信仰の世界・恐山信仰とオシラサン信仰*; MIYAMOTO 1989. *Tengu to shugenja. Sangaku shinkō to sono shūhen 天狗と修験者・山岳信仰とその周辺*; MIYAMOTO 1995. *Osorezan. Yama to shinkō 恐山・山と信仰*; MIYAZAKI 2001. "The Intersection of the Local and the Translocal at a Sacred Site. The Case of Osorezan in Tokugawa Japan."; MORI 1995 (or.1975). *Reijō Osorezan Monogatari 霊場恐山物語*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986. *Mutsushishi. Minzoku-hen むつ市史民俗編*; NAKAMICHI 1929. *Okugū kitan 奥遇奇譚*; SASAZAWA 1953. *Usori hyakuwa 宇曽利百話*; TAKAMATSU 1983. *Shimokita hantō no minkan shinkō 下北半島の民間信仰*..

[7] I will briefly take *itako* into consideration below. For bibliographical references on *itako* see: BLACKER 1975. *The Catalpa Bow. A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan*; IVY 1995b. " Ghostly Epiphanies. Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore." In *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*; KUSUNOKI 1968. *Shimokita no shūkyō 下北の宗教*; MIYAMOTO 1995. *Osorezan. Yama to shinkō 恐山・山と信仰;* MORI 1995 (or.1975). *Reijō Osorezan Monogatari 霊場恐山物語*; RAVERI. 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*.

[8] IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, 142.

Because of the lack of historical records, as well as of the influx of the media, visitors who entered the gate of Osorezan were generally unaware of the history of the site, that was represented as if it was connected to death practices and symbols from its origins, as witnessed, among others, by the history presented in the pamphlet that visitors were given at the entrance, together with the ticket:

> Osorezan is a holy place opened 1200 years ago by the Great Master Ennin (Jikaku-*daisjhi* Ennin 慈覚大師円仁)[9]. Driven by a dream he had while he was practicing in China when he was young, Ennin travelled through the provinces [of Japan], preaching the Buddhist teachings and eventually reaching this Shimokita area. At that time, he found a landscape he felt appropriate to be called "holy mountain" (*reizan* 霊山), he carved a statue of the *Bodhisattva* Jizō and he dedicated[10] the place to him.
>
> The site, with Lake Usori in the centre and surrounded by the eight mountains [called] Kamabuse-zan, Ōzukushi-yama, Gozukushi-yama, Hokkoku-zan, Byōbu-yama, Tsurugino-yama, Jizō-yama, Keitō-zan, resembled an open lotus flower with eight petals. Furthermore, comparing all its rocky surface that spurts out volcanic gas to hell, and its lake surrounded by shores of white sand to heaven, for as long as one thousand years people have been conveying simple cults and prayers, maintaining that "When one dies, goes to *Oyama*".[11]
>
> From ancient times, not only from Tōhoku, but from every place in Japan, the believers paying homage to Osorezan did not cease. […] Even though times change, until people desire never-ending peaceful lives and death, holy place Osorezan, will continue to cast the light of belief, along with what they wish.[12]

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[9] Jikaku-*daisjhi* is the posthumous Buddhist name given to the monk Ennin (794-864).

[10] In the original: "*honzon to nasatta no desu* (本尊となさったのです)". This is the honorific form for "*honzon suru*", meaning "Enshrining [a statue of] a Buddha or *bodhisattva* in a temple, with the purpose of [practicing] cults and prayers". See "*Honzon*" in *Kōjien*.

[11] *Oyama* お山 is the way local people address Osorezan. It is the honorific form of "mountain" (*yama* 山). This appellation is commonly used not only in this area, but in several places connected to cults of the mountains, to address the main mount of the local cult. See, for instance, MIYAMOTO 1995. *Osorezan. Yama to shinkō 恐山・山と信仰*; MORI 1995 (or.1975). *Reijō Osorezan Monogatari 霊場恐山物語*; SAKURAI 1976. "Minkan shinkō to sangaku shūkyō 民間信仰と山岳宗教." In *Sangaku shūkyō to minkan shinkō no kenkyū 山岳宗教と民間信仰の研究*; SEIDEL 1992-93. "Mountains and Hells. Religious Geography in Japanese *mandara* paintings.".

[12] *Reijō Osorezan* 霊場恐山, pamphlet distributed at the ticket office. Interestingly enough, the English version is partly different: *About 1200 years ago, the Japanese Buddhist priest En'nin was studying Buddhism in China. One night he had a mysterious dream. In the dream, a holy monk said to him. "When you return to Japan, go eastward. You will find a sacred mountain in thirty-days walk from Kyoto. Carve a statue of the bodhisattva Jizō and propagate Buddhism there." En'in returned to Japan. In spite of various hardships he traveled through many provinces on foot in the hope of finding the sacred mountain. Finally he came to the mountainous area of Shimokita peninsula. There he found a place which met all the conditions required to be the sacred mountain for which he had been looking. It was this mountain, Osorezan. At the*

Actually, as obvious as it is, the role of this sacred site changed overtime, like recent researches pointed out. Osorezan went through different phases: the cult of the mountain appeared for the first time only in the mid-seventh century and the mount became one of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Japan in the end of the nineteenth century.

Fig. 13: The entrance to Osorezan and the Bodaiji complex

center of the sacred area of Osorezan is Lake Usori, and next to it a large tract covered with white sand. Sorounding them are eight peaks: Mount Kamafuse, Mount Ōzukushi, Mount Kozukushi, Mount Hokkoku, Mount Byōbu, Mount Tsurugi, Mount Jizō and Mount Keitō. The landscape of Osorezan with the eight peaks surrounding it represents a lotus flower of eight petals, the symbol of the world of Buddha. In its central area there are 108 ponds of boiling water and mud, which correspond with the 108 worldly desires and the hells linked to each of them. Side by side with the hellish ponds the woods, the lake and the cost of white sand present a wonderful scene, which suggests the beauty of Paradise. When En'nin saw them, he noticed that this landscape of Osorezan coincided down to the last detail with that of the sacred mountain as described in his mysterious dream. Then with his own hands he carved a statue of bodhisattva Jizō, which was about 190 centimeters high, and he built a hall to house it. Having accomplished these tasks he devoted himself to the propagation of Buddhism with increased earnestness. I copied exactly the contents of the pamphlet, not correcting the misprints. As one can notice, all the emphasis put on the continuity of the cults and belief is completely missing in this version.

2.2 Forgotten History

Up to the eighteen century, the mount was renown as a site with healing hot springs, in fact it was called "Yama no yu 山の湯", literally "Hot springs of the Mountain", or Usorisan 宇曽利山, "Mount Usori", from the name of the lake. There are two interpretations about the origins of the name Usori. The first links the *u* (宇) at the beginning of the name with the cormorant that supposedly guided the monk Ennin to discover the site. This association is based on the homophony with the character of "cormorant" (鵜). The second interpretation links the word to *usor* (ウソリ), a Ainu term meaning "harbour" or "bay", used particularly by the native people of southern Hokkaido. During the Tokugawa period, Usori was the name of a river flowing into Mutsu Bay and the village near the mouth of the river.[13]

Miyazaki and Williams describe the changes in the names of Osorezan overtime in their remarkable work that analyzes the history of this site:

> Usorisan also referred to the volcanic area around a crater lake located to the north of the peak of Mount Kamafuse (Kamafusesan 釜臥山), the highest peak when viewed from the bay areas. When a shrine-temple complex was gradually constructed near the lake during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this volcanic area came to be recognized as the precinct of what would later in the nineteenth century be called the "Bodaiji of Kamafusesan" or the "Jizō Hall of Usorisan". The clustering of mountains in the area and the subsequent conflation of naming the site now recognized as Osorezan suggests that the sacred site developed in stages. Known as a section of or an extension of Mount Kamafuse, or alternatively as a place of hot springs such as Yama no Yu.[14]

The origins of Osorezan as a religious site are still unknown. Also in these case there are two possibilities, based on legendary accounts. According to some interpretations, the first person who discovered this site was a daughter of Sakanoue no Tamuramaro 坂上田村麻呂, a general who pacified the Tōhoku region on behalf of the imperial court from the late

[13] For more detailed explanations on the origins of the name, see KUSUNOKI 1984. *Shomin shinkō no sekai. Osorezan shinkō to Oshirasan shinkō 庶民信仰の世界・恐山信仰とオシラサン信仰*; SHIMOKITA HANTŌ NO REKISHI TO MINZOKU WO KATARU KAI (ed.) 1978. *Shimokita hantō no rekishi to minzoku 下北半島の歴史と民俗.*

[14] See MIYAZAKI 2001. "The Intersection of the Local and the Translocal at a Sacred Site. The Case of Osorezan in Tokugawa Japan.".

eighth to the early ninth century. Other interpretations attribute the discovery to the Tendai monk Ennin. Yet, whoever the first to discover it may be, all the legends agree on the point, specified also by the institutional history quoted above, that Ennin developed the site into a religious centre. What is not specified in institutional sources is that Osorezan was abandoned as a religiously significant site during the medieval period.[15] As Kumagai points out, the first reliable information on Osorezan dates back no earlier than 1657: a note attached to a copy of the signboard attached to the ridge beam of the roof of a hall built on the precinct of Entsūji 円通寺, a Sōtō zen temple located in Tanabu 田名部,[16] a village close to Osorezan:

> Usorisan is a sulphurous mountain from which a lot of hot water gushes out. Because of this, metallic objects, such as copper and iron, are corroded, and wooden rottens up quickly. Therefore, records inscribed on them earlier than the fifth abbot of Entsūji [1643–1651] are rarely extant. From the time of the sixth abbot [1651–1666] we stopped leaving records there.[17]

This note helps to understand, firstly, the reason why historical records prior to medieval period are not extant and, secondly, that a it was an institution outside the mountain, namely Entsūji, that had information about the early history of Osorezan. Although Entsūji was a Sōtō Zen temple and Ennin was a renown Tendai master, it seems that by the early seventeenth century, the temple was able to exert managerial authority over the mountain. This is not particularly surprising considering the larger pattern of the take-over of *yamabushi* 山伏 and formerly Tendai and Shingon affiliated institutions by priests of the Sōtō Zen in the Tōhoku region, who would act as *chūkō kaisan* 中興開山, or founders who revived a dilapidated temple or hermitage.[18]

Among the strategies adopted by Entsūji to legitimate its control over the mountain, that was a potential religious site, there was also the attempt to link the site back to Ennin, who was already renown as the legendary founder of numerous religious institutions around Japan, as well as many hot springs, around the Tōhoku area. A skilful use of the legend of

[15] See Ibid., 402.
[16] Presently, Tanabu is a part of Mutsu-*shi* むつ市, Aomori prefecture, and Entsūji is the institution that manages the Bodaiji complex, as well as the whole Osorezan. See below.
[17] KUMAGAI 1967. *Osorezan Honbu Entsū-ji shi 恐山本部円通寺志*, 101-102.
[18] See SUZUKI 1983 (or. 1942). *Zenshū no chihō hatten 禅宗の地方発展*.

Ennin, the enshrinement of several statues of Jizō and the very and geomorphic conformation of Osorezan, with its healing hot springs and its volcanic landscape that evoked scenes of hell, made this religious site particularly successful.[19]

Yet, as I mentioned above, Osorezan did not become popular because of cults of Jizō and its links to death practices and narratives. It is not until the year 1700 that we have the first evidence of a cult of Jizō at Osorezan. This *bodhisattva* had not yet occupied the dominant position at the mountain during the early eighteenth century. Instead, the main Buddha in the site was Śakyamuni and the mountain was dotted with statues and chapels dedicated to other members of the Buddhist pantheon: Kannon, Amida, Dainichi.

The growth in the cult of Jizō at Osorezan during the eighteenth-century, corresponds to a boom in the cult of Jizō – in particular "Life-Prolonging Jizō (Enmei Jizō 延命地蔵) – in the whole country, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[20] This took to an association between the life-prolonging powers of *bodhisattva* Jizō and the healing powers of the hot springs in Osorezan and, therefore, by the late eighteenth century, the site was a destination for hot spring pilgrims, even in the winter months when the religious institutions were closed.[21]

The connection with Jizō, together with Osorezan's physical landscape, its bubbling ponds and sulphurous smells, became the main points that evoked images of hells as one of the central features of the mountain. The actualization of hell in Osorezan's geography began with the naming of certain sites as specific hells, or as marking the borderland between this world and the other.

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[19] On the religious symbolic and political strategies adopted by the abbot of Entsūji to take over Osorezan, keep control over the mountain and to promote it as a religious site, see MIYAZAKI 2001. "The Intersection of the Local and the Translocal at a Sacred Site. The Case of Osorezan in Tokugawa Japan.". Particularly from 1670 to 1780 the management of Osorezan was a source of contention between Entsūji and Jōnenji, a Jōdo sect temple. In 1968 even the Tendai sect sent an emissary from its headquarters, Hieizan near Kyoto to claim its rights over the mount. Only in 1780 the authorities of the Nanbu 南部 domain (that controlled large areas of present Iwate and Aomori prefectures, including Shimokita) recognized the legitimacy of Entsūji's control over Mount Osore. See KUSUNOKI. 1968. *Shimokita no shūkyō 下北の宗教*; KUSUNOKI. 1979. "Osorezan Shinkō 恐山信仰." In *Tōhoku sangaku to shugendō 東北山岳と修験道*.

[20] See HAYAMI 1975. *Jizō shinkō 地蔵信仰*; MANABE 1960. *Jizō bosatsu no kenkyū 地蔵菩薩の研究*.

[21] MIYAZAKI 2001. "The Intersection of the Local and the Translocal at a Sacred Site. The Case of Osorezan in Tokugawa Japan.".

At Osorezan, this geography of hells and heavens most prominently featured the Sai no kawara, the Chi no ike jigoku and the Gokuraku no hama. These cosmological elements were tied to the notion that Jizō was a *bodhisattva* who had the ability to appear in any of the six realms of existence, including the hell realm, to save suffering beings.[22]

Reliable evidence of Osorezan's hell geography, in particular the Sai no kawara and the Chi no ike jigoku, does not appear until 1762,[23] it is not likely that such ideas could have existed too much earlier at Osorezan because it was not until the early Tokugawa period that such notions began to be prevalent nationwide:

> At Osorezan from the late eighteenth century, an open space covered with stones near the lake located on the temple precincts came to be called Sai no Kawara. Furthermore, by the late eighteenth century, a Jizō statue was enshrined in that zone of the mountain, followed by a full-fledged Jizō Hall in the mid-nineteenth century.
> The connection between the Osorezan Jizō and salvation of the dead, children in the case of the Sai no Kawara, became just as important as this-worldly benefits to the cult at the mountain by the late eighteenth century. [24]

Another identifying place was the Chi no ike jigoku,[25] that, as well as in other "actual hells" consisted in a red coloured pond, tinged by various mineral substances.[26] Pilgrims

[22] Osorezan Jizō became extremely popular also among people engaged in maritime transportation. This coincided with a rise in the use of the maritime routes around the ports of the Shimokita Peninsula, especially with a trade route that extended all the way from Osaka along the coasts of the Inland Sea and the Japan Sea to the northern end of Honshū and sometimes even up to Ezo and the Kuril Islands. The harbours of Shimokita became particularly important, since they were the conjunction among the three main sea routes: the Western route, the route between Honshū and Ezo, and the one along the Pacific coast side to Edo as well as farther ports, see MAKINO 1985. *Kitamaesen to sono furusato 北前船とそのふる里*; MAKINO 1989. *Kitamaesen no kenkyū 北前船の研究*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986. *Mutsushishi. Minzoku-hen むつ市史民俗編*; SHIMOKITA HANTŌ NO REKISHI TO MINZOKU WO KATARU KAI (ed.) 1978. *Shimokita hantō no rekishi to minzoku 下北半島の歴史と民俗*; TAKAMATSU 1983. *Shimokita hantō no minkan shinkō 下北半島の民間信仰*. This obviously contributed to extend the popularity of Osorezan as a religious site in the whole country. From 1846 to 1861, more than a hundred patrons donated 48 stone lanterns to be placed in Osorezan, 33 stone Kannon statues to be placed along the path of the pilgrimage from Ōminato to Osorezan and 124 stone guideposts to be placed at intervals along another pilgrimage route from Tanabu to Osorezan, See Ibid.. These financial contributions from seafaring merchants built the physical structure of the Osorezan cult, including its Jizō Hall, the stone lanterns within the precinct of the mountain, as well as the guideposts along the various pilgrimage routes.

[23] See TACHIBANA 1988. "Osorezan Ōminato sandō sanjū-san Kannon ni tsuite 恐山大湊参道三十三観音について.", 87.

[24] MIYAZAKI 2001. "The Intersection of the Local and the Translocal at a Sacred Site. The Case of Osorezan in Tokugawa Japan.", 422. One more Jizō hall would be built as a supplement to the first, close to the Sai no kawara, in the nineteenth century.

started to go to Osorezan to communicate with dead relatives, through the intercession of Jizō, Amida Buddha – not present in the mountain, but it was a common deity to pray for salvation in the Pure Land, represented by the shore and the mountains in the front – and the monks of Entsūji, who recited sutras and prepared memorial tablets for the deceased.

The mountain experienced the highest affluence during Obon お盆 and the Jizō-*bon* 地蔵盆, since in these periods the dead were thought to come back from the afterlife, therefore they were more accessible to the living. By the nineteenth century Osorezan had become the site in which this world and the afterlife meet.

A huge amount of research investigated the problems of (re-)constructing or inventing tradition, not only in Japan.[27] As Van Bremen points out "social memory consists of acts of memorialization and re- memorialization in objects, accounts and narratives, and the re-enactment of the past in rites or ceremonies important […] in the present."[28]

> It would be comforting to think of memory as a simple record […] as fragments of preserved reality, sometimes more and sometimes less complete, but reflecting, as far as they went, a true image of what used to be. Of course, it is nothing of the kind: it is an artefact or a trickster, and an active trickster at that, nor merely a relic of the past, but the past shaped and adapted to the uses of the present – and of the present then as well as the present now.[29]

As I pointed out above, the historical narratives through which Osorezan is presented by the management of the temple, elide the actual development of the mount as a religious site. This creates a narrative that stresses the continuity between the foundations of Bodaiji and the cults of the dead, that are the main reason why visitors and pilgrims go to Osorezan at

[25] According to Miyazaki and Williams: "It is quite likely that the Sōtō Zen temple Entsūji promoted the idea of the Chino Ike at Osorezan influenced by the activities of another Sōtō Zen temple, Shōsenji. Shōsenji, which claimed the title of the birthplace of the sutra in Japan, was one of the largest centers of *Ketsubonkyō*-related activity during the Tokugawa period". See Ibid., 425.
[26] In the case of Osorezan, it was red mainly because of a high concentration of iron in the water. However, the Chi no Ike at Osorezan, because of the changes in the contents of its mineral substances, has not always been red, see NAKAMICHI 1929. *Okugū kitan 奥遇奇譚*, 144-145. In fact, the pond was not red also when I conducted my fieldwork in Osorezan.
[27] See, for instance, APPADURAI 1981. "The past as a scarce resource.".
[28] VAN BREMEN 2005. "Monuments for the Untimely Dead or the Objectification of Social Memory in Japan." In *Perspectives on Social Memory in Japan*, 37.
[29] FENTRESS 1992. *Social Memory*, viii.

present, thus legitimizing the role of the mountain. Nevertheless, since the meaning of the mountain is created on the base of these narratives, they will be the focus of my analysis in the next paragraphs.

2.3 Ritual Practices

Doubtlessly, Osorezan's popularity is based on the festivals, especially the *Taisai*, a five days festival held from the 20th to the 24th of July. In this periods, not only pilgrims and people who hope to speak to their deceased beloved ones, but also metropolitan tourists, foreign and Japanese anthropologists and ethnographers, television crews and journalists gather on the mountain, (re)producing narratives that link it to symbolic discourses of death.

Bodaiji performs memorial services (*kuyō* 供養) during the whole year, rites that aim to pacify the dead, by remembering them through offerings, prayers and chanting of sutras.[30] By this rites and correctly remembering the dead and helping them out in the afterlife, the livings hope to console them, as well as to prevent them from causing troubles and problems in their own lives.

During the festival, the temple offered special memorial services, that were very similar to other Sōtō-Zen Buddhist temples that manage death and ancestor worship all around Japan. In particular, people could buy a *tōba* 塔婆, a wooden memorial tablet, that could be found in several sizes and prices and that symbolizes a *stūpa*. The buyer received a receipt and the blank tablet and waits for a monk to have the tablet written. The monk wrote "Osorezan Jizō", the month and date of birth of the person being memorialized, the family name of the deceased and *senzo daidai* 先祖代々, meaning "perpetual memorial for ancestors".

[30] *Kenkyusha's New Japanese - English Dictionary* defines *kuyō* as "memorial service". However, this term refers broadly to any Buddhist-influenced ritual practice, held in order to remember a vast and complex range of spirits of deceased living beings. The target of each *kuyō* is specified case by case: *senzo kuyō* to remembers ancestors (*senzo*), or *segaki kuyō* 施餓鬼供養 that aims to alleviate the sufferings of demons (*oni*) or *muenbotoke* (see above, note 2), or *mizuko kuyō* for miscarried or aborted children. There are also *kuyō* performed for important objets of everyday life (i.e. *hari kuyō* 針供養, a memorial service for old or broken needles) and for domestic animals. The term *kuyō* is used nearly interchangeably with *ekō* 廻向, translated by Buddhologists as "merit transference", based on the Buddhist idea that living beings can store up merits and transfer them to others, in particular the dead. However, also this term is commonly used with the meaning of "memorial service", see *Kenkyusha's New Japanese - English Dictionary*. 2003. On worship of ancestors and rites for the dead, see SMITH 1974. *Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan*.

Then the buyer walked to the *Sotoba kuyōdō* 卒塔婆供養堂 ("Pagoda for memorial rites and placing of *tōba*"), passed the *tōba* to one of the workers inside, lighted an incense stick, bowed and waited for sutras to be chanted. The workers, then collected all the *tōba* and placed it in the open space next to the pagoda, called *tōbajō* 塔婆場. People of the family, then, gather in front of the *tōba*, put out offerings and lighted incense.[31]

A particularity of this practice in Osorezan is that, although usually *tōba* are placed on the grave in graveyards, there is no cemetery on the mount. As Ivy points out "this separation from material remains (which retain a powerful metonymic tie with the dead person) allows an abstract notion of "death" to be detached from its associations with the dead's physical remains. Mount Osore is at one and the same time a place of palpable death, as the home of spirits, and a site that works precisely to distance death".[32]

Actually, there was a small ossuary (Sōkotsutō 納骨塔), a place where priests placed the ashes – or part of the ashes – of the dead. However, this ossuary was separated from the *tōbajō*, suggesting that it was not immediately associated with the memorial *stūpa*. Generally speaking, in this ossuary which resemble a *stūpa*, people placed the teeth or jawbone of the dead (*shikotsu* 歯骨) within one year from the death, while the rest of the bones were placed in the temple in which the family is registered.[33] However, the rests were all mixed inside the ossuary, which presents no separate compartments for families or individuals, again conveying the representation of generalized death and the afterlife, with no particular links to the family or the social place the deceased occupied during his/her life, in which the spirits of the dead could be memorialized with no connection to any particular grave or religious institutional affiliation.

[31] Ritual and religious practices in Osorezan have been widely documented, since they have always been the main interest of researchers. Since the aim of this study is investigating the narratives connected to the mount, I will only briefly focus on ritual practices. For more detailed accounts, see BLACKER 1975. *The Catalpa Bow. A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan*; KUSUNOKI 1968. *Shimokita no shūkyō 下北の宗教*; KUSUNOKI 1979. "Osorezan Shinkō 恐山信仰." In *Tōhoku sangaku to shugendō 東北山岳と修験道*; KUSUNOKI 1984. *Shomin shinkō no sekai. Osorezan shinkō to Oshirasan shinkō 庶民信仰の世界・恐山信仰とオシラサン信仰*; MIYAMOTO 1995. *Osorezan. Yama to shinkō 恐山・山と信仰*; MORI 1995 (or.1975). *Reijō Osorezan Monogatari 霊場恐山物語*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986d. *Mutsushishi. Minzoku-hen むつ市史民俗編*; RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*.

[32] IVY 1995b. "Ghostly Epiphanies. Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore." In *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, 153-154.

[33] MIYAMOTO 1995. *Osorezan. Yama to shinkō 恐山・山と信仰*, 184-185.

Yet, besides the rituals performed under the institutional control of the monks and workers of Bodaiji, there were also a series of practices that people perform, on the area that separates the precincts of the temple, from the lake, among the rocks, the hissing gasses and the myriads of Jizō statues: an itinerant round of offerings that developed a different relationship and signification to remembrance of the dead.[34]

People not only offered any kind of goods (pilgrim robes, straw sandals, flowers, food, money), as well as object associated to the dead person (cigarettes, beer, whiskey, toys, clothes, comic books), they also pile up stones as offerings to the dead. When I went to Osorezan, for instance, the terrain was scattered with pinwheels offered to Jizō and to dead children. People walked around the terrain, stopping at each prominence, named site, or statue of Jizō, placing offerings and stones. The stones became stone *stūpa*s to which more stones are offered, and so on, in a repetition that paralleled the labour of dead children in Sai no kawara. Actually, each stone the leaving pile up, means one less stone for dead children to accumulate. "Each offering leads to more offerings; a pebble casually placed on the ground leads to a whole collection of pebbles, one-yen coins and candy. There is thus a logic of sheer accumulation and repetition. The point is not to make one, efficacious offering, but to make a multitude of offerings at each point that someone else has designated".[35]

Also the offerings, scattered all around the terrain, suggested a conception of "general death", apparently not connected to any particular place. Osorezan was perceived as sort of gate between this world and the afterlife, or as a "otherworldly" terrain, in which the world of the living and the world of the dead met and were superimposed. It is not surprising, then, that the two worlds came into contact. This happensed in two ways: through the mediation of *itako* and through casual and unmediated apparitions of ghosts.

[34] These practices were not temporarily confined to the periods of the festivals. People who visited Osorezan could freely perform them through the whole opening season, although, obviously, the highest number of practitioners concentrated in the festivals.

[35] IVY 1995b. "Ghostly Epiphanies. Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore." In *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, 155. Ivy's ethnographical account of the signification of food offerings during Osorezan *taisai* is extremely interesting, not only because the author points out historical change in the offerings, but also because she focuses on the problems that food offerings cause: waste, litter, smell, wasps and insects… Indeed, also when I went to Osorezan, the terrain was populated by a incredible number of crows.

Fig. 14:Offerings to a dead child on the terrain. I covered the face of the child to protect the privacy of the family.

Fig. 15: Pinwheels and piles of stones offered on the terrain.

Itako are blind female mediums and were one of the main attractions of present-day Osorezan festival. Yet, they began to gather in Osorezan from the Tōhoku region form the late 1950s – in accordance with a boom of the cult of the dead in Osorezan that happened after the second world war – and communication with the dead through them began to flourish from the 1960s.[36] They gathered on the left of the main entrance, in small tents within the temple precincts, and performed *kuchiyose* 口寄せ, the calling down of the spirits of the dead. Costumers required to talk to a particular dead person and the medium called down the spirit. It entered the medium who spoke with the voice of the deceased and answered the questions of the customer, advising him/her and often predicting the future.[37]

Although *itako* and *kuchiyose* are a relatively recent phenomenon, they have been reported by the media as a characterizing element of Osorezan from the "ancient times" (*mukashi kara* 昔から). Most of the people I interviewed when I was in Osorezan, not during the festival, were slightly disappointed not to find *itako*, since they were convinced the mediums stay on the mountain all over the year.

Spirits interacted with the living also through apparitions. Ghost (*yūrei* 幽霊) stories were extremely numerous in Osorezan and in Mutsu. Yet, many of them surpassed the limits of locality, being reported in ethnologies, novels, travel accounts and, most importantly, often being broadcasted by the media on a national level. Ivy states that "Osorezan now operates within a national, mass-mediated array of ideas and images about the folkic marginal".[38] This created complex ideoscapes that articulated in the way visitors, pilgrims, religious practitioners, local people and workers in Osorezan gave meaning and value to the mountain. These ideoscapes, though, are not to be considered as homogenously spread among the people who, in one way or another, got into contact with the mount. They are to be understood as linked to various categories: their age, their role and relationship to the mountain and distributed among them. Furthermore, these representations were not

[36] KUSUNOKI 1984. *Shomin shinkō no sekai. Osorezan shinkō to Oshirasan shinkō 庶民信仰の世界・恐山信仰とオシラサン信仰*, 165-167.
[37] Since *kuchiyose* has been widely documented, I am not taking it into consideration in my study. For a description of *kuchiyose* and a tractation of *itako*, see, among others, KUSUNOKI 1968;1979;1984; MIYAMOTO Kesao 宮本袈裟雄, and TAKAMATSU Keiichi 高松敬一 1995; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI 1986; RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984).
[38] IVY 1995b. "Ghostly Epiphanies. Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore." In *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, 143.

mutually exclusive: they were negotiated among the actors and the practices, in constant interrelationship and change.[39]

2.4 OsorezanS

Local ghost stories in Osorezan have been widely documented in ethnography, showing that unmediated encounters with the dead have played an important role in the meaning making of the mountain, since it was connected to cults of the dead. Mori reports the experience that one of the temple caretakers had during the long winter months on the mount:

> It's not only me who saw them. Seven or eight people who are here on the mountain have seen ghosts. First, it's like a voice. It's really similar to someone talking. Among them there are some that are cheerful, but even though you can't understand what they are saying, you firstly hear some bright and loud voices. They don't wait until nighttimes. When and where you hear them depends on the day. However it's like the talking voices come from the gate to the *hondō*.
>
> I don't care too much about the talking voices, but the crying ones are really eerie. On the days I hear the crying voices, they remain in my ears.
>
> Among them, you can also hear songs. They are country drinking songs, or sometimes verses of local folk songs. I can't say I heard them thousands of times, but I certainly heard them a lot of times.
>
> In plays and movies ghosts wear white clothes and you can't see their feet. They come out with their hands hanging down and pale face. However the ones I saw, first of all, apparently the colour isn't fixed. Sometimes they are black, sometimes they appear suddenly, with a harsh and violent shape.
>
> The ones I saw, just come out suddenly. When I think surprised that in that moment no one is supposed to be there and I look again, starting from up and down, they become like a ball and disappear.
>
> Surprised, even if I think I want to see it again and I keep my spirit high and wait, they won't appear again. The ones I saw, become a like a ball and zoom away.

[39] On complexity and distribution of culture, see HANNERZ 1992. *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*. On ideoscapes, see APPADURAI 1988. "Putting Hierarchy in its Place."; APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*; APPADURAI 2003 (or. 1996). *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*

> Saying that you don't see the lower part, but it's from the head to the waist! You see it clearly! So, if you even meet them for the first time, they are not that frightening. But when you realize that there is no lower part, you get shocked.[40]

Several people also told me their own experience as well as stories they heard from other people, while I was carrying out my fieldwork:

> When I was young, I was taking a bath in the hot springs in Osorezan, I heard someone running around the building. It was late in the afternoon and there was no one around, so I thought it must have been a joke. So I went out the building, but no one was there (Man, 65, Mutsu)

> I heard that several people saw human faces coming out from the stones or from the trees in Osorezan. If you pay attention, you will also see human faces in the gasses spurting out from the rocks. You must not take home any stone from Osorezan: they say they are cursed. Since the spirits of dead are inside them, it is good if they stay on the mountain. However, if you take one home as a souvenir, the spirit will get angry and, at night, a human face will come out of the walls of your house and you'll be taken you away (*tsurete ikareru* 連れて行かれる). (Woman, 52, Mutsu)

This story shed a light on two interesting elements. The first is that not only the mountain was felt by this woman as a place for the dead: she – and not only she, since I was told several times in Mutsu about the prohibition of stealing stones and offers from Osorezan – felt that every single element of the mountain is linked to the afterlife. If one took home even one single stone, he/she would mix up two worlds that must have been kept separated. The punishment was being taken away by the spirit.

This is the second element: ghosts were not only frightening. They were dangerous. However, according to the stories, they did not kill, at least directly: they took their victims away with them, in the afterlife. Although where victims are taken was not always clear, according to some people the victim would be taken to Osorezan.[41] This is the main risk one could run, when he/she meets a *yūrei*. Therefore, as I will show below, the places in

[40] MORI 1995 (or.1975). *Reijō Osorezan Monogatari 霊場恐山物語*, 10-11.
[41] "*Oyama ni iku* お山に行く" ("going to Oyama") is an expression used in the local dialect to indicate death. Therefore "*Oyama ni tsurete ikareru* お山に連れて行かれる" ("being taken to Oyama") indirectly means being killed.

which ghosts appear must be avoided. Osorezan is an exception, though. It is generally felt as a proper place for the dead, therefore the spirits are not dangerous *per se* on the mount. However, they must be left alone and not disturbed, even on the mountain.

2.4.1 The Nostalgic Mountain

Ian Reader, with his study on the Shikoku pilgrimage showed that "[…] a close examination of how pilgrimages are presented in the mass media, indicates that they are treated primarily as symbols of culture and tradition rather than as manifestations of religion".[42] In fact:

> From the early 1950s, as economic growth and reconstruction after the war began to bring pilgrims back to Shikoku and as transport infrastructures (notably bus package tours) developed in line with this economic revival, signs became evident of renewed media interest in positive depictions of pilgrimage. Often such portrayals fitted into a wider framework relating to responses to the continuing urbanization of Japan in the post-war period and the perceived erosion of traditional aspects of Japanese life and culture. Attempts to counter such matters were evident in a rising emphasis on nostalgic depictions of traditional Japan centered around images of the *furusato* (native village) or *kokoro* no *furusato* (spiritual homeland) that permeated much of Japanese imaginative discourse in the 1970s and 1980s. Such imagery appeared widely in the campaigns mounted by commercial concerns, from Japan Rail, the Japanese national railway company of the period, to transport companies associated with Japan's growing internal tourist industry that thrived in the wake of economic growth.[43]

This was true for Osorezan in 2008 as well: the mount was represented as a site of religious traditions, especially in the news and in newspapers. As in the case of the history explained in the pamphlet, narratives that nostalgically link the present in which Japan has lost its culture, to an imagined past in which "real" Japan existed, through the use of expressions like "unchanged from the ancient times" (*mukashi kara sono mama* 昔からそ

[42] READER 2007. "Positively Promoting Pilgrimage. Media Representations of Pilgrimage in Japan.", 13. On religions and the media in Japan, see also DORMAN 2007. "Editors Introduction: Projections and Representations of Religion in Japanese Media."; READER 2006. *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning And Practice in Shikoku*.

[43] Ibid., 16. On *furusato* and nostalgia, see also IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*; MARTINEZ 1990. "Tourism and the Ama: The search for a real Japan." In *Unwrapping Japan*; READER 1987a. "Back to the future: Images of nostalgia and renewal in a Japanese religious context.". Ivy's study also provides an analysis of commercial campaigns organized by Japan Railways. See IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, 29-54.

のまま), or "a history that has continued for more than one thousand years" (*sennen ijō tsuzuiteiru rekishi* 千年以上続いている歴史) were extremely recurring in representations of the mountain, especially in website and magazines that promoted tourism in Osorezan.[44]

During my fieldwork, I carried out a small survey on the mountain, interviewing visitors, talking to them in the site. This provided a transversal sample, mostly made up of tourists, but also of local people and religious practitioners. One of my purposes, was investigating how representations of Osorezan influence perceptions and significations of the place beyond the festival periods.

Most of the people visiting Osorezan arrived on tour buses, mainly from Aomori Prefecture, or from the neighbouring Akita and Iwate Prefectures, but I also met people from Tokyo, Saitama, Osaka and Kyoto Prefectures. They paid the ticket, entered the gate and had a quick round of the mountain. Some groups were accompanied by tour guides who were nearly never specialized on the history of the mountain (I saw only one guide explaining the history of the place). Those who had no guide, scattered around the terrain in smaller groups and took a quick look around: they rarely had more than thirty minutes to visit the whole complex. All in all, Osorezan was only one of the many touristic attractions in Aomori prefecture. Nearly no one performed any memorialisation practice, but offering coins at the main buildings of the temple and/or at the *Jizōdō* near the Sai no kawara, clapping their hands and bowing. Basically, they did what people normally do in temples.

Smaller groups of visitors arrived by car. Since they were groups of friends, families or couples, they were obviously freer than the tour groups, so they usually took more time to walk around the crater. Some people also performed some ritual practice for the dead, like piling up a stone or making offers at the *Jizōdō*.

I hardly met any pilgrims, or people wearing religious robes. This was indicative of the fact that religious practices were generally concentrated in the festival periods.

[44] See, for instance, the website MUTSU-SHI KANKŌ KYŌKAI.

Groups of people under their thirties were also very few: most of the visitors were at least in their forties, but the mode consisted of people in their sixties. As a worker in the ticket office once told me half-joking:

> The eighty percent of the people who come here is made up of tourists: Osorezan is becoming a touristic area. The ones who come here for memorialisation services are only old people. Sometimes some old ladies lament the fact that we don't give any discounted ticket for old people. If we did that, we did not earn anything! Maybe we'd be better to apply a discount for young people! (Man, 37, Osorezan worker, form Mutsu.)

The generational divide among visitors in Osorezan, seemed to provide a good insights not only of the distribution of representations of the mountain and of the value accorded to it. It also offered a glimpse of behaviours in relationship to the perception of the mountain.

Most of the people I interviewed asserted that they knew the mount since thy were children, especially through the stories their grandparents or their families told them. The fame and the value of the mountain as a "traditional spiritual site" were unquestioned:

> Everybody in Japan knows Osorezan. When you die, you come here and become an ancestor. (Man, 66, from Saitama Prefecture)

> It's not that we know it from the media. The Japanese know Osorezan because it is true. (Man, 43, from Iwate Prefecture)

The idea of a traditional sacred place was very widespread, particularly among people over-forties and, obviously, among workers and caretakers of Osorezan. Among the people who visited the mountain for the first time – who were actually the most, especially among tourists – there was a marked trend of expecting a site characterized by a strong "spirituality" (*reikan* 霊感).[45]

[45] *Jim Breen's Online Japanese Dictionary* translates *reikan* as "(1) afflatus; inspiration; (2) ability to sense the supernatural (esp. ghosts, etc.)". In this case, I chose the term "spirituality" because it seemed to me more appropriate to the context. Another term that was used, even though by few people, was *supirichuariti* (スピリチュアリティ), that is newer than *reikan*. On this term, see SHIMAZONO 2004a. *From Salvation to Spirituality. Popular Religious Movements in Modern Japan*; SHIMAZONO 2007. *Supurichuariti no kōryū shinreisei bunka to sono shūhen スピリチュアリティの興隆 新霊性文化とその周辺.*

This expectation was met in some cases, in which Osorezan was recognized as a spiritual place, legitimized in particular by its relationship with Kōyasan and Hieizan as one of the "Three Great Siritual Places" (*sandaireijō* 三大霊) of Japan. This was expressed in several ways:

> I think Osorezan is a very important historical and traditional religious site. It's definitely one of the three Great holy places in Japan (*yappari nihon no sandaireijō desu ne* やっぱり日本の三大霊所ですね). […] Then today the whether is cloudy. Quite Osorezan-like, isnt'it? (*Osorezan teki desu ne* 恐山的ですね) (Man, 35, from Aomori Prefecture)

> We always wanted to come here, because it's a very famous place and it's one of the three sacred places of Japan. It's definitely a spiritual place (*reikan no tsuyoi basho* 霊感の強い場所)." (Man, 43, from Iwate Prefecture)

> It's a very spiritual place. A place in which you feel the spirits of ancestors. (Man, 53, from Akita Prefecture)

People who recognized the spiritual aura of the mountain as a traditional site did not necessarily engage themselves in religious practices. They were mainly tourists, who just stated to have a personal interest in the mountain.

Yet, actually, the representation of the mountain as a traditional spiritual place, to a certain extent, even caused disappointment to some other people – especially to the few pilgrims who went to the mountain with the purpose of carrying out religious practices – as they realized that most of the visitors were not religious practitioners but tourists.

As pointed out by a couple of pilgrims I met on the terrain, differently from the mounts of the Shikoku Pilgrimage,[46] visitors were not required to wear pilgrim robes on the mountain. This provided a substantial difference between Osorezan and other mountains in which pilgrimages are carried out. Together with the extremely low number of *kuyō* practitioners, this provided a general impression of "touristic place" (*kankōchi* 観光地) to the people

[46] See READER 2006. *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning And Practice in Shikoku*.

who visited the mountain in order to perform religious practices, that collided with the aura of "spirituality" and of "tradition" that is narrated in mass-mediated representations.

2.4.2 The Horrific Mountain

Yet, although Osorezan was often depicted as a traditional religious place in the media, representations of the weird, linked to ghost stories, death and the supernatural, seemed to prevail in entertainment programs, as well as in magazines, novels and comic books.[47] Osorezan and its apparition of ghosts were a recurring theme especially in magazines that specialized in horror stories and it is always listed in websites and blogs specialized in "haunted places" (*shinrei supotto* 心霊スポット) in Japan.[48]

Starting from its very name, "Dread Mountain", Osorezan was particularly suitable for being the setting of scary stories of death and the afterlife. Furthermore, narratives and beliefs that spirits of the dead gathered in Osorezan, the conception of "generalized death", together with local ghost stories, the presence and fame of *itako* and narratives created in *manga*, *anime* and literature, that were spread out by the media, produced the representation of a frightening, dreadful and, in some cases, dangerous place. Moreover, since this kind of entertainment was specialized in horror, the representations they provided of the mount, were not only limited to the stories, but they were also surrounded by visuals that suggested further connections to death, fear, mystery and the supernatural, like dripping blood and corpse candles, especially in websites. Osorezan was represented as a place in which apparitions of *yūrei* were nearly taken for granted, since it is the place where spirits of the dead gather:

> One of the famous Three Great Spiritual Mountains, Three Great Spiritual Places and Three Great Spiritual Areas. An "other space" in which heaven and hell mix up. It is said that all the spirits of the dead in Honshū come here. Therefore, also people who regret to separate from the dead, pay visit to this place. (NIHON NO SHINREI SUPOTTO)

[47] See for instance AZUSA 2006; KAZAMI. 1998. *Osorezan yūrei jiken 恐山幽霊事件* and UCHIDA. 1989. *Osorezan satsujin jiken 恐山殺人事件*, in which Osorezan is the setting of mysterious murders connected with supernatural beings. Also an extremely famous author of horror manga, Mizuki Shigeru, used Osorezan as a special setting for his stories, see MIZUKI. 2005. *Osorezan monogatari 恐山物語*.

[48] The word *shinrei* I translate as "haunted" has a less negative connotation than in English. However, the expression *shinrei supotto* not only always indicates a place in which ghost appear, but it has usually a connotation of mistery and dread. As for websites, see, for instance NIHON NO SHINREI SUPOTTO and NIHON ZENKOKU SHINREI SUPOTTO SAGASHI.

No more explanation is necessary: the King of haunted places in Aomori. No, in the whole Japan! Starting from the name, it has got quite a lot of impact. (TŌHOKU NO SHINREI SUPOTTO)

It is said that all the spirits of the dead gather in this mountain called "the hometown of the dead". Therefore, people who pay visit to the mount, with the sad hope of meeting the face of a deceased person even one time, never cease.
If you look outside from the window of one of one of the hot springs within the precincts of the temple, the person you want to meet appears from the afterlife. It is said that you will see him/her looking towards the *Jizōdō* in front of the window.[49]
However, you cannot absolutely call him/her.
If you call him/her, violating this prescription, you will meet his/her terrible eyes. (SHINREI TAIZEN)

Fig. 16: The page that mentions Osorezan in NIHON NO SHINREI SUPOTTO

This kind of narratives were mostly consumed by children, teenagers and people in their twenties or – at latest – in their thirties, who are also the target of horror *manga*, *anime*, literature and the media, if not – like in the case of horror websites – their direct creators.

[49] In other words, you will see the spirit from its back.

In fact, the few people under their thirties I met in Osorezan, showed that their knowledge of the place was informed by those kinds of sources.

However, among the people I interviewed, the ones who stated to be informed on the mountain especially by the media were not necessarily under-fourties. Yet, they also shared the image of a dreadful (*kowai* 恐い) and/or gloomy (*kurai* 暗い) place".

> "I thought this was a dreadful (*kowai*) place. Something like who comes here could be taken away, or that monsters or ghosts would appear, or that you must not take pictures. […] Now I don't think it's scary, anymore, but it's definitely a site for *kuyō*, a ghostly place (*reitekina basho* 霊的な場所). Also the surrounding space is so weird…" (Woman, 23, Osaka Prefecture)

> I tought Osorezan was a bit scary and I expected it to be a gloomier (*motto kurai* もっと暗い) place. In the media it is often portrayed as gloomy, but it's actually not. (Woman, 18, Miagi Prefecture)

> I am not particularly interested in Osorezan, I just came here because it is famous. […] I thought this was a dreadful place, I saw it on the TV. Actually it is not, even though it could be a bit more cheerful… (Woman, 40, Tokyo).

> I think this place is not Japan-like (*nihonppokunai* 日本っぽくない). I used to have a dreadful image of it, I thought it was kind of slimier (*motto dorodoro* もっとどろどろ). (Woman, 35, Kanagawa Prefecture)

The people who stated to be informed mainly by the media, then, expected the mount to be a frightening place, regardless to their age. Nevertheless, the influence of mass-mediated representations was much clearer among under-fourties, since, as stated above, this is the target of most of the media that specialize in horror. Yet, most of these people changed their mind by visiting the mount, mainly commenting that it actually was a "place that calms the heart (*kokoro ga ochitsuku tokoro* 心が落ち着く所)", even though some of them kept defining it as a weird (*fushigi* 不思議), upsetting (*kimochi warui* 気持ち悪い) or lonely (*sabishii* 寂しい) place, because of the particularity of the landscape:

> I expected a place in which the dead come. If I came here on my own, I would be a bit frightened. Now, I don't think it's scary, but It's quite a weird place indeed (*Fushigina tokoro* 不思議な所): there are stones everywhere, so I don't get whether it's a mountain or a town… (Woman, 68, Miyagi Prefecture)

> I imagined Osorezan was a dreadful place, but now I think it's a lonely one, with all these white stones and rocks… (Woman, 28, Tokyo Prefecture)

Needless to say, the further the person came from, the higher the probability to have been informed by the media, since they had no direct experience of visiting Osorezan. These narratives actually seem to be quite effective and widespread: before going to Osorezan I stayed in Kyoto for two weeks. I was extremely surprised in discovering that, when I told my friends I was about to start my fieldwork in Osorezan, most of them told me to take care, because they had heard it is a haunted place and they did not want me to get harmed by ghosts. A 47 years-old woman even suggested me to buy a *omamori* お守り and take it with me on the mountain, otherwise some ghost could go back with me and give me troubles, or even kill me.

There were obviously also quite a few exceptions to this general trend, since the way people construct their knowledge varies accordingly to the person's interests and tastes. So, for instance, people who visited Osorezan to perform religious practices and/or stated to be interested in religious topics in some ways, did not necessarily share the representations of the "horrific mountain", even though they came from Osaka or Tokyo. However, this was generally linked to the fact that they had been mainly informed by their family members' stories or by scholarly folklore studies, so they were more oriented to provide a representation of the mountain as a "traditional" religious sites.

2.4.3 The "True" Mountain

> "The temple's told me not to spread it around that ghosts and spirits and other such things appear at Mount Osore, but, after all, these things are real." The temple's admonition to the caretaker echoes his own earlier warning to the visitor who saw the face of an absent relative in the baths: it's frightening, so don't say anything about it, even if you did

> something. There is an attempt to deny the existence of ghosts by discouraging rumours of them.[50]

Ghost stories and repeating rumours of them were a preoccupation for the monks of Bodaiji and Entsūji. Also *itako* were considered a nuisance by the temple management. *Itako* caused traffic jams, media glare, and crowds to appear on the mountain and

> […] they disrupt the more sober, orderly rites and processions of the event. One reason the temple disavows any connection with the mediums is that people complain to the temple when the *itako's* predictions are off the mark [..]; another is the fact that *kuchiyose* conjoins a vocal calling of the dead with money. That is why the *itako* have been segregated from the allegorical space of the itineraries, and why, at the same time, they sit along fortune-tellers charm sellers, palm readers, and herbalists who hawk their services above the low-pitched, constant din of the medium's chants and rustle of rosaries.[51]

Indeed, the management of the temple showed to be extremely worried about ghost rumours spread by the media and the *itako*. In fact, while the temple proposed representations of a mountain linked to Buddhist religious symbolic discourses and memorialisation services, narratives of the "horrific mountain" contrasted with the management's intentions. Indeed, practices and beliefs that were not subsumed by official Buddhist methods to control the dead, allowed the living to contact the dead, potentially disrupting the authority of the temple and thus questioning its very role in relationship to Osorezan.

> The temple, and the metanarrative of Buddhist efficacy in dealing with death that underlies its function, are authoritative. Temple authorities can discourage the belief – and the telling of stories that attest to at least a lingering desire to have a belief – in ghosts. The temple wants to deny the activity of ghosts and the telling of stories about them, testifying to an uneasiness with its failure to account for the unsettled dead, which in a very real sense it creates, as the exterior of its own discursive system. Yet without the refractory remainder that ghosts provide, the power of the memorialization system could not function. Ghostly narratives supplement Mount Osore's institutional structure; at the same time they are an

[50] IVY 1995b. "Ghostly Epiphanies. Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore." In *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, 167.
[51] Ibid., 171.

> alterity necessary for the exercise of the power of that structure. They allow the temple system to succeed by failing.[52]

Yet, this is not the only reason why the temple's management discouraged talking about ghosts: the monks were worried that those rumours, that have become more and more widespread in recent years, might scare people around Japan to even visit the place, thus causing a decrease of the number of visitors and, consequently, of the incomes of the temples. Actually, visitors in Osorezan were progressively decreasing from 2004.

１．下北半島国定公園地域別入込数

（単位：人）

区　　分	平成１３年	１４年	１５年	１６年	１７年	１８年
恐　　山	370,000	390,000	446,000	432,000	404,000	387,000
薬　　研	347,000	343,000	419,000	374,000	324,000	289,000
尻　　屋	140,000	142,000	148,000	150,000	131,000	131,000
大　　間	223,000	218,000	260,000	220,000	204,000	232,000
仏　ヶ　浦	227,000	231,000	244,000	219,000	174,000	190,000
脇　野　沢	39,000	39,000	46,000	42,000	33,000	29,000
湯　野　川	65,000	66,000	93,000	102,000	125,000	102,000
合　　計	1,411,000	1,429,000	1,656,000	1,539,000	1,395,000	1,360,000

資料：青森県観光統計概要

Tab. 1: Report of total number of tourists in Mutsu area from 2001 to 2006. In the first line, data referring to Osorezan. From MUTSU SHIYAKUSHO 2009.

In order to face this problem, from 2007, the temple had recruited two professional guides, who could be hired by visitors at the entrance. They were both thirty-five years-old men in 2008 and both of them were born and grew up in Mutsu. One of them, G-san, was also studying to become a monk at Bodaiji. The other, K-san, claimed he did not know yet whether to become a monk or not.

[52] Ibid., 167-168.

> Without any kind of PR, there are about one thousand people a day visiting Osorezan, more than ten thousands during the days of the festivals. However, most of them don't understand the place: they just come touring here, they take a look around and go away. Then mount Osore has started to have this fame of a scary place. […] I decided to become a guide because for me Osorezan is extremely important for its history, tradition and spirituality and I want to show people the true Osorezan (*hontō no Osorezan* 本当の恐山). If we sported the place in the right way, with its true history, I think that all the rumours about ghosts would disappear and the number of visitors, especially of young people, would increase. It would be a pity if Osorezan disappeared (*Osorezan ga nakunaru to komaru* 恐山がなくなると困る)! (K-san)

> I became a guide because I was interested in Osorezan and I because I started to study to become a monk. Then I wanted to change the image of the mount, that is often sported as frightening. I want to tell the truth about Osorezan to the people who come here. Most of them, though just come here, walk around the itinerary and go away, without understanding anything. There are also quite a few people who hire us. They are really interested in Osorezan, but they are mainly old people. (G-san)

The two guides' statements clearly showed that, by recruiting them, the temple tried to change the representations of the mountain by contrasting the one of the "horrific mountain", that was felt as one of the causes of the decrease of visitors, and to impose its own narratives, linked to Buddhist symbolic discourses, history and "tradition".

This policy carried out by the management of the temple becomes clearer, if we think that visitors could access information on the site exclusively through the pamphlet distributed at the entrance with the ticket and the guides. Moreover, also the guides arbitrarily decided to provide visitors with selected information, that contributed to improve the institutionalized representation of the place, as I could understand during my guided tour, when I was taken in front of the Hell of the Blood Pond:

> "This is the Hell of the Blood Pond (Chi no ike jigoku). The water used to be red, because of a high rate of iron in it. However, some years ago, the rate of iron in the water decreased, so now it looks like a normal pond. This hell is specific for women, because they bleed for menstruation and when they give birth to children. As you might know, Buddhism did not have a very good opinion of women. Now it's different, of course. But,

> to be honest, if you had been a woman, I wouldn't have showed you this place." "Really? Even though I was a researcher?" "Yes, I think it wouldn't be nice anyway." (G-san)

The temple institutionally controlled every process of signification of Osorezan in the site, obviously promoting Buddhist narratives. Actually, most of the people I interviewed and who did not hire a guide, lamented the fact that they could not understand anything of what they were seeing because of the lack of explanations.

In fact, the pamphlet doid not provide any kind of information regarding the part of the terrain. Consequently, interpretations and significations of the site was left to individuals, thus allowing a high degree of freedom also in religious and memorializing practices.

Anthropological studies in western languages about Osorezan stressed the difference and the contrast between the Buddhist institutionalized and ideologized discourses related to the temple complex and the freedom of the symbolic discourses and narratives linked to the part of the terrain between the temple and the lake, left to "popular religious" practices.[53] Yet, I think this dichotomy might be deconstructed and analyzed in different terms.

Visitors needed to buy the ticket to enter. The ticket, though, did not include only the visit to the temple complex: also the terrain was inaccessible without paying the five hundred yen fee, because the walls that surrounded the temple complex extended all the way down to the lake. This showed that the place was conceived as a unity, obviously controlled by Bodaiji.

In second instance, all the people of the staff that managed the place were related to the temple, including those who had the responsibility to clean up the terrain from memorializing offerings. Needless to say, without them the terrain would have become a dump in no time, but once again, the facts that the terrain must have been kept clean and how it must have been kept clean depended on decisions taken by the management of the institution.

[53] See IVY 1995b. "Ghostly Epiphanies. Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore." In *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*; RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*.

> We have a lot of problems with the small memorializing Jizō statues. People bring the statues here, there are loads of them. We don't know what to do with them, there are loads of them, so we take them away from here and we keep them in the temple's storehouses. (G-san)

Even more importantly, the temple controlled the articulation and signification of space, by proposing in the pamphlet an oriented itinerary through the terrain and giving meaning to places through plastic signs with the name of the places:

> Last year[54] the temple renewed all the signs on the terrain. Once there were a lot more signs with names of hell. There were even hells dedicated to specific professions. However the signs were all very old and in very bad conditions (*boroboro* ぼろぼろ). It was nearly impossible to read most of them, so we decided to keep only the main ones, also because we did not know what was written on the others. (G-san)

In fact, confronting the pamphlet with the map of Osorezan drawn by Mori in 1975[55] there are four missing hells (See Fig. 10).

Signs not only organized the space, but they also gave meaning to it. Walking around the terrain one could find offers scattered around the place, especially in front of small altars made of stones and personalized by a photograph or by the name of the deceased – particularly for children. Nevertheless, most of the people performing memorializing practices, from giving offers to praying, did it in the Sai no kawara *Jizōdō*, or in places marked by signs. Most of the piled stones, in fact, where nearby the big gas-spurting rocks named after some hell and most of the people bowed in front of them.

Moreover, other signs give rules over religious practices:

> "This is not a river to flow memorial offers. Please, give the offers to the Buddhas in your respective houses, after having taken them home." (Sign on the Sai no kawara)

[54] Namely 2007.
[55] See MORI 1995 (or.1975). *Reijō Osorezan Monogatari* 霊場恐山物語, 50.

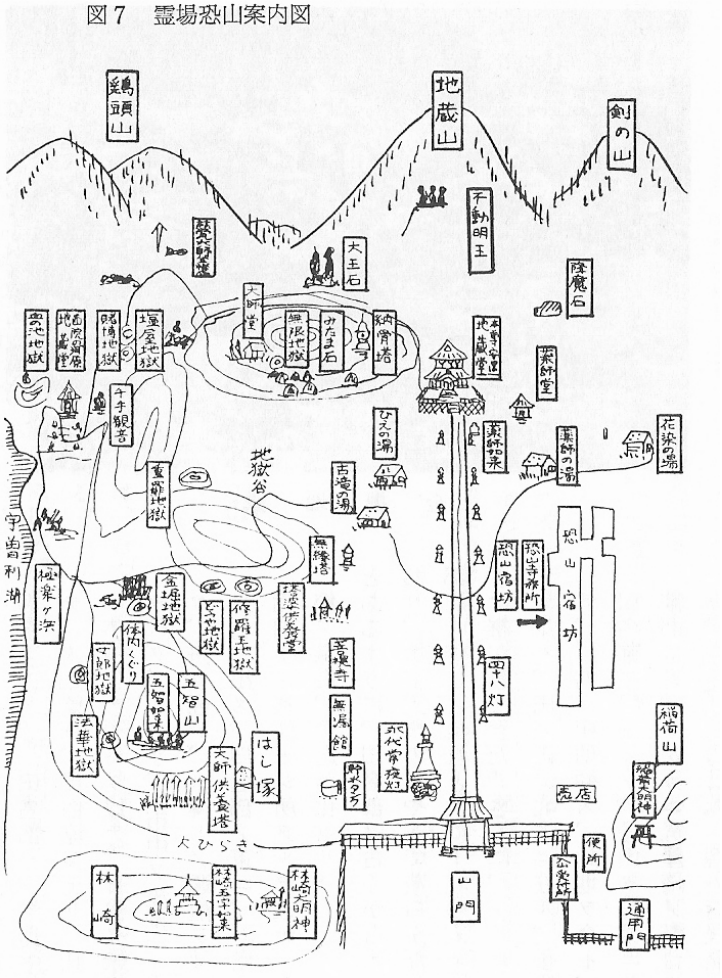

Fig. 17: Map of Osorezan in 1975.
From MORI 1995 (or.1975). *Reijō Osorezan Monogatari 霊場恐山物語*, 50.

Both the signs with the names and the ones with prescriptions, hence, provided limits to freedom of religious practices in the site. This institutional organization of space, together with the reproduction and transmission of representations of the "traditional" mountain, constituted the limits within which innovation in practices was conceived and negotiated. Consequently, it may be concluded that the temple carried out a policy aimed to exert an indirect control on the whole site, organizing its narratives, meanings and practices, through signification of space and, therefore, institutionalizing them at least partially, to pursue the teachings of the "true" Osorezan.

2.4.4 The Local Mountain

One of the purposes of my study was to investigate whether there were any differences between how Osorezan is sported/represented in translocal contexts and how it was perceived on a local one. As I mentioned above, in most of the cases there was a direct relationship between personal experience on the field and effectiveness of mass-mediated narratives, especially in the case of representations of the "horrific mountain", in particular, among under fourties. This was possible because of a displacement and decontestualization of the meaning[56] of the mountain that happens when a person's main source of information is some kind of media.

Yet, if it was so, it would be reasonable to expect narratives about the "traditional" mount to have been extremely widespread in the close Mutsu from where, theoretically speaking, everyone had the possibility to go to the mountain in every moment and, thus, to access direct experience of the place, as well as the Buddhist institutionalized narratives promoted in the site.

Mutsu is the northernmost city in Honshū and it had a total population of 65.224 people in 2008. It was born with the name of Mutsu in 1960, one year after the two villages of Tanabumachi 田名部町 and Ōminatomachi 大湊町 were united with the name of Ōminatotanabu 大湊田名部. In 2005 Mutsu became the most extended city in Aomori Prefecture, with the incorporation of the neighbouring villages of Kawauchimachi 川内町, Ōhata 大畑町 and Wakinosawamura 脇野沢村.

The economy of the city was mainly based on fishing and agricultural industries, but Mutsu also hosted a military base and a nuclear plant, that drew a very high number of workers from all over the country, especially from Tokyo Prefecture.

The central part of the city was Tanabu, where also Entsūji, the temple that managed Bodaiji in Osorezan lye. Religious life in Tanabu was characterized by a festival (Tanabu

[56] See IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*.

matsuri 田名部祭り), held from the 18th to the 20th of August.[57] Moreover, religious practices in Tanabu were deeply connected to the mount, at least until the nineteen sixties. Men of the villages, in fact, used to walk up to the mountain at least once a year, to take baths in the hot springs and spend the nights in the temple complex. Furthermore, the belief in the thaumaturgic powers of the hot springs was very widespread. Therefore, people who got wounded or fell ill used to climb the mountain or be taken on the top of it, to take a bath in them in order to recover.[58]

Fig. 18: Map of Mutsu-*shi*. From MAPPLE CHIZU

These provided a direct relationship between Osorezan and the people, as well as a general attribution of a positive value to the mountain, in spite of ghost stories that were already existing at the time.[59] Most of over-fifty years-old people in Tanabu still remembered a little nostalgically when they used to go to take baths in Osorezan and some of them also lamented the fact that these practices are no more in use. In fact, participation to these

[57] The festival was characterized by the similarity of the *mikoshi* 神輿 to the *yamaboko* 山鉾 of Gion *matsuri* in Kyoto. They were imported during the late eighteenth century, when the naval trade between this area and Kansai developed enormously. See MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986d. *Mutsushishi. Minzoku-hen むつ市史民俗編.*

[58] For a more detailed explanation, see KUSUNOKI 1968. *Shimokita no shūkyō 下北の宗教*; KUSUNOKI 1979. "Osorezan Shinkō 恐山信仰." In *Tōhoku sangaku to shugendō 東北山岳と修験道*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986. *Mutsushishi. Minzoku-hen むつ市史民俗編.*

[59] For an account of local ghost stories, see MORI 1995 (or.1975). *Reijō Osorezan Monogatari 霊場恐山物語*, 8-14.

practices, though, started to decrease during the post-war, and nearly disappeared during the mid-sixties, with the progressive industrialization and change of life-stile, as well as of the social structure.[60]

Yet nearly everybody in Tanabu showed a certain pride towards the mountain and claimed there is an extremely close relationship between people in Mutsu and Osorezan: I heard statements like "We don't call it Osorezan. We call it Oyama" hundreds of times, talking with people in Tanabu.

However, actually, meeting people from Tanabu, or even from Mutsu in general, in Osorezan was very difficult in 2008. All the locals I met on the mountain were over-sixties and went to the mount to perform *kuyō* in Bodaiji.

Nevertheless, Osorezan is obviously well known at every level in Tanabu and local stories about the mountain were countless. They were not limited to ghost stories, though. Interestingly enough, there were also narratives based on recent scientific research. As far as I understand, the results of these researches were not broadcasted on a translocal level by mainstream media, even though they were reported in scholarly ethnographic studies, thus remaining confined to locality. Yet, they are very well-known among the population.

The first of the two is linked to Mount Osore's landform itself. The underground do Shimokita peninsula is reach of gold, silver, copper, iron sand and other minerals. In particular the iron sand is famous in Japan because of its high percentage of iron and it was extracted and commercialized since the early modern period. In 1989, during a geological survey on Osorezan, a huge gold deposit was found. From the viewpoint of the gold grade in a mine of thermal deposits, it is the best in the world, but it cannot be extracted, since the area is a national park and it is also protected by the Special Preservation [Norm] on Natural Environment (*shizen kankyō tokubetsu hoken* 自然環境特別保険).[61] The second, is a biologic one. Osorezan is a volcanic lake, in the middle of a crater, therefore has an

[60] See, for instance, MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986d. *Mutsushishi. Minzoku-hen むつ市史民俗編*; SHIMOKITA HANTŌ NO REKISHI TO MINZOKU WO KATARU KAI (ed.) 1978. *Shimokita hantō no rekishi to minzoku 下北半島の歴史と民俗*

[61] See MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986e. *Mutsushishi. Shizen-hen むつ市史自然編.*

extremely high acidity rate. Yet, particular small minnows (*ugui* ウグイ) are living in it.[62] Especially these fishes have been studied by the students of local high schools and they appear, together with the gold deposit, historic and religious notions on Osorezan in excursion reports.[63] These results were commented enthusiastically every time, as they gave a legitimization to the role of the mount itself:

> Did you know that Osorezan is one of the biggest gold mines in the world? I got to know it only recently, but I thought "It's really a great mountain!" (Man, 56, Mutsu)

> Although Lake Usori is extremely acid, there are fishes living in it. Isn't it strange? (Man, 34, Mutsu)

At a local level, the results of these researches were not only considered simple scientific discoveries: they were interpreted in connection to the meaning given to the mountain, contributing to increase the local reputation of the mountain as a special place and to give the place an aura of alterity, coherent with its "otherworldly" role.

However, although the importance of the mountain was unquestioned, again, ghost stories and representations of the mountain as a dreadful place were extremely widespread, in particular among under twenties. Furthermore, I could verify that these narratives were linked to practice in Mutsu: more than sixty percent of the primary school students I surveyed, up to the last year, stated that they have never gone to Osorezan. This rate became slightly lower among middle school students, though it was more than fifty percent, while it was around twenty-five percent among high school students.

Yet, most of under twenties stated that they went to Osorezan only once or twice in their life and that the main reasons why they went were tourism or school excursions, not *kuyō*, nor the festival. This was not only related to the young ages of students: one might state that, generally speaking, all the relatives of an under-twenty were still alive. However, it can be objected that they could have gone with their parents or their grand parents to the

[62] See MIYAMOTO 1995. *Osorezan. Yama to shinkō* 恐山・山と信仰.
[63] See AOMORI KENRITSU TANABU KŌTŌ GAKKŌ 2008. I am enormously grateful to the staff and the students of Daiichi Tanabu shogakkō, Mutsu-shi chūgakkō and Tanabu kōkō for the kindness, patience and collaboration they offered to me for my research. The survey I distributed to them can be found in Appendix 1.

mountain to perform memorializing practices, at least once. This is indicative of the fact that these practices in Osorezan have been nearly abandoned also by older generations and it explains why I could meet nearly only over sixty years-old locals on the mount.

The lack of religious practice-oriented approach to the mountain, together with its unquestioned importance, role, and relationship with death, caused a proliferation of narratives of the "horrific mountain": most of the students – even most of those who went to the mountain – defined Osorezan as dreadful (*kowai* 恐い), uncanny (*bukimi* 不気味), or weird (*fushigi* 不思議).

> When I was at the primary school I was riding my bike on the street to Osorezan, with some friends of mine. However, an old lady we did not know, passed by, stopped the car and scolded us: "The street to Osorezan is not a place to go for children alone! Go home right now!" (Girl, 17, Mutsu)

> Since I was I child I was told by my family "Osorezan is not a place to go for children". So I think it must be a scary place and I don't even think I would like to go there. (Girl, 18, Mutsu)

> The smell is a bit too strong. I think that it's certainly a place with a ghostly atmosphere . (Boy, 17, Mutsu)

> Since I've never been there, I would like to go, but it's kind of scary. (Girl, 17, Mutsu)

> It's a place in which there are rituals for the dead, so it's a bit frightening. It's separated from reality because there are things like the *sanzu no kawa* or the red sea (*akai umi* 赤い海),[64] so I want to keep the distance. (Girl, 18, Mutsu)

Especially high school students stated that they were mainly informed about Osorezan by their families members, whereas television and friends were the main source of information among younger people. Moreover, most of the ones who did not go to Osorezan stated that it was not because of a lack of interest, but because they were forbidden by their family members. The fact that the mountain is not felt as a proper place

[64] This girl, who has never been to Osorezan, clearly mistook the Chi no ike jigoku.

for children is also witnessed by the first story above, in which a stranger prevented the group of children from going up to the mount. Therefore, we can conclude that the place was felt as dangerous at a local level, not only by under twenties, but also by their families.

As mentioned above, the religious practices that conveyed a positive value to the mountain have disappeared, thus leaving only its renown relationship with the world of the dead. Consequently, whereas all the significations related to the "traditional" religious place remain widespread mainly among over sixties, the signification of the mountain – especially among under twenties – was based on displaced information, thus strengthening the aura of the "horrific mountain" and transforming it in a haunted place. Yet the danger of ghosts is not only confined to the mountain.

2.5 Down the Ghost-Road

Although Osorezan was recognized as *the* site of ghosts in Mutsu, it was not the only setting for ghost stories. People in Mutsu reported apparitions of ghosts all along the street that leads to the mountain from Entsūji, close to the city centre. This road, called Osorezan *kaidō* (恐山街道) was, in fact, also renown as "Ghost-road" (*rei no tōrimichi* 霊の通り道, literally "the street through which spirits go"). Ghosts appeared along the whole street and the closer one got to Osorezan, the highest the probability to see them. Reports in the area surrounding Hiyamizu 冷水[65] were countless, as well as stories regarding the last houses on the side of the street, before the forest, they continued down to Entsūji and the surrounding neighbourhood, Shinmachi 新町, and they invested the whole city, appearing in a myriad of localized spots.

Ivy, in her brief account of ghost stories in Osorezan points out that

> Seeing or hearing a ghost is personal and not subject to verification by a group. There is instead a desire to repeat what one has heard about ghosts: a logic of hearsay that brings tales of ghosts close to gossip and rumour. A plural, heterogeneous narrative practice

[65] A bus stop on the road to Osorezan. This place was characterized by a mountain water spring, surrounded by Jizō statues. The bus stopped here for some minutes, in order to let passengers out, so they could drink the water, while speakers in the bus announced: "Hiyamizu 冷水, if you drink the water once, you will live ten years longer. If you drink it twice, you will live twenty years longer. If you drink three times, your life will grow thirty years longer".

> ensues based on the repeated tellings of encounters with ghosts. Stories of strange occurrences at Mount Osore are often prefaced by "My friend told me…" or "My grandmother said she saw…" Stories are told secondhand, their experiential origins displaced in a fashion that parallels the shifting origins of the ghosts themselves. […]
> Buddhist narratives of redemption and the procedures and rationales for rites for the dead lie in public domain. Enscripted and formalized, they set the outer limits in Mount Osore's Buddhist control of the dead. The repeated telling of reports of ghosts forms a reserve of private, minute experiences not subject to formal verification. Ghost stories circulate, rarely promising or describing an actual communication with a specific dead one.[66]

In Ivy's account, ghost stories are repeated secondhand stories, that remain in the private sphere and do not become socially significant stories. This can be explained by thinking that people go to Osorezan to visit and/or to perform memorializing practices for the dead. Their belief and their desire to communicate with the deceased is a private experience that is not necessarily to be communicated. Moreover, people visit Osorezan come from all over the country (or from all over the world, if we also include foreign anthropologists) and then go back home. In this case, ghost stories remain confined on the mountain, because there lies the people interest, including Ivy's.

Yet, during my fieldwork in Mutsu, people who told me their own firsthand experiences with ghosts and they were incredibly numerous. Moreover, ghost stories in Mutsu exceeded the private sphere and enter "public culture",[67] since they were freely told and discussed by people in bars and shops, during their leisure time. Thus, this stories became meaningful discourses in the everyday life of people in Mutsu.[68]

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[66] IVY 1995b. "Ghostly Epiphanies. Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore." In *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, 168.

[67] On the debate about public culture, see APPADURAI 1988b. "Why Public Culture?"; CARRILLO ROWE 2009. "Writing Public Culture."

[68] Stories about ghosts within the city have never been documented. As I mentioned above, some studies, like IVY 1995b. "Ghostly Epiphanies. Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore." In *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*; MORI 1995 (or.1975). *Reijō Osorezan Monogatari 霊場恐山物語* report some ghost stories referring to Osorezan, but nothing about Mutsu. Even historical information about the city is rather general. See, for instance, MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986a. *Mutsushishi. Genshi, kodai, chūsei-hen むつ市史原始・古代・中世編*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986b. *Mutsushishi. Kindai-hen むつ市史近代編*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986c. *Mutsushishi. Kinsei-hen むつ市史近世編*. Therefore, these paragraphs are completely based on data I produced myself through my fieldwork.

The most general definition of a haunted place that people of Mutsu gave was "a spooky place" (*kimiwarui basho* 気味悪い場所). Dark parks or areas, construction sites, ruins, shabby houses, are the perfect places for apparitions. Moreover, another element that produced a haunted place was, obviously, the link with death: graveyards, crematories, and places in which somebody died by some cause, accidentally, or committed suicide.

I tried to understand what were the most renown places, the ones about which there were shared narratives. On one hand, like Ivy points out, it is true that most of personal experiences about apparitions of ghosts remained confined in the private sphere, even though they were told and debated in public places. Namely, they remained confined among the members of the conversation at that time and did not spread. On the other hand, however, sometimes the haunted place constituting the setting of the personal story of one member coincided with a secondhanded story other members knew. In this case, the place was recognized by the others and the experience of the first contributed to and legitimized the fame of that particular place.

Ghost stories, thus, tended to be shared and transmitted horizontally, among people of approximatively the same age. In fact, most of the stories that were known, for instance, by students, were unknown to older people and vice versa. Moreover, some of them remained confined among people living in the area and did not reach the whole population of the city.

In most of the cases, people traced back every story to its origins during the debate and, even when one person did not know the "history" of the ghost he/she had seen, other members informed the speaker about why there was a ghost in that particular spot. I report here two brief conversations. The first occurred in a group of people in their late fifties, the second is quoted and translated from a website:

> Woman: I hate going to Osorezan. Once I saw a ghost on the backseat. I was driving alone and, suddenly, I looked in the rearviewmirror and I realized that there was a man sitting in the back. I got terribly scared, but, as I looked again, the man wasn't there anymore. And then, another time, the car radio suddenly stopped, as I was driving through Ghost-road. I was listening to a cassette, but it stopped and there was no way to make it play again. It happened three times, always on Ghost-road and once there was also my daughter with me. Eventually, I have three music cassettes that don't work anymore.

> Man 1: Oh, yes. Ghost-road is dangerous… It's full of spirits who go to Osorezan.
> Man 2: I saw a ghost on Ghost-road as well, when I was younger. I was walking to Osorezan and I met a young girl, alone. She was walking on the other side of the street, standing in the middle of the forest and looking at the ground. I asked her "What are you doing here?", but she did not reply. I asked her again, but nothing. So I kept on walking, but then I thought "Maybe she got lost and she needs some help." It was just a matter of seconds, but, as I looked back, she had disappeared. Maybe she was the ghost of a girl who died some years before…
>
> A) Yesterday I saw a ghost in Hayakakeshō park. Do ghosts appear there?
> B) Some time ago, a child drown there
> C) It was on the news some years ago. How did you see the ghost?
> […]
> B) Rumours of ghosts in Hayakakeshō park are pretty famous!
> C) Well, because quite a few children who died in the pond… And there are also bears.[69]

I was extremely surprised when I heard people freely talking about ghosts. Firstly, I thought of a consequence of my agency, namely that they were doing so just because I – a foreigner researching Osorezan – was there. As I became more acquainted with some of my informants, I asked them about those practices. They seemed to be surprised by the question and they replied that talking about ghosts in bars was totally normal and that it was not connected to my presence.

In fact I realized that sometimes also people who did not know me, talked about apparitions of ghosts in one place or another. Ghost stories where always extremely precise in reporting the place: a particular park, mansion, school, bend of a street, neighbourhood… I was so struck that I decided to start surveying some of them, trying to understand how they spread, became shared discourses, changed, what they were based on and how they were distributed among the population.

[69] See AOMORIKENNAI! This is a website to which people send comments on a particular topic by mobile phone. Therefore the age of the speakers is not understandable. Yet, this conversation offers a nice example of recognition and explanation of the origin of a haunted place. Hayakakeshō 早掛沼 park is a park outside the city centre, near a big pond. Ghost stories about this place were fairly well known especially among middle-school students in 2008.

This caused me some problems. Ghost stories were more than rumours in Mutsu: it was obvious that ghosts appeared in the city, because Osorezan was there. The unquestioned link between the mountain and death provides the legitimization of belief in ghosts. Of course, not everybody in Mutsu believed in those stories, but people often reacted to my questions as if I wanted to "scientifically" demonstrate the truthfulness or untruthfulness of the stories. Again and again people insisted in telling me that ghosts actually appeared in that spot and that somebody, if not themselves, really saw it. I repeatedly had to state that I was interested in how the story originated as a rumour, in why people talked about that place as haunted and in how the rumour spread around, otherwise I would be seen as a weird ghostbuster poking his nose in topics he could not understand. Nevertheless, conversations often shifted to whether I could feel the presence of ghosts or not (*reikan ga tsuyoi/yowai* 霊感が強い/弱い, literally, if I had a "strong/weak ability to sense the supernatural") and, as I stated I had never seen a ghost in my whole life, I was often replied that then I would not probably be able to understand Mutsu.

I do not know whether they were right or wrong, but what I could understand is that ghosts are a serious topic in Mutsu, because dealing with them is dealing not necessarily dealing only with death. It is dealing with history and memories, social values and identity.

2.6 Haunted Places in Mutsu

Osorezan was renown in the whole Mutsu as a haunted place, transversally among the population, and so Ghost-road was. They were definitely top-ranked as settings of ghost stories. I have already discussed the signification process and the meaning making of the mountain, therefore I will now focus on Ghost-road.

To be precise, Ghost-road does not coincide with Osorezan *kaidō*. As I mentioned above, Osorezan *kaidō* is the road that connects Mutsu to Mount Osore. It has always been the only way to go to the mountain from the city. It runs close to the city centre and converges in a urban street. Ghost-road comprehends the whole Osorezan *kaidō* and a brief urban

street that leads to Entsūji and Daikakuin 大覚院. The first, as I explained above, is a Sōtō zen temple, the second, in spite of its name,[70] is a Shinto shrine.

Fig. 19: The main entrance to Entsūji

Historically speaking, the reasons why Ghost-road was considered a haunted place, is that it was the street that *yamabushi* used to walk to go down to Entsūji during the medieval and early modern periods. The connection between *yamabushi* and *oni* or ghosts is pointed out in Komatsu's work.[71] In fact, places connected to cults of the mountains and *shugendō* practices often presented symbolic representations of death and the afterlife. Unfortunately, in the case of Mutsu, there were not enough historical sources to affirm this connection and, even more importantly, this interpretation was known nearly only by specialists or by people who had a personal scholarly interest in the mountain. Therefore, the connection between ghosts and *yamabushi* could not be considered as meaning producing among most of the people in contemporary Mutsu. The main narrative that legitimize the road as a

[70] Normally, religious buildings that present the *kanji in* (院) in their name are connected to Buddhist temples, or are independent Buddhist temples themselves. The story of this small Shinto shrine is nearly unknown, but, according to some interpretations, it was connected with shugendō practices and *yamabushi* during the medieval and early modern periods.

[71] See KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha* 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは.

haunted place in contemporary Mutsu was that, since the street has always been the only way to reach Osorezan, it was the one that all the spirits of the dead had to walk.

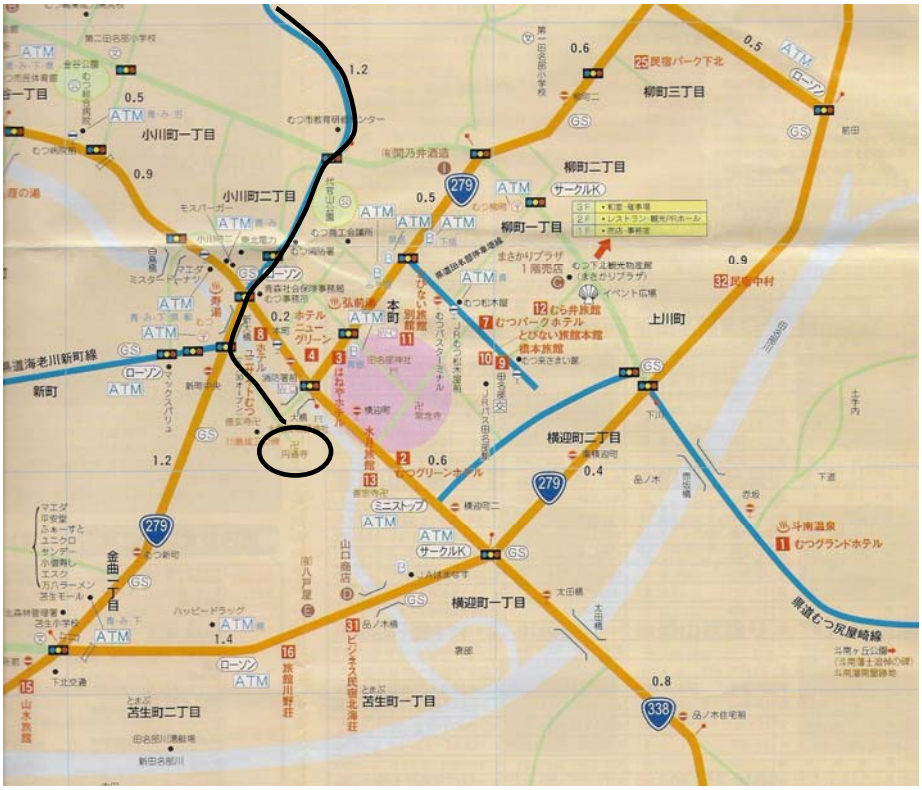

Fig. 20: Map of central Mutsu. The black lines indicate Entsūji and Ghost-road

2.6.1 Haunted Houses, Interrupted Lives and Social Values

Apparitions of ghosts along Ghost-road were reported in particular outside the city, but there were also accounts of ghosts in the houses at the boundary between the inhabited space and the forest:

> They say that there are haunted houses on the street that goes to Osorezan. People talk about weird noises, banging doors and windows, human faces that appear on the walls. Creepy, isn't it? I would never live in such a place. Actually, apparently, those houses are empty because, as soon as a someone rents the house, ghosts send them away. (Woman, 46, Mutsu)

> They were so stupid as to build a house on Ghost-street. Some friends of mine rented it, but, as soon as they entered, their child started to see people walking through the rooms. Once they were having dinner together and the child said: "Dad, who is that man?" And

> there was no one there! I mean, they could not see anyone, but the child did. They kept on staying there for a while, but, apparently, the child continued seeing people around, so, eventually, they left the house. (Man, 52, Mutsu)

Actually, the practice of discriminating against houses that were considered haunted place was extremely diffused, among the whole population. In most of the cases, the houses in which ghosts were believed to appear were, generally speaking, old, dismissed and shabby. Thus, they conveyed that *kimiwarui* aura that (re-)produced ghost stories. Yet, conversely, most of the people were not going to rent or buy a house in which ghosts seemed to appear, therefore, as the proprietor died, these houses were left alone and their conditions became worse and worse, until they were not rentable anymore. Thus, ghost stories lived in a continuous feedback between people and place, often producing a downward spiral.

I met people who left the house or the room they rented because they claimed they were haunted. One in particular, a man in his early fifties who had moved in Mutsu from Tokyo, entered a house that was the setting of a murder some years before. There were rumours of ghosts appearing and of blood stains that could not be washed away. He stated that he rented the house because he did not know the stories, but, in the following weeks, he was informed in local bars and started to interpret everything in the house in relationship to the presence of ghosts. Eventually, he left the house some months later and he found another accommodation. Before leaving the house, though, he performed purification practices (*arai* 洗い), in order not to let the spirits stuck to him.

In fact, ghosts tended to belong to people who were killed, or died in an accident. Their lives could not be completed, being circumstantially interrupted. The spirit of the deceased, thus, remained on the place, longing for its lost life and trying to steal it from the living. In fact, differently from the ghosts in Osorezan, that were considered dangerous because they may have taken away their victims with them, those in Mutsu tended to stuck to the victim (*tsuite iku* 付いて行く), sucking away his/her life, making him/her weaker and weaker, until he/she would died. The only ways to get rid of them was to confine them in the place

where they belonged through purification rituals on the entrance of the house, or exorcise them.[72]

Yet, ghost stories regarding that particular house were not known by people living far from the area – that was also an isolated one – even though the murder was, since it appeared in local media.

The practice of leaving or not renting houses, though, did not seem to influence the market of real estate. Actually, since ghost spots were, generally speaking, extremely localized and regarded one particular house, or one particular apartment in a mansion, one single person or family who did not believe the story, could freely enter. Moreover, as in the above mentioned case, people coming from outside were quite numerous. They did not normally know or did not necessarily believe local stories, so they could normally rent the house and live in it. Conversely, houses that had become shabby, were no longer rentable or sellable, thus they were no longer taken into consideration by real estate agencies.

Nevertheless, even though the real estate was not actually influenced by ghost stories, it is interesting to note that people who talked about haunted houses *assumed* they were empty. This showed that discriminative practices were taken for granted as an integral part of ghost narratives and of process of signification of places. Furthermore, assuming that haunted houses were empty, implied assuming that all the people in what the speaker intended as a "community"[73] behaved in the same way. Namely they did not rent or buy houses that were considered haunted. In this case, the belief in diffused discriminatory practices linked to ghost stories was indicative of the signification of those narrative, even more than the actual situation of real estate, since it assumed a relationship between knowledge and behaviour that was felt as shared among the locals.

In fact, the haunted house on Ghost-road is actually empty because of rumours about ghosts. Moreover, when I talked to owners of other houses considered haunted, they were

[72] For a more detailed discussion about *yūrei* and hungry ghosts, see RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*.
[73] On the conception and production of "community", see COHEN (ed.) 1986. *Symbolizing Boundaries*; COHEN 1989. *The Symbolic Construction of Community (Key Ideas)*; COHEN (ed.) 2000. *Signifying Identities. Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*. I will take into consideration the creation of "community" in the following chapters.

extremely worried I could spread around the rumour even more than it already was. This showed how incident in behaviour ghost stories were considered to be in Mutsu. In particular, the owner of a mansion over a convenience store, close to the city centre, at the conjunction between Osorezan *kaidō* with the urban street, explained the dynamics of the formation of that particular ghost story, that was extremely widespread among the whole population and talked about voices of children crying. Here I report parts of the conversation I had with the landlord I contacted at her workplace, a gasoline stand by the convenience store:

> "If you don't mind, I would like to talk about the mansion. Quite a few people told me that there are ghosts there…"
> "Oh, those stories… There are no ghosts here!"
> "Well, I think so too. However, I am not interested in whether there really are ghosts or not. I would like to ask you what you know about the story."
> "I see… Well, it's just a rumour… Up to five years ago, there was a gynaecologic clinic here, called Kimura *fujinka* (木村婦人科).[74] The gynaecologist was called Kimura-san. He moved away around five years ago, so the clinic was demolished. The convenience store was built two or three years ago, together with the mansion, but ghost stories came out before the mansion, when there was nothing here.
> Actually, since we built the house, there has always been a person living in the room at the third floor, in which ghosts are supposed to appear. There are two windows that face the street, do you see? One is the storeroom, the other is the flat. However, the window of the flat that faces the street is the window of the bedroom, so the light is often turned off at night, as the storeroom light is. So people think that the whole floor's empty because there are ghosts."
> "I see. So you haven't got any problems with these stories, since there is someone living in the house."
> "No, not at the moment. People living around here know that this story is not true, but these rumours become widespread extremely quickly, especially now, with the computer. I hope you don't go around and talk about ghosts in this mansion, because now there is the guy and it doesn't seem he wants to leave for now. But if he leaves, finding someone else can actually become a problem. (Woman, early forties, Mutsu)

[74] Literally "Ginaecology Kimura". In Japan, many gynaecologic clinics offer women the possibility to give birth to children, as well as to have an abortion.

Discriminating practices based on "popular" religious symbolism have been widely documented in Japan. For instance, the accusation of being a possessor of a fox (*kitsune mochi* 狐持ち), or a user of its supernatural powers (*kitsune tsukai* 狐使い) produced the legitimization for discrimination against families who where perceived to disrupt social norms in rural community, by becoming, for instance, suddenly rich.[75] Yet, I have never heard people in Mutsu talking about the owners of the houses, as they told their ghost stories. Moreover, ghosts apparitions were also reported in public places, like parks or streets, where someone was killed, or died in an accident. Therefore it was evident that they were not linked to discriminatory practices against particular people.

Apparitions of ghosts rather tended to show that the death of a person was felt like unfair by the people in the city: an interrupted life, rather than a death. Narratives about crying children voices, for instance, appeared when the clinic was demolished, namely when the link between the significations of the place and significations of the practices vanished. The cult of dead, miscarried, or aborted children (*mizuko* 水子) is a pacification practice. Since the seventies there was a strong ideological pressure in demonizing abortions and in promoting the cults of *mizuko*.[76] These ideological narratives indirectly insisted on the positive value of life of a foetus. The appearance of ghosts in the place where a clinic for abortion was, shows that the death of those children was generally considered as negative, thus showing that the ideological narrative connected to *mizuko* was generally accepted. When the clinic existed, there was a coincidence among the site (a clinic), people who were in it (doctors and patients), their role and the role of the site (examinations, birthgivings, abortions). The fact that children were born and died in that place was a coherent narrative. Yet, when the clinic was demolished, there were no memorialization and pacification practices, nor purification rituals or exorcisms for the children who died there. Their death was not institutionally managed, leaving the spirits of dead children in the incoherence of a site whose role was not put to an end in a symbolic way.

[75] On practices connected to foxes (*kitsune* 狐) see BLACKER 1975. *The Catalpa Bow. A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan*; RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*; SMYERS 1999. *The Fox and the Jewel. Shared and Private Meanings in Contemporary Japanese Inari Worship*.
[76] See HARDACRE 1997a. *Marketing the Menacing Fetus in Japan*.

Ghost, thus, appeared when the death of a person is felt as unfair and it is not managed by an institutional symbolic discourse. They become the evidence of a past event, that is thought as unfair in the present. Even when the tangible testimony of the event disappears, like in the case of the clinic, ghosts remain to witness what happened. In fact ghost stories were often linked back to an actual reason. When people remembered it.

2.6.2 Haunted Areas, Danger and Identity

The area surrounding Entsūji was one of the most renown haunted places in Mutsu. Although elementary and middle school children did not directly report it as a haunted area, choosing a more general "graves", "graveyards" and "temples", as haunted places, from high school students to old people, nearly everybody in Mutsu stated that ghosts appear in the area close to the temple.

Since Entsūji was the temple that managed Osorezan, it was connected to the mountain, both symbolically and economically. This legitimized apparition of ghosts in its area. Moreover, nearby the temple, an extremely huge graveyard extended for tenths of meters. This reason, together with the symbolic connection of the temple to Osorezan, might have been enough to justify ghost stories in the area. Yet, Entsūji was not the only Buddhist temple in Mutsu, nor in its central zone. However, reports of ghost stories about other temples were nearly absent, although graveyards were obviously nearby any temple. Moreover, Shinmachi 新町 (literally "New City") the neighbourhood surrounding the temple, looked particularly poor, if compared to others.

Shinmachi was one of the widest neighbourhoods in the whole Mutsu. Walking around, one could see outnumbered empty spaces between one house and the other, land for sale, poor and shabby houses – nearly barracks – together with a bunch of brand new mansions and apartments scattered around. Shinmachi was limited by the Tanabu river on its northern and eastern sides, by the national road 279 on its South and it merged with the neighbouring Shōwachō 昭和町 on its western side.

Although the haunted places I was indicated were generally extremely localized, "the area surrounding Entsūji" (Entsūji *no atari* 円通じの辺り, Entsūji *no shūhen* 円通じの周辺) was definitely a broader definition. Furthermore, ghost stories about Shinmachi

represented the only case in Mutsu in which such a broad area was reported as a haunted place. Therefore, differently from all the other places, it was the only case in which a whole "community" – people who lived in Shinmachi – was symbolically linked to representations of the supernatural and the weird.

According to Komatsu's paradigm, such representations tend to symbolically express a difference in identity between the particular community and the rest of the city.[77] Moreover, generally speaking, people who live in an area connected to representations of death, as well as people who deal or used to deal with death were discriminated against in many areas of Japan.[78]

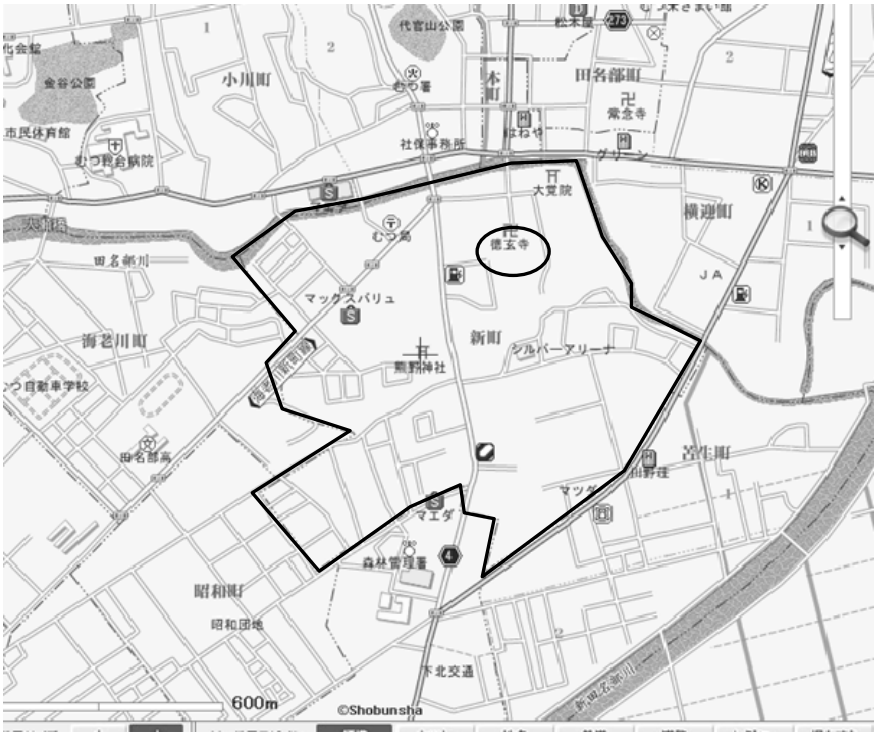

Fig. 21: Map of Shinmachi. The cyrcle indicates Entsūji. From MAPPLE CHIZU.

[77] See KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha* 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは.

[78] I will talk about death and discrimination in the following chapter. For an introduction to this topic, see DEVOS 1966. *Japan's Invisible Race. Caste in Culture and Personality*; MCLAUCHLAN 2004. *Prejudice and Discrimination in Japan. The Buraku Issue*; OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1998. "A Conceptual Model for the Historical Relationship Between the Self and the Internal and External Others. The Agrarian Japanese, the Ainu, and the Special-Status People." In *Making Majorities*; VALENTINE 1990. "On the Borderlines. The Significance of Marginality in Japanese Society." In *Unwrapping Japan*.

Therefore, I started to investigate whether Shinmachi, in particular the area surrounding Entsūji, was a discriminated one and whether there was any link between ghost stories and perception or representation of the people living in Shinmachi. With no results.

People in Shinmachi did not denounce any kind of discrimination against them, nor did any other people in Mutsu. Namely, there was no perceived difference between the people living in Shinmachi and people living in other areas in Mutsu. Yet, this was not an exception. As I stated before, it was the same for other ghost stories as well: ghosts haunted places and identified their history, they did not infest or possess people. Consequently, I began to ask the reason why Shinmachi was reported as a haunted place by so many of my informants:

> It is because there were the crematory of Koreans. A long time ago, Shinmachi was not called Shinmachi. It was Chōsenmachi 朝鮮町." (Man, 84, Mutsu)

> When I was young, my parents used to tell me not to go to play in Shinmachi, because there were Koreans there. (Man, 39, Mutsu)

In fact, until the Second World War, Shinmachi was unofficially renown as "Korean City" (Chōsenmachi 朝鮮町). During the period of colonization of Korea, the Japanese government forcedly imported thousands of Koreans, in order to use them as cheap workers for labour. By 1945 there were two millions of Koreans in Japan, most of them in the Northern part of the country.[79] Chōsenmachi was the place where most of Korean labourers were allocated in Tanabu.

Unfortunately, there are no historical sources to understand why the area of Entsūji was chosen. I interviewed the director of the Mutsu City Board for Education (Mutushi *kyōiku*

[79] For a general overview about the history of Koreans in Japan, as well as socio-anthropological analysis in contemporary Japan, see LIE 2001. *Multiethnic Japan*; LIE 2008. *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity*; RYANG 1997. *North Koreans In Japan: Language, Ideology, and Identity*; RYANG 2000. *Koreans inJapan. Critical Voices from the Margin*; WEINER 1989. *The Origins of the Korean Community in Japan, 1910-23*.

iinkai むつ市教育委員会), a 84 years-old man, who also contributed to edit *Mutsushishi*,[80] which is basically the only historical study on the area:

> There are no sources that demonstrate why that area was chosen, or what kind of place it was before. Actually, when I was young, there was nearly nothing there and there was the rumour that, if you had dug in that area, you could have found lots of bones of horses and cows, but that's all I know. (Man, 84, Mutushi *kyōiku iinkai*)

Even though there is no historical evidence to demonstrate that the area was actually connected to death, it is interesting to point out that, even before the allocation of Koreans, the signification of the area surrounding Entsūji was linked to death. This shows a continuity in the (re-)production of meaning: the area was perceived as a liminal one – actually the temple was separated by the rest of Tanabu by the Tanabu river – that was chosen to place people perceived as liminals.

Koreans were allocated in that area and forced to do heavy labours during World War Two. Some of them worked in a steel factory (*Nihon tokushu kōkan kabushikigaisha* 日本特殊鋼管株式会社), close to the present Shimokita Station, whereas others were used as labourers to build roads and tunnels.

"Octopuses" (*tako* タコ), how Koreans were called in the local dialect, used to live in barracks called "octopus rooms" (*tako shitsu* タコ室) in Shinmachi. Actually, Chōsenmachi was a discriminated area, perceived as dangerous:

> I was forbidden to go to Chōsenmachi, because there were Koreans. My mother used to tell me "don't go there, Koreans are dangerous" (Man, 45, Mutsu)

> My grandmother told me she was often told by her parents "You must stay away from them: they're Koreans!" (Woman, 24, Mutsu)

[80] See MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986a. *Mutsushishi. Genshi, kodai, chūsei-hen むつ市史原始・古代・中世編*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986b. *Mutsushishi. Kindai-hen むつ市史近代編*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986c. *Mutsushishi. Kinsei-hen むつ市史近世編*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986d. *Mutsushishi. Minzoku-hen むつ市史民俗編*; MUTSUSHISHI HENSAN IINKAI (ed.) 1986e. *Mutsushishi. Shizen-hen むつ市史自然編.*

Most of Koreans in Japan repatriated during the post-war and, in the case of the ones living in Tanabu, Ōminato and the surrounding areas, they were repatriated on a ship, the Ukishima Maru 浮島丸.

The Ukishima Maru was a Japanese naval transport vessel. She was originally built as a passenger ship in March 1937. During World War II, she served as a naval vessel after receiving heavy armament. On August 22, 1945, the vessel sailed from Ōminato harbour, carrying 4,000 to 5,000 of the Korean forced-labourers who were living in the area, headed towards the Korean port of Busan. On the 24th, the ship entered the port of Maizuru (Kyoto Prefecture), where the ship exploded and sank, killing 524 Koreans and 25 Japanese on board. Koreans, both the South and the North, view this incident as a deliberate Japanese war crime committed by the Japanese government of the time. 80 South Koreans, survivors and relatives of the victims of the incident, have filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government, seeking some 8 billion yen in compensation, an official apology and the remains of the victims that are kept in a Yūtenji 祐天寺 in Meguro, Tokyo. In 2005, a South Korean man, claiming to be a survivor of the incident, told an internet-based news media that shortly before the explosion, most Japanese soldiers and officers left the vessel and also that the explosives were hidden inside the hull.[81]

On the 27th of August 2001, the Kyoto District Court has ordered the Japanese government to pay 45 million yen to 15 South Koreans, who are survivors and the relatives of the victims of the incident. The court ruled that the Japanese government had failed in its duty to transport passengers safely as a legal relation was established between the government and the passengers at that time. The court rejected, however, claims of the plaintiffs demanding official apologies and return of the remains of the victims. Moreover, the court rejected claims of 65 plaintiffs on the ground that their relationship with the victims could not be established.

Because of the Ukishima Maru incident and its history of discrimination, most of the people I met in Mutsu – especially over sixties – did not freely talk about Koreans and the

[81] On the Ukishima Maru incident (Ukishima Maru *jiken* 浮島丸事件) and some glimpses of life of Koreans in Tanabu and Ōminato, see KIMU 1994. *Ukishima Maru. Pusan minato he mukawazu 浮島丸釜山港へ向かわず*, SHINADA 2008. *Bakuchin Ukishima Maru. Rekishi no fūka to tatakau 爆沈・浮島丸―歴史の風化とたたかう*.

Second World War. Yet they all acknowledge that present-day Shinmachi was a discriminated area, even after most of Koreans had left.

Ghost stories about Shinmachi were widespread during the Second World War as well. The emergence of such narratives, thus, appears to be connected to representations of an area that was perceived as dangerous, liminal, different from the rest of the village and that, possibly, was connected to death from earlier times. In this sense, ghost narratives marked a difference in perception and construction of identity, as Komatsu points out,[82] as well as of signification of the place. At that time, thus, there were a coincidence between place, people, community and symbolic representations of them, that constituted a coherent system of signification.

Yet, although most of the Koreans repatriated, ghost stories continued to be told by people and ghosts were reported to appear in the area also in 2008, even by people who did not know about the previous Korean presence. However, although most of the people under their thirties knew ghost stories about Shinmachi, but they could not link them back to their origins, most of the people who knew about the Korean community, still connected the symbolic representations of ghosts in the neighbourhood to former Korean presence.

Shinmachi remained an area made up of barracks until about late seventies:

> I used to come here when I was a child, even though my parents told me not to come. The crematory was here, abandoned, and all around there were barracks. Most of them were empty, because Koreans had gone away many years before. Yet it was a really creepy place. (Man, 42, Mutsu)

Even though the coincidence between people, community and place had disappeared, the deserted and shabby area, in which people of Mutsu did not want to go to live, constituted the creepy setting for ghost stories, a *kimiwarui* place, even though they were no longer connected to the presence of Koreans who, as time passed, started to be forgotten by younger generations, both because the "difference" was actually no longer there and because information about the past tended to be obliterated by older people.

[82] KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha* 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは.

Fig. 22: Houses in Shinmachi

Similarly, ghost stories developed also around other places that were connected to Korean presence during the second World War. For instance, the case of the ruins of the steel factory, that was called "bat residence" (*kōmori yashiki* コウモリ屋敷) in 2008, was representative.

Fig. 23: *kōmori yashiki*

As the war ended, in fact, the factory was abandoned and the whole area was not revaluated, since it was a physically marginal one, outside of the economy of the area. Thus, the buildings were gradually forgotten and were colonized by vegetation, animals and, recently, homeless and poor people. Consequently, young inhabitants of Mutsu,[83] started to consider them creepy and made them the setting of ghost rumours. Yet, most of under twenties did not know what the buildings actually were and most of the people who knew the connections with former Korean presence, did not know about ghost stories in the place. Therefore, in this case, it is impossible to assume a direct connection between ghost stories and representations of identity. Yet, similarly to the case of Shinmachi, since the area was a socio-economically liminal one, was not revaluated, namely no new signification was produced. Thus the place started to be portrayed as a haunted one.

Conversely, during the late seventies, the city administration carried out a policy of revaluation of Shinmachi, building new houses and mansions. This was still going on in 2008, with the eleventh stage of a campaign called "Shinmachi, neighbourhood of the future" (Mutsu *shi* Shinmachi *miraiku* むつ市新町未来区). In 2008, most of the remaining barracks were used as storehouses by people who lived in Shinmachi. Prices of rents and land were not dissimilar from the rest of the city, showing the end of discriminatory practices against the area.

In other words, ghost stories developed and emerged among groups accordingly not only to symbolic causes, linked to representations of death, but also to socio-economic variables. Policies and economic investments on an area, like Shimachi, contributed to change the perception of the place, when a difference in identity was no longer (re-)produced among the population. This is because ghost stories tend to emerge in places that are felt, in some ways, liminal and/or dangerous by a certain group.

Therefore a high number of High Schools students indicated *kōmori yashiki* as a haunted place. Present conditions of *kōmori yashiki*, yet, are the result of a socio-economic policy that abandoned the factory, thus providing no new meaning to the area or, in other words, letting the area be signified as a haunted place by new generations.

[83] According to my informants, ghost stories about *kōmori yashiki* were not older than 4-5 years. They were extremely widespread among High-school students, whereas older people did not know them.

Nevertheless, people who were interested in ghost stories and who did some researches about their origins, could easily link back symbolic representations to the former Korean community, especially through information exchange in the internet.[84] This happened not only for Shinmachi or *kōmori yashiki*. It happened also for other sites, that were felt dangerous: a 18 years-old girl, identified as a haunted the site of an accident occurred some months before and explicitly stated that it was the place in which there were the graveyard and the crematory of Koreans until the end of the war.

Fig. 24: Shinmachi, neighbourhood of the future, eleventh stage campaign. Picture from HASHIMOTO HŌMU

2.7 Conclusions

Forced migrations, social values, sudden deaths, perceptions of identity, social memory, economic developments and religious traditions all mingled and contributed to delineate

[84] See, for instance AOMORI NO SHINREI SUPOTTO, in which people chat about haunted places in Aomori prefecture and, by doing so, among others, exchange information about what their parents, or grandparents told them about Chōsenmachi, *kōmori yashiki* and Koreans.

what Appadurai defines "fields of possibility", on which base complex ideoscapes are (re-) produced.[85]

In a diachronic perspective, migrations and change in socio-economic dynamics produced "disjuncture and difference"[86] between the signification of symbolic representations (e.g. ghosts) in a holistic way (e.g. coincidence between representations of ghosts linked to Koreans or to liminal spaces perceived as dangerous) and the emergence and reproduction of ghost stories in contemporary Mutsu.

Osorezan, with its unquestioned role and signification – constructed both locally and mediatically – provided the symbolic legitimization for ghost stories in Mutsu. As long as these stories became "public culture", exceeding the private sphere, they became representative of social values, processes of construction of identity and of signification of places, that are constantly negotiated among the people.

Ghost stories in Mutsu showed the limits created in the "field of possibility" for (re-) production of symbolic narratives, imposed by the interaction between continuity and change, that are, in turn, constantly negotiated in the interaction among people.

Yet, continuity of narratives has not to be confused with continuity of meaning. The meaning of ghost stories changed, according to what narratives are connected to them: the same place can be haunted for some people because it was connected to Koreans, whereas it can be haunted just because it is someway spooky, or because there was an accident for others. Nevertheless, that same place is considered haunted by most of the people.

Therefore, an analysis of the interactions among socio-economic and political variables can be useful to investigate the ways of signification of place, of religious symbolic discourses, and of the complex relationship between local knowledge and behaviour, as well as their continuity and change.

[85] See APPADURAI 1988a. "Putting Hierarchy in its Place."; APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*; APPADURAI 2003 (or. 1996). *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*

[86] See APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

Chapter 3 – Discriminating Hell – Kyoto and Rokuhara

Rokuhara 六原,[1] is an area in Kyoto, on the Eastern side of the Kamo river. Nearly unknown to Western scholarship, it is one of the oldest area in Kyoto, since it was built with a specific symbolic and functional role at the time of the foundation of the city.

In fact, the area had a deep link to death and the afterlife, since it was the place where corpses were thrown during the Heian period. Therefore it was renown in Kyoto as the "entrance of hell" (*jigoku no iriguchi* 地獄の入り口), even at the time of my fieldwork.[2] The area provides the setting for the "Walk through the six realms" (*rokudō mairi* 六道参り), a memorializing festival that takes place from the 7th to the 8th of August, 7-10, involving the whole area, but mainly centred on one of the templed: Rokudō chinnōji 六道珍皇寺.

Starting from this festival, in this chapter, I will analyze the processes of signification of hell in Rokuhara and in Kyoto. Narratives of religious discourses in the area, found their

[1] "Rokuhara" can also be written using the Buddhist *kanji* 六波羅. Yet, although historically speaking, the Buddhist writing was more used and diffused, the *kanji* 六原 are the ones that are standardly used in contemporary Kyoto.

[2] I carried out four periods of fieldwork in Rokuhara: during Spring-Summer 2006 and 2007, Summer 2008 and Fall-Winter 2008. This chapter is based on archival and bibliographical research, as well as on data I produced during my stay. My fieldwork consisted in participant observation at the *rokudō mairi*, as well as at other activities of the temples. I interviewed visitors (both tourists and religious practitioners) and monks in the temples. I also interviewed people around Kyoto, chosen by areas of residence, through snowball sampling, in order to have a glimpse of perceptions and representations of the area. As for the interviews I conducted, they were semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions. I used to introduce myself as a researcher of Ca' Foscari University of Venice and, obviously, to ask my informants for their informed consent. I used to record formal interviews, whereas, in case of informal ones, I used to take notes while talking, when I could, or immediately afterwards, especially during informal interviews regarding the *buraku* issue, in order not to embarrass my informant. I am grateful to Professor Lucia Dolce of the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions (CSJR) at SOAS for having helped me out and supported my research. I am also indebted to people of the Kyoto Centre for Research on *buraku* (Kyoto buraku kenkūjo 京都部落研究所) – in particular W.-san – who helped me to find historical sources, let me use their library, advised me all through my research and even gave me precious and rare books as a present. I am also grateful to Professor Kawashima of Ritsumeikan University, as well as Professor Okuda in Osaka University and Y.-san of the Kanazawa section of the Buraku Liberation League for the interest they showed for my research and for their precious advices. A special thank goes to Higashiyama Ward Office (Higashiyama *kuyakusho* 東山区役所) employees for their precious collaboration, to the Makatsū まか通 research group of Kyoto University of Arts and Crafts (Kyōto zōkei geijutsu daigaku 京都造形芸術大学), who shared with me the information they had collected through their researches and, obviously, to all the people in the temples and in the whole area who helped me through the hardships of this research.

legitimization in a rhetoric about their "tradition". One of the main purposes of this chapter will be analyzing these narratives and the processes of construction and (re-)production of "tradition" and of its value.

Moreover, I will show that the emphasis on the "traditional" link between the area and death, as well as socio-economic dynamics within it, provided an identifying element by which people in the area were associated to pre-modern and modern outcasts, who were discriminated against. I will carry out an historical analysis of the outcaste (*burakumin* 部落民) issue, in order to show how their actual situation and their perception changed.

Subsequently, I will display the processes on which these associations were based, proposing a that significations of symbolic narratives of pollution of death and hell in contemporary Japan constituted an identifying element of areas, rather than of people or groups.

Fig. 25: Entrance to Rokuhara during the *rokudō mairi*.

Although in Kyoto, Rokuhara was also renown as the "entrance of hell" and it remains still and almost sleepy for most of the year, during the first days of august, when *obon* お盆 (or *urabon* 盂蘭盆), the festival of the dead, reaches its acme and the *rokudō mairi* takes place,

becoming paradoxically lively. This was one of the most important and peculiar activities of the annual religious calendar (*gyōji* 行事) of the area and, when it took place, the streets around the so called "crossroad of the six realms" (*rokudō no tsuji* 六道の辻), close to Rokudō Chinnōji, became extremely crowded.

Mairi is the nominalization of the verb *mairu* 参る, which means " to go" or "to visit a temple", therefore "*rokudō mairi*" literally means "visiting the six realms". It concretely consisted in walking through Rokuhara, paying homage to the temples in the area, in order to meet and welcome (*omukae suru* お迎えする) the spirits of the dead, who were believed to visit their homes during *urabon*. The main temple of the zone and the centre of the *mairi* was Rokudō Chinnōji 六道珍皇寺, but also Saifukuji 西福寺 and Rokuharamitsuji 六波羅蜜寺 had their role during the rites which regulate the relationships between this world and the one of the dead, in the place which is believed to be the connection point between this world and the otherworld.

The relationship between the area and afterlife – particularly hell – was largely sported in pamphlets of the temples. In 2009, Rokuhara was a very small area and it was certainly not one of the most famous historical sites in the great touristic cauldron of Kyoto. Yet it was pretty renown in the whole city – especially among over forties – as a place for rituals for the dead. Moreover, a large number of Kyotoites I met, stated they knew at least the name of the area, since they had studied it at school, during history lessons. Furthermore, the managements of the temple, as well as of the Ward Office and the City Hall were trying to advertise the area for its historical and artistic value, in order to improve tourism.

However, as I will try to show throughout this chapter, historical narratives linked to the area and to its relationship with death and the afterlife, constituted one of the main causes of the various issues I investigated during my fieldwork.

3.1 History of Hell in Kyoto

Until the Meiji period, the name "Rokuhara" used to indicated a wide area that extended on the eastern side of the Kamo river, from Gojōdōri 五条通 (present Matsubaradōri 松原通),

to Shichijōōjidōri 七条大路通.[3] Yet, in 2009, the name indicated the so-called School District Rokuhara (Rokuhara *gakku* 六原学区), the small and rectangular area, with a base about seven hundred meters long and about three hundred and fifty meters wide, limited by Matsubaradōri on its Northern side and by Gojōdōri on its Southern one, while Yamatoōjidōri 大和大路通 and Higashiōjidōri 東大路通respectively traced its western and eastern boundaries.

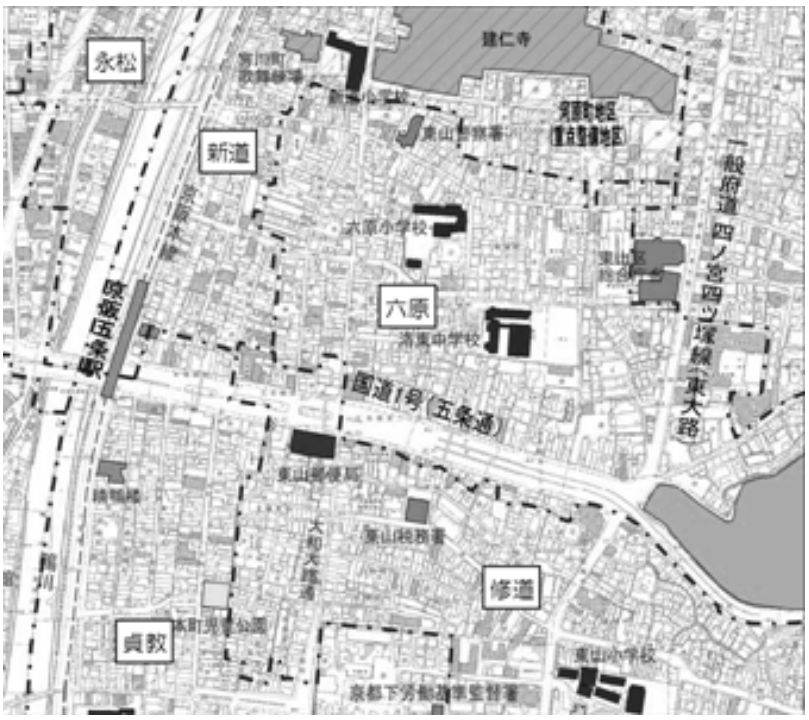

Fig. 26: Map of contemporary Rokuhara and neighbouring areas

The area has been considered the actualization of hell in Kyoto since the very foundation of the city. At the time of its foundation, Heian-*kyō* 平安京 was entirely built on the western side of the Kamo River, according to geomantic principles (*onmyōdō* 陰陽道) by which the diviners (*onmyōji* 陰陽師) chose and organized the area. The whole city was structured as an enormous *mandala*, in order to manage and protect the purity and the symbolic power of the emperor.

[3] See Data on the history of Rokuhara can be found in BUKKYŌ DAIGAKU (ed.) 1995. *Kyoto no rekishi (4). Dentō no seisei 京都の歴史（４）伝統の生成*; KYŌTOSHI (ed.) 1987. *Shiryō Kyōto no rekishi. Daijūkan. Higashiyamaku　史料京都の歴史・第10巻・東山区*; KYŌTOSHI (ed.) 2005. *Kyōtoshi rekishi siryō 京都市歴史資料.*

In fact, for instance, the North-East (*ushitora* 艮) side of the city, considered the direction from which demons and impurity came, was protected by the highest mountain in the area, Mount Hiei, on which a temple complex that was meant to protect the city and the state was built. Rokuhara was one of the places in which the pollution of the whole city was supposed to gather.[4] From a symbolic perspective, the Kamo river provided the paradigm of separation between this world and the one of the dead, like the Sanzu no kawa, therefore the whole area on its eastern side, namely Rokuhara, was associated to the afterlife.

Indeed, the area was placed in the outskirts of the city, since the whole Heian developed on the western side of the river. It was the entrance to Mount Toribe (Toribeyama 鳥辺山), identified – in turn – with Toribeno 鳥辺野, a wild field at the foot of Mount Toribe. Consequently, the names "Toribeyama" and "Toribeno" became synonymous. From the mid-Heian period and on, Toribeno was recorded as the place where the corpses of both animals and human beings were cast and abandoned. Moreover, from the end of the Heian period, walking Gojōdōri, passing through Rokuhara and the "Gojō (or Kiyomizu) slope" (Gojōzaka 五条坂 or Kiyomizuzaka 清水坂), was the only way to reach the famous Kiyomizudera. This temple, founded in 798, was one of the main temples in the whole city and the one that used to manage death practices in Toribeno and Rokuhara.

Although there are several theories about the origins of the name of the area, it seems that this very name was linked to death and burial practices. In fact one the *kunyomi* of the kanji of *roku* (六) is *mu*, which is the same as the *onyomi* of the kanji of *haka* (墓), which means "grave, tomb". It seems that, because of the sound, the two kanji were superimposed, and the way to write the word that was formerly used to simply indicate a "burial place", namely "*musho*" (墓所), was distorted, becoming *musho* 六所. Moreover, since this place was considered to be the "wild" (*genya* 原野) were many spirits gathered, it was given the name of Rokuhara (六原).

[4] On Heian as a *mandala* and on the geomantic principles on which the whole construction of the city was based, see KOMATSU 2002. *Kyōto makai annai 京都魔界案内*; KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは*, 29-73.

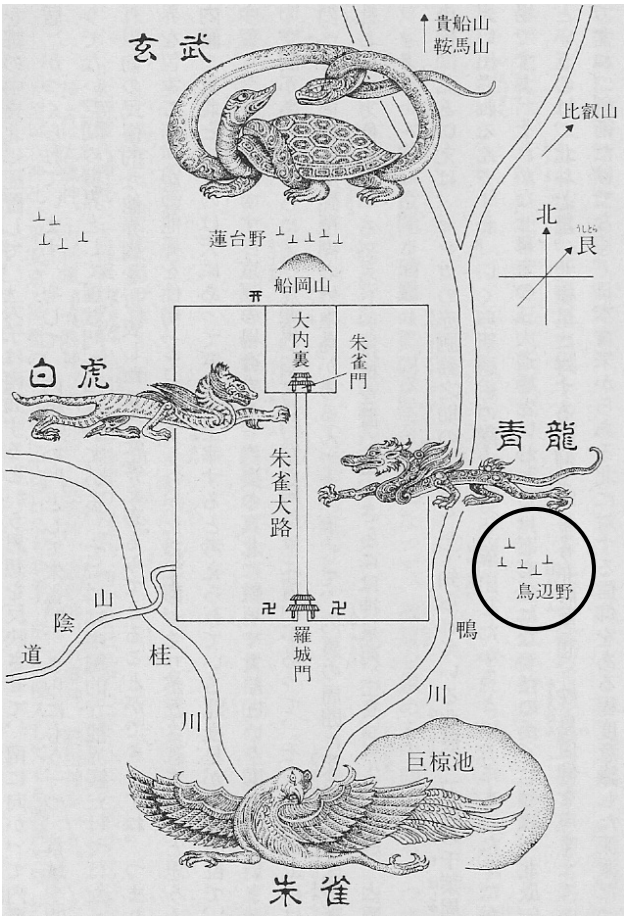

Fig. 27: Representation of Kyoto according to *onmyōdō*. In the circle, the area of Toribeno, whith graves indicated. Published in KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985)

According to other interpretations, the name might directly derived from the practice of throwing corpses in the area. As a consequence of this practice, in fact, the area was disseminated with skulls (*dokuro* 髑髏), therefore the area was called the "plain of skulls" (*dokurogahara* 髑髏原). This seems to be linked also to the name of the neighbourhood in which all the temples in Rokuhara are: *rokurochō* 髑髏町 ("Lathe Neighbourhood"), that was named after the artistic work activities of the area (pottery making) during the Meiji period, because the original name "Skull Neighbourhood" (*dokurochō* 髑髏町) was creepy.[5]

When Emperor Kanmu relocated the capital to Heian, he decided that Rokuhara had to become a burial area mainly for common people, whereas the Empress and all the

[5] For a discussion of the theories about the origino f the name Rokuhara, see KYŌTOSHI (ed.) 1987. *Shiryō Kyōto no rekishi. Daijūkan. Higashiyamaku　史料京都の歴史・第10巻・東山区*, 252-254.

aristocrats had to be buried exclusively in southern Toribeno.[6] Therefore he ordered the construction of Chinnōji (originally named Atagodera 愛宕寺) so that it could protect and manage the zone of Rokuhara. Subsequently, also the other temples in the area were founded.[7]

In the beginning of the twelfth century, Rokuhara was chosen by Taira no Masamori, Taira no Kiyomori's father, to establish the Heike residence. During the Kamakura period, the area was chosen to establish the Rokuhara *tandai* 六波羅探題, a political base of the *bakufu* in Kyoto. After the fall of the Heike, the area of Rokuhara was left to Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝. In 1185, when Hōjō Tokimasa 北条時政 started to be in charge, on Yoritomo's behalf, the area was chosen to build the government office building – in order to protect and guard the city – as well as lodgings for Yoritomo and his family.

After the Jōkyū protests in 1221, Hōjō Yasutoki 北条泰時 and Tokifusa 時房, who led the *bakufu*'s army in Kyoto, in order to sedate the uprising, settled down in Rokuhara and were given the power to control the whole city. From that time on, the holders of Rokuhara *tandai* were directly chosen by the head of the Hōjō family. Yet, in 1333, the Hōjō were defeated by Ashikaga Takauji 足利尊氏 and Rokuhara *tandai* fell.

Since the Muromachi *bakufu* established its headquarters in a more central area, the *bushi* presence in Rokuhara gradually decreased and, eventually, the management of the area passed again to the temples, which took it back to its previous function of ritual site. The link between Rokuhara and death was never forgotten, therefore pilgrimages to and popular cults in the area, as well as to the close Kiyomizudera flourished and the area was promoted as a "spiritual site" (*reichi* 霊地), becoming one of the most famous religious sites in Kyoto all through the medieval period. As a consequence, also commercial activities, linked to tourism, sightseeing and entertainment increased, developing the economy of the surrounding areas, in particular Gion 祇園.

[6] Emperors were buried in separate mausoleums.
[7] Data on the history of the area and the temples can be found in KYŌTOSHI (ed.) 1987. *Shiryō Kyōto no rekishi. Daijūkan. Higashiyamaku　史料京都の歴史・第 10 巻・東山区*; KYŌTOSHI (ed.) 2005. *Kyōtoshi rekishi siryō 京都市歴史資料*; MAKATSŪ 2007. *Rokuhara shinshaku 六原新釈.*

During the medieval period, the area was under the control of Gionsha (祇園社)[8] and Kenninji 建仁寺 and kept on developing as a religious site – with and extremely high concentration of temples and pagodas – as well as a residential area.

During the seventeenth century, according to the process of urbanization that involved the whole city of Kyoto, the area of Rokuhara developed around the Rokuharamitsuji and was sub-divided into neighbourhoods. Following the same trend, also the zone at South of Rokuharamitsuji, called "New Rokuhara" (Shinrokuhara 新六波羅) developed during the eighteenth century, giving birth to present day Rokuhara *gakku*.

From the pre-modern period, the area started to be characterized by production and sale of potteries, renown as Kiyomizu-*yaki* 清水焼, that were sold in shops that appeared from Kenninji, all through Gojōzaka, until Kiyomizudera. Yet, during the Meiji period, kilns and crematories were moved to Yamashina and the economic situation of the area got worse and worse.

The history of Rokuhara shows that there was a coincidence between its connection to death and its geographic and economic liminality, at least from its foundation to the modern period. This liminality was based on pollution (*kegare* 穢れ) of death, a concept that was widespread and accepted in the whole Japan, even with local differences.[9] Therefore, all along Japanese history, people who used to deal with death in a number of ways (from butchers and fishermen, to leatherworkers, to people involved in funerary rites), were marginalized or, conversely, people who had to deal with death were recruited among liminal social classes, like beggars or poor people, through the whole Japanese history,

[8] Present day Yasakajinja 八坂神社, at the time also renown as Enryakuji 延暦寺.

[9] The concept of pollution in Japan has been widely studied, in relation to a variety of topics, non necessarily religious ones. For an analysis of death and pollution from an historical perspective, see MONMA 1999. *Sabetsu to kegare no shūkyō kenkyū. Kenryoku toshite no "wa" 差別と穢れの宗教研究・権力としての「和」*; NAMIHIRA 1987. "Pollution in the Folk Belief System."; OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1984. *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan. An Anthropological View*; OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1987. *The Monkey as Mirror. Symbolic Transformations in Japanese History and Ritual*; OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1998. "A Conceptual Model for the Historical Relationship Between the Self and the Internal and External Others. The Agrarian Japanese, the Ainu, and the Special-Status People." In *Making Majorities*; OKIURA 2005. *Kegare. Sabetsu shisō no shinsō ケガレ・差別思想の深層*; RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*; VALENTINE 1990. "On the Borderlines. The Significance of Marginality in Japanese Society." In *Unwrapping Japan*.

with modalities that changed according to areas, periods, economic and political dynamics. People living in Rokuhara were not an exception.

3.1.1 Dwellers of Hell

As a spiritual place, Rokuhara attracted a high number of pilgrims and, therefore, its living areas developed in particular around the temples. Yet, since the Heian period, the Kiyomizu slope attracted poor people and outcastes, renown as *sakahinin* 坂非人 ("non-humans from the slope") or *kawaramono* 河原者 ("people from the riverbank"). The "Kiyomizu slope" was the biggest *hinin* area in the whole Kyoto, during the medieval period. As Groemer notes:

> Some *hinin*, probably a small minority, were convicted criminals; others were physically disabled, blind, or suffering from leprosy, and abandoned by their families; yet others were penurious vagrants, street performers, holy practitioners or ascetics, and certain types of artisans. Hinin tended to live in specific areas of medieval cities. Of the 2,027 *hinin* listed in a Kyoto register of 1304, some 1,000 resided at Kiyomizu-saka Many such people had arrived in cities after finding their possessions and property confiscated in their home provinces because they had been unable to pay taxes; others had been the victims of natural disasters.[10]

Although these people used to be generally categorized as *hinin*, this term encompasses several functional differentiations: in the case of *sakahinin*, for instance, some used to live along the riverbank, deriving some income from boiling down sea water for salt, or burning gathered seaweed for minerals contained in the ash to be used as fertilizer. Others, particularly beggars (*kojiki* 乞食), concentrated in front of the main gate of the Kiyomizudera, trying to make a life out of the pilgrims' pity.[11]

As burial practices were substituted by cremation, crematories were installed in Rokuhara and *hinin* had the right to take care of crematory practices, thus deriving an income. Moreover, they could also produce utensils and ritual objects that had to be used at funerals, as well as in rituals for the dead.

[10] GROEMER 2001. "The Creation of the Edo Outcaste Order.", 265.
[11] See KYŌTO BURAKUSHI KENKYŪJO (ed.) 1995. *Kyōto no burakushi. Zenkindai* 京都部落史研究所・前近代.

From the Kamakura period on, as the Rokuhara *tandai* was built, some *hinin* were used to exert control on the territory, as a sort of police force, named *kebiishi* 検非違使.[12] A prison was built in the area, that was also chosen to perform death penalties, thus reinforcing the link between Rokuhara and death symbolism.

Moreover, a special category of *hinin* was characteristic in Rokuhara during the medieval period: the so-called "People of the Dog-god" (*inujinin* 犬神人),[13] also called *tsurumeso* つるめそ. They normally used to make and sell bowstrings and arrows, but, in exceptional cases, they served at Gionsha as military police. During the Heian period, *inujinin* used to live on the riverbank and to dispose of the corpses that were thrown there. Yet, as they also used to take care of purification, cleanings and low level duties at Gionsha, they were gradually incorporated in the organizational group of the temple-sanctuary. Although they were discriminated as *sakahinin* by "mainstream" society of the time, they used to play a fundamental role in the socio-economy of the area.[14]

Generally speaking, *hinin* used to build their lodgings (*shuku* 宿) in the area in which they gathered and Kiyomizuzaka was not an exception. Yet *hinin* were not the only dwellers of the area during the medieval period: according to registers, there were at least six liquor shops, as well as "People of the slope-side" (*sakamenzai jinin* 坂面在地人), who worked with timber for the rebuilding of Kiyomizudera.

[12] For a complete analysis of the role, management and historical development of *kebiishi*, see NYUNOYA Tetsuichi 1999. *Kebiishi 検非違使*.

[13] "*Jinin*" 神人 ("People of god) was the name that indicated low level people who carried out humble duties in temples and sanctuaries, from the Heian period, all through the medieval period in Japan. Although their level was low, they were not *hinin*. "People of the Dog-god" (or, maintaining the word *jinin* as one, "Dog people of god"), were a particular case in Kyoto. For a more detailed explanation on this figures, see HONDA 1993. *Edo no Hinin. Burakushi Kenkyū no Kadai 江戸の非人研究の課題*; KYŌTO BURAKUSHI KENKYŪJO (ed.) 1995. *Kyōto no burakushi. Zenkindai 京都部落史研究所・前近代*; KYŌTOSHI (ed.) 1987. *Shiryō Kyōto no rekishi. Daijūkan. Higashiyamaku　史料京都の歴史・第 10 巻・東山区*; MONMA 1999. *Sabetsu to kegare no shūkyō kenkyū. Kenryoku toshite no "wa" 差別と穢れの宗教研究・権力としての「和」*; NYUNOYA Tetsuichi 1997. *Nihon chūsei no mibun to shakai 日本中世の身分と社会*; OKIURA 2000. *'Burakushi' ronsō wo yomitoku. Sengo shisō no nagare no naka de 「部落史」論争を読み解く・戦後思想の流れの中で*.

[14] See KYŌTOSHI (ed.) 1987. *Shiryō Kyōto no rekishi. Daijūkan. Higashiyamaku　史料京都の歴史・第 10 巻・東山区*, 33-34. On *inujinin*, see also KYŌTO BURAKUSHI KENKYŪJO (ed.) 1995. *Kyōto no burakushi. Zenkindai 京都部落史研究所・前近代*, 30-32; 37-39.

During the medieval period, every neighbourhood or village (*machi* 町) in Kyoto, was protected by a wooden gate (*kuginuki* 釘貫). People could freely pass through it during the day, but at nights it was closed and warded by some *hinin* who were employed for this purpose. These *hinin* used to dwell in small houses built near the gate and called *koya* 小屋. Therefore, *hinin* were spread all around the city, yet big structures like *shuku* were only two or tree in some determined places. Rokuhara was one of them.[15]

Although *hinin*'s duties, names and functions enormously changed during the medieval and pre-modern periods, according to edicts and regulations imposed by local authorities and temples-sanctuaries, the *shuku* remained in Rokuhara, thus identifying it as a discriminated area, at least until the Meiji period.[16] Thus, even when Rokuhara passed under Gionsha's control during the seventeenth century and *sakahinin* lost their right to take care of cremations and funerary rites, the area kept on being discriminated against. Moreover, since the crematories were not moved until the end of the Edo period, the link between the area and death symbolism, rituals and practices, remained extremely strong.

3.1.2 Managing Hell: Local Temples, History and Legends

Rokudō Chinnōji was founded by Abbot Keishun (**慶俊僧都**) under the reign of Emperor Kanmu, and prospered at the time of Kūkai. The main hall and the tower were restored by Ono no Takamura (**小野篁**), a statesman who lived during the first Heian period (about 802-852), serving Emperor Saga, and who is renown as an intellectual and poet.[17]

The temple decayed during the Nanbokuchō period, but it was revived as a Rinzai temple, related to Kenninji (**建仁寺**). It is dedicated to Yakushi Nyōrai, represented by a statue, which is also an "important cultural property" (*jūyō bunkazai* 重要文化財), which is exhibited only during the *rokudō mairi* and which is said to be a work of art made by Saichō. Inside the boundaries of the temple, on the eastern side, there is a famous Enmadō 閻魔堂, in which two wooden statues are enshrined: one represents Enma Daiō, the

[15] KYŌTOSHI (ed.) 1987. *Shiryō Kyōto no rekishi. Daijūkan. Higashiyamaku　史料京都の歴史・第10巻・東山区*, 33.
[16] For a deeper analysis of *hinin* during the medieval period in Kyoto, see KYŌTO BURAKUSHI KENKYŪJO (ed.) 1995. *Kyōto no burakushi. Zenkindai 京都部落史研究所・前近代*, 235-254.
[17] For an account of legends about Ono no Takamura and a reconstruction of his history, see WAKABAYASHI 2009. "Officials of the Afterworld. Ono no Takamura and the Ten Kings of Hell in the Chikurinji engi Illustrated Scrolls."

supreme judge of the spirits of the dead. It is believed to be a work by Ono no Takamura, while the other statue, which is 190 cm tall, represents Ono no Takamura himself, and it is thought to be life size.

According to local legends, this statesman used to serve as a government official at the Imperial Court during the day, while at night he worked in Enma's office. Many legendary tales of people who maintained that they met him have been recorded. Among these, one of the most authoritative was given by Fujiwara no Yoshisuke, the minister of Nishi Sanjō, who helped Ono no Takamura when he was punished because of an accident when he was a student. Thereafter the minister died of a disease and was taken in front of Enma in order to be judged on account of the actions he made during his lifetime. Thanks to Ono no Takamura's intercession, he was allowed to go back to this world. The day after, the minister went to Takamura to try to determine whether his blurred memories of the night were true. When he asked, the statesman replied, "I just returned the favour you did for me, but don't tell anybody what you have seen." Yoshisuke honoured and respected Takamura, but could not help recounting his incredible adventure.

A second legend about Takamura's role as intermediary between the worlds of the living and the dead is about Takamura's father-in-law, Fujiwara no Tadamori. He, too, died of a disease and was taken in front of Enma. Because of Takamura's intercession he came back to life, and he promised he would copy the Hannyakyō within three years. However, when the three years had passed, he had still not copied the sūtra, because he was too involved in his businesses. When Takamura scolded him and he saw that the frightful face admonishing him was the same that had helped him in the underworld three years before, he understood that what he remembered was true and so he quickly copied the sūtra. However, the story about Takamura dropped also from Tadamori's lips.

Although the figure of this statesman seemed to be connected both to the history of Chinnōji and to its function during the *rokudō mairi*, it did not seem to be the most important feature of the temple or, at least, it does not seem to play a fundamental ritual role at the time of my fieldwork. One can suppose that the historical and economical connections with such an important and popular political figure might have legitimized the identity of Chinnōji as an institution. Furthermore, the role Takamura plays in the

underworld, together with his relationship with Enma, who is considered to be the highest ranking official in the otherworld, legitimized Chinnōji in its ritual function. However this did not seem to be very relevant in the *mairi* courses in which I participated. No particular attention or worship was given to the statue of Takamura (nor to the one of Enma), although they constituted the necessary representation of power within the dynamics of the ritual discourse in Rokuhara.

Fig. 28: Entrance to Rokudō Chinnōji during the rokudō mairi

Nevertheless, legends about Takamura's role clearly show the direct relationship between the temple and the underworld, a relationship which is also demonstrated by two different elements. The first is the well on the back of the *hondō* of Chinnōji, which is believed to communicate with hell. Rokuhara and, in particular, *rokudō no tsuji* is thought to be the entrance of hell, therefore the dead spirits which return home during *obon* are believed to come up from this well. Additional evidence of the tight relationship between Rokuhara and the otherworld is to be found when contrasting it with another area, that of the Daikakuji (大覚寺), located in Saga (western Kyoto), in front of which a "Neighbourhood

of the Six Realms" (*rokudōchō* 六道町) is thought to be. The place, indicated as Daikakuji-*mae* 大覚寺前, is also called "The six realms of life" (*shō no rokudō* 生の六道), because Takamura used to come back there from the underworld. By contrast, Rokuhara is indicated as the "Six realms of death" (*shi no rokudō* 死の六道), because, while Takamura used to go to the underworld through the well in this place, the spirits of the dead reach this world through the same way.

The other elements which marked the relationship between Rokuhara and the otherworld was the so-called *mukaegane*（迎え鐘）, a bell which is said to call back the dead. This bell, sealed inside a building from which a long and thick rope comes out horizontally, is thought to hang over a deep hole, directly connected to hell. Therefore, as people ring the bell, the spirits of the deceased are thought to come back to this world, guided by its low sound.

Very close to Rokudō Chinnōji there was a famous shop which sells "candies to bring up ghost children" (*yūreiko sodateame* 幽霊子育て飴), which were very popular among women before and after childbirth. They used to offer them to the spirit of a child who was said to have disappeared on Toribeyama and whose crying voice might still be heard from underneath the graves.[18] This tradition still existed in 2009, but only during *obon*.

The second important temple in the area is Saifukuji. It is much smaller than Rokudō Chinnōji and also its ritual function seemed to be less relevant in the *mairi*. Saifukuji stands on the *rokudō no tsuji*. It is said to have been built by Kūkai and was inaugurated by enshrining a statue of the Bohisattva Jizō, to which the temple is dedicated. When it was built, there used to be six Buddha halls within the temple precincts, but presently, only three remain. The correlation between the temple and Jizō started when Empress Danrin, the wife of Emperor Saga, invoked the Jizō of Rokuhara and asked him to help prince Masayoshi to recover from a disease. From then on the prince's health improved and he eventually managed to rise to the throne as Emperor Ninmyō.

[18] See KOMATSU 2002. *Kyōto makai annai 京都魔界案内.*

From that time, the Jizō of Saifukuji has been known as "Kosodate Jizō", the "Jizō who [helps to] bring up children". On the one hand, this way of referring to Jizō shows the function to which this bodhisattva - and, specifically, the one to which Saifukuji is dedicated - is associated. Nevertheless, this Jizō is also called "Rokuhara Jizō". This name does not show any particular function, but it clearly creates and displays a direct relationship between Jizō - and, consequently, Saifukuji - and the ritual discourse on death related to this area.

There was one more temple, which, because of the history of its foundation, presents an interesting relationship to the area and, consequently, to death, which permeated every single stone in Rokuhara. During the Tenryaku 天暦 era, in the year 951, Kyoto was struck by a terrible plague, which spread throughout the city. It is said that the monk Kūya[19] made a statue representing the Jūichimen Kannon, the eleven-faced Kannon, and took it all around the city on a carriage, giving the ill people tea that he had dedicated to the Buddha, and teaching them to chant the *nenbutsu* 念仏. Suddenly the plague stopped.

During the following ten years the master, with the collaboration of many citizens, copied the six hundred fascicles of the Daihannyakyō 大般若経 and erected a temple, calling it Saikōji (西光寺), since its purpose was to diffuse the light of the doctrine of the Western Pure Land inside and outside the city. However, because the temple was commonly known as "The temple of Rokuhara" (Rokuhara *no tera* 六波羅の寺), Kuya's disciples, referring to the Sanskrit term *pāramitā* (*haramitsu* 波羅蜜 in Japanese), which is a part of the entire name of *Hannyakyō* (*Hannya haramitsukyō* 般若波羅蜜経; Skr. *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*), decided to call the temple Rokuharamitsuji (六波羅蜜寺), the "Temple of the Six Pāramitā". The same associative process was transferred to the name of the entire zone, which started to be written 六波羅, instead of the previous 六原.

These temples constitute the setting of the main religious event in Rokuhara: *rokudō mairi*, that takes place every year from the from the 7th to the 10th of August.

[19] Kūya was famous *hijiri* linked to the Tendai sect, who lived during mid-Heian period. For some analysis about this errant monk, see, for instance, CHILSON 2007. "Eulogizing Kūya as More than a Nenbutsu Practitioner. A Study and Translation of the *Kūyarui*."; KAMINISHI 2006. *Explaining Pictures. Buddhist Propaganda and Etoki storytelling in Japan*.

3.2 Rokudō Mairi *and Religious "Tradition"*

As one entered Rokudō Chinnōji during the *rokudō mairi*, could not avoid to be struck by the impressive number of people who crowded the small precincts of the temple, as well as by colours. Not only Buddhist paraments with Buddhist colours and lanterns were placed on the orange main gate of the temple, but the small covered market that was built within the precincts for this occasion, displayed a wide range of flowers and branches of plants, to be used for ritual services. Moreover, some different stalls were selling seaweed, pickles, several varieties of hot peppers, o even cold drinks and shaved ice with syrup (*kakigōri* かき氷), showing a dimension of the event that went far beyond rituality.

Yet, passing through the stalls and reaching the centre of the precincts, in front of the *hondō*, the space for ritual practices appeared. On the right, there were the small building with a statue of Yakushi 薬師, displayed only during the *mairi*, the statues of Ōno no Takamura and Enma, as well as the *mukaegane* and the long queue of people waiting to ring it. On the front, the *hondō* was hidden by some tents, populated by the monks who were writing on the ritual tablets, in front of a number of queuing customers. On the left, people were gathering in front of a wide tub, with Jizō statues on the top.

People could learn what to do, by reading explanatory signs, disseminated around the place:

> 1. Buy a *kōyamaki*高野槙[20]on the path within the precincts of the temple
> 2. Have the posthumous Buddhist name of the deceased (*kaimyō* 戒名) written on the ritual tablet (*suitōba* 水塔婆), in front of the *hondō*
> 3. Ring the *mukaegane*
> 4. Purify the *suitōba* by using incense
> 5. After performing memorial services with water and the furnished *kōyamaki* in front of the "Jizō treasure", leave it there
> 6. On the 17th of August, on this mountain, when *segaki*[21] memorial service is performed at the *urabon* meeting, perform all the rites for all the *suitōba* at the place called "Crossroad of the six realms", in front of this temple[22]

[20] *Sciadopitys verticillata*, an evergreen plant.
[21] Segaki is a rite which aims to expel hungry ghosts and basically consists of offering food to them in order to appease their hunger and chanting *sūtra*; it is often performed on the mountains, especially in the area of

As I mentioned above, people, especially over their fifties and particularly women, stood in an interminable queue in order to pull the rope and ring the bell. However, differently from the bells that one finds in every temple or sanctuary, people pulled the rope toward themselves, instead of pulling it down.[23]

According to local legends, underneath the bell there is a very deep hole, which goes down underground, until it reaches hell. Therefore, when the dead hear the sound of the bell, they come up and gather on the small branches of *kōyamaki*, their living relatives bought beforehand in order to take their ancestors home.

The ringing of the bell was only a part of a more complex series of ritual practices performed at Rokudō Chinnōji, that continued also at home. After following the instructions of the sign, in fact, they left the tablets in front of the tub and went back home taking the branches of *kōyamaki* with them. I was explained both by monks in Chinnōji and by practitioners that, as practitioners arrived home, they would put the branch on the altar, together with small ritual objects and offerings. These objects – that could be purchased at the market in front of the temple and all along Matsubaradōri – ranged from small *sake* bowl to small wooden ladders, by which spirits of ancestors are thought to go down from the branch of the tree, to the altar.[24]

Kyoto. However, different from the offerings to the ancestors, which are usually seasonal vegetables (like carrots, cucumber and pumpkin) and cooked rice, in separate bowls, the offerings made to *gaki* are generally the same vegetables, but mixed with raw rice. offering cooked rice to the ancestors has a symbolic meaning of acceptance of common social and cultural dynamics. In fact, the ancestors are welcomed home and share food and alcohol with the rest of the family, since they are considered actual members of the group. Moreover, they provide the legitimization for the structure of the family itself and, in a wider sense, of the whole society. On the contrary, since hungry ghosts such *gaki* or *muenbotoke* (無縁仏), which are a symbolic representation of social deviance, are not accepted in the city of the dead, and are driven away by offering the same food as the one which is offered to ancestors, although it is not culturally treated. In this way, they are recognized as "non-animals", since the base of the offerings is the same, but, at the same time, they are not completely accepted inside society, since they are not allowed to share the same social rules and, in fact, they are generally offered water instead of alcohol. See RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*.

[22] Sign within the temple precincts.

[23] This offers an interesting example that recalls Victor Turner's interpretation according to the principle of "inversion". *Mukaegane* is to be pulled horizontally, in order to stress the difference between the spirits of the dead and gods or Bodhisattva. See TURNER 1967. *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual Ithaca*; TURNER 1974. "Liminal to liminoid in play, flow, and ritual: An essay in comparative symbology.".

[24] For a more detailed discussion of ancestor worship at home, see RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*; SMITH 1974. *Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan*.

Fig. 29: A woman ringing the Mukaegane and people queuing

Fig. 30: Offerings for the dead on a stall during *rokudō mairi*

Although ritual practices in Chinnōji doubtlessly represented the central and main part of the *mairi*, also Rokuharamitsuji and Saifukuji offered the same services. According to the abbots of these two temples I interviewed during my fieldwork, the management of the temples decided to perform the same memorializing practices as Chinnōji after the Second World War, since the area was famous for its connection to death and Chinnōji could not face the enormous flow of people on its own. Conversely, according to the abbot of Chinnōji, the other two temples decided to perform the same memorial services in order to get some funding, since they were rapidly decaying.

Yet, as I carried out my three periods of fieldwork in Rokuhara, the affluence of the people performing rituals at Chinnōji was outstanding, differently from the two other temples. I interviewed people queuing to ring the bell, asking why they chose Chinnōji in spite of the time it was taking, although the other two temples were offering the same services:

> I chose Chinnōji because it's the original (*moto* 本). It performs these rituals since the ancient times (*mukashi kara* 昔から), so it's true. (Woman, 57, August 2008)

> Chinnōji is the oldest temple to perform these rituals. It's like the "head family" (*honke* 本家), so I think it works better. (Woman, 65, August 2008)

People who chose Chinnōji, gave value to the temple according to the long-standing religious "tradition" of its practices. Indeed, as the abbot of Chinnōji confirmed, the *mairi* to the temple dated back to its very foundation, without any interruption even during World War two and there are no historical sources to disprove it:

> Abbot: The *rokudō mairi* is very old. It has been performed since the Heian period, with no interruption.
> I: Really? People came here for the *mairi* even during World War two?
> Abbot: Sure. As I told you, there is no interruption. Chinnōji itself changed its name: first Atagodera, then Chinkōji and now Rokudō Chinnōji, but it and everything in it, is exactly as it was in the Heian period.

> I: I see… It's extremely interesting. I actually read in a book that the bell got broken during the Meiji period and that it was substituted with a smaller one in 1910, but…[25]
> Abbot (looking at me and half-laughing): You know a lot of things… The book is right. We changed the bell in the Meiji period, but the *mairi* did not change.[26]

In this conversation, the abbot tried to place not only the *mairi*, but also the temple itself in a temporal *continuum* with the past, in order to give a greater value to it and to legitimate the religious site and its practices by the use of narratives linked to "tradition". This is not dissimilar from the analysis of the "nostalgic mountain" I carried out in the previous chapter,[27] yet in Kyoto narratives about "tradition" are extremely widespread, shared and accepted and narratives about Kyoto as a representative of "Japanese tradition" or "Japanese culture" are widespread on a national level. As Macdonald points out:

> In contemporary Japanese mythology, the past is revered, the nation glorified, and contradictions and conflicts, including discrimination, are concealed. Vast social and economic differences are obliterated. Certain practices are selected to symbolize "traditional Japanese culture". This is supposedly homogeneous, classic culture is

[25] The book I was talking about is KYŌTOSHI (ed.) 1987. *Shiryō Kyōto no rekishi. Daijūkan. Higashiyamaku　史料京都の歴史・第10巻・東山区.*

[26] I interviewed the abbot of Chinnōji on the 28th of July 2008. By writing this conversation I am not meaning that the abbot was trying to trick me. The abbot of Chinnōji was an extremely kind and friendly person and he found the time to meet me even in an extremely busy period, like the one preceding *obon* and the *mairi*. Moreover, he knew the history of the area and of the temple very well, as much as notions about Buddhism in general, but also *onmyōdō*. Yet I think that this conversation offers an interesting opportunity for reflection, in order to understand the "role play" anthropologists have to manage during fieldwork, as well as issues about self-representation and representation of the other. Since I had long and curly hair and I normally looked younger than I am (even at the time of writing, at the end of 2009… Anyway, I was 29 in 2008), I was often perceived as a "young researcher" who came from Italy. On the one side, this had positive aspects, since people were in some way curious towards me. In other cases, though, I had to show some specific competence to the people I interviewed, in order to convince them to tell me something more precise than notions on the pamphlets. This happened in particular in temples in Kyoto, probably also because monks in the temples were used to talk with researchers. Yet, as far as I understand, all the researches about Rokuhara focused on its historical aspects, with the only exception of the researches carried out by Makatsū (see note 1), that, however, focused more on the architectural aspects of the area. Therefore, my role, aspect and the topic of my research itself, contributed to create in many people the image of the "strange" foreigner that, in some cases, diminished and lost value as I got acquainted to my informants. In other cases – like with the abbots of the temples – it grew weaker as I showed that – somehow – I knew what I was talking about and, sometimes, it represented a kind of wall for people who were intimidated and did not want to deal with me. For reflection on the role of the anthropologist during fieldwork, see ALLISON James 2007 (or. 1997). *After Writing Culture. Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology*; AMBROS 2009. "Researching Place, Emplacing the Researcher. Reflections on the Making of a Documentary on a Pilgrimage Confraternity."; BESTOR 2003. *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*; CLIFFORD (ed.) 1986. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*; MARCUS 1998b. *Ethnography through Thick & Thin*; READER 2003. "Chance, fate, and undisciplined meanderings." In *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*.

[27] See above, Chapter 2, paragraph 2.4.1.

> presumed to be best preserved in the city which played host to the imperial courts: Kyoto. The eroic and historic past is so important an image that it is not unusual to be told that Japan has "lost" its culture, that the only place that one can experience it is in Kyoto. Consequently all other expressions of culture, of being in the world, are devaluated.[28]

The concept of "tradition", thus, served as a legitimizing one for the role of the temple and religious practices that were performed in it. This provided an attraction for people who performed memorializing practices and cults of ancestors during *obon*. Actually, people who performed memorializing services in Rokuharamitsuji and Saifukuji were basically somehow directly related to the temple (i.e. members of the *danka* 檀家,[29] or people whose family graves were in the precincts of the temple), whereas Rokudō Chinnōji attracted people from the whole Kyoto, as well as, in the last years, from all over Japan.

During the days of the *mairi* I met two television crews at Chinnōji, one of KBS Kyoto, a local television channel, the other of Mainichi Hōsō (MBS), a national channel, documenting the *mairi* in order to broadcast special features during the news. I asked them why they were interested in the *mairi* and what kind of special features they were going to produce. They replied that they were interested in the traditional aspects of Kyoto and the *mairi*, and that they would focus especially on the history of the area and the temples.

Actually, historical narratives that were (re-)produced by the media, but also by the pamphlets of the temples, provided a legitimization not only for Chinnōji, but for the whole Rokuhara, as a religious site. Its link with death, afterlife and, in particular hell, was also visually stressed in the temples.

In fact, during the *rokudō mairi*, Saifukuji and Chinnōji exposed some *Kumano kanjin jikkai mandara* 熊野観心十界曼荼羅,[30] which represented the whole otherworld, but in which the portion dedicated to the torments of hell was quite relevant. They seemed to attract the attention of the people who visit the temples and, in Rokudō Chinnōji, they became part of the rituality, since people paid homage as they passed in front of them.

[28] MACDONALD 1995. "The Politics of Diversity in the Nation-State." In *Diversity in Japanese Culture and Language*, 301.
[29] "Family which supports a temple, parishoner", see *Jim Breen's WWWJDIC Online Japanese Dictionary*.
[30] See Chapter 1, paragraph 1.4.3.

Moreover, in Saifukuji, together with a variety of paintings of hell (*jigoku-e* 地獄絵),[31] there were some representations of the phases of the decay of corpses.

Moreover, every year the management of Saifukuji organized *etoki* 絵解き, performer by a specialized monk. However, the monk died in 2005 and, from 2007, *etoki* started again at Saifukuji, but performed by a Professor of Kyoto Gakuin and organized as a special event by Makatsū, the research group that

> aims to develop and promote the new touristic resources in Kyoto and Rokuhara, by focusing on modern industrial heritage scattered in the area of Rokuhara in Higashiyama-*ku*, and setting up events on the theme of the "dark" (*ura no*裏の) history, legends and tradition.[32]

The policy of promoting artistic and "traditional" activities in the area and of the area was also adopted by the City of Kyoto, as well as by Higashiyama Ward Office, that, starting from 1919, promoted a pottery market (*tōki ichiba* 陶器市場) all along Gojōdōri, on the Southern boundary of Rokuhara *gakku*. The market was divided into two parts: the Northern side of the street was populated by stalls selling local products, whereas on the Southern one there were stalls coming from all over Japan to sell their potteries. This is also connected to the festival of potteries (*tōki matsuri* 陶器祭り) held every year in the local sanctuary, the Wakamiyahachimangū 若宮八幡宮 – also renown as Tōkijinja 陶器神社 – on the 8th of August. The acme of the matsuri is the moment in which the *mikoshi* 神輿, completely covered in small pottery plates is carried by people of the community of the temple through Gojōdōri on the two sides, passing in front of every stall of the market.

[31] The temple possessed a variety of *jigoku-e* from different periods (especially Muromachi and Edo). The abbot chose every year which to display, thus making the exposition even more attractive. Interestingly enough, paintings of hell were displayed in the open air, with nearly no care at Rokudō Chinnōji, whereas in Saifukuji, they were displayed in a small inner room (the whole temple is very small), but with no particular care, or protection. The abbot of Saifukuji also claimed several times that there were loads of *jigoku-e* and *mandala* in the storehouse, but he did not know where and he did not feel like looking for them, so he was just exposing the ones he could easily find.

[32] See MAKATSŪ.

Fig. 31: A *Kumano kanjin jikkai mandara* at Saifukuji

The market influenced religious practices as well, for, since the market was established, from the 7th to the 10th of August, also the temples modified the dates of the *mairi*, that used to be from the 7th to the 9th, as both the abbot of Chinnōji and of Saifukuji confirmed.

As marginal as Rokuharamitsuji can be in the *mairi*, it also attracted people, especially in the evenings, since on the 7th, 8th and 9th of August, monks perform *mandōe* 萬燈会, an esoteric ritual to call back the spirits of the dead. A monk lights up a series of small candles,

disposed to form the character *dai* 大, to remind of *daimonji* 大文字, the famous five giant bonfires that are lit up every year on the 16th of August on the mountains around Kyoto, to send back the spirits of ancestors to the afterlife and that represent the end of *urabon*.[33]

Moreover, this temple was doubtlessly the biggest in the area, as well as the one that attracted most of the tourists during the rest of the year, because of its exposition of statues and pieces of art, displayed in a hall on the back of the *hondō*. Among the statue, the most famous was an outstanding bronze statue of the monk Kūya, holding a stick with a deer's horn in his right hand, while six small Buddha Amida statues coming out of his mouth and representing the syllables of *nenbutsu*.

Fig. 32: Particular of one of the *Kumano kanjin jikkai mandara* at Saifukuji

[33] See ROKUHARAMITSUJI.

The area of Rokuhara, thus, appeared as characterized by a strong emphasis on narratives and practices linked to its "tradition", mainly related its relationship to death and rituals for the dead.

3.3 Contemporary Hell

In the past, as I tried to point out above, there was a direct relationship between religious symbolism linked to hell and the afterlife, death practices, pollution of death, liminals and discriminated people who used to deal with it and geographic liminality. Yet, in 2009, as a consequence of a urbanization process that started in the late sixteenth century, Rokuhara was fairly close to the city centre (about 20 minutes walking), very close to Gion, the rich and touristic area of "traditional" entertainment and close to the tube station of Gojō-Keihan. Namely, it was no longer a "liminal" area, at least geographically speaking. Nevertheless, its socio-economic conditions presented a number of problems.

In fact Rokuhara, composed by 23 neighbourhoods (*chō* 町), subdivided into 41 blocks (*gaiku* 街区), was the area with the highest depopulation rate in its ward in 2008, which was one of the *ku* with the highest depopulation rate in the whole Kyoto, with a population of 4232 in 2007. It was also the area with the highest ageing rate, with 24.9 percent of the population above the age of 65 in 2006.[34] Moreover, more than 10 percent of the houses was abandoned and the owners of one on four of the abandoned houses were unknown.[35]

This situation caused several problems and danger in the area: according to official sources, the most worrying problem was the possibility of fires. In second instance, there was a high risk that, especially old houses, crumble down and collapse, involving neighbouring houses and/or passers by, in particular children who played in the area.

Moreover, damaged vacant houses forced neighbours to take care at least of their appearance, by keeping them clean, at least on the outside, and give them the aspect of

[34] See KEIHAN GOJŌ-SHICHIJŌ CHIKU NO GAIKYŌ; ŌTANI 2007. "Kyōto kyūshiiki ni okeru akiya no jittai to sono mekanizumu ni kansuru kenkyū 京都の旧市域における空家の実態とそのメカニズムに関する研究."
[35] See CHIIKI NO CHIKARA, ANATA NO CHIKARA. See also Ibid.

"normal" houses.[36] Also the Head of Rokuhara Community (Rokuhara *kaichō* 六原会長) confirmed these problems when I interviewed him.[37]

The problem of vacant houses was obviously connected to the extremely high depopulation and ageing rates in the area. These were basically due to a lack of job in the area. People, especially the young, left Rokuhara to go and live in other cities or other areas in Kyoto. Therefore, the people who stayed in Rokuhara were basically their parents or grandparents. As people who lived in a particular house aged, they left the house to go to live with their children, or, in case they did not, as the tenant died, children did not want to inherit the house, since they already had their lives in other cities, or in other areas in Kyoto, therefore the house remained vacant.

Another cause seemed to be the difficulty to renew old houses or build new ones. This was the consequence of a law, the "Law on Construction Standards" (*kenchiku kijun hō* 建築基準法) promulgated by the government in 1950 and that regulates construction standards in "old town areas" (*kyūshigai* 旧市街).[38] According to this Law, in fact, new houses cannot be built on streets narrower than three meters.[39] This is a serious problem in Rokuhara, where most of the streets are narrow paths winding around among old houses. Because of this law, old houses cannot be rebuilt and, since in many cases they are old, they would take a huge amount of money to be restored.

Some of the vacant houses were reutilized by the Ward Office, that promoted the construction of a bar, of centres for recreating and "traditional" activities linked to the history of the area and even a library, that will be open in the end of 2009.[40]

In spite of the promotion of the problems through campaigns carried out by the Ward Office within the area, though, people living in Rokuhara did not seem to worry about them too much: according to the survey carried out by Ōtani *et al*., only 27 percent of the

[36] See CHIIKI NO CHIKARA, ANATA NO CHIKARA.
[37] I interviewed Rokuhara *kaichō* on the 8th of October 2008.
[38] See KENCHIKU KIJUN HŌ.
[39] See Ibid. Article 42, paragraph 5.2.
[40] See CHIIKI NO CHIKARA, ANATA NO CHIKARA; MAKATSŪ.

people living in the area seemed to worry about damages and fires, whereas 65 percent did not perceive any kind of problems related to vacant houses.[41]

Yet the problem, obviously, involved the whole economy in the area, starting from the real estate. According to the interviews I carried out in estate agencies both inside and outside the area,[42] the rent in Rokuhara is cheaper than in neighbouring areas: for a 1DK[43] was required, in average, around 55.000 Yen for deposit (*shikikin* 敷金), no key money to give (*reikin* 礼金)[44] and 45.000 for the rent. For the same room in neighbouring areas prices were nearly doubled and *reikin* was, in average, 100.000 Yen. This changed for the few new mansions in Rokuhara, that were built on the main streets, in which prices were comparable to neighbouring areas.

Yet most of the people who entered rooms in new mansion, were University students or people coming from other cities. This caused problems in the "community" life in Rokuhara, as the Head of the Community explained to me:

> There are only students of the University or people coming from outside in the mansions. They don't care at all about our neighbourhood activities (*chōnai katsudō* 町内活動) and they don't even want to pay the fees.[45] So I decided not even to give them our newspaper, because they wouldn't care anyway. Yet we are almost all old people and we cannot carry out activities on our own. I can go on although I'm 77, but all the people here is going to die someday and if there are no young people, the community is going to die as well. (Rokuhara *kaichō*, 77)

Most of the houses in Rokuhara, in fact, were not to rent, but to sell. However, despite the extremely practical location of the area, the high rate of empty houses still in good

[41] ŌTANI 2007. "Kyōto kyūshiiki ni okeru akiya no jittai to sono mekanizumu ni kansuru kenkyū 京都の旧市域における空家の実態とそのメカニズムに関する研究."
[42] I tried to carry out interviews in 10 different agencies, 2 inside and 8 outside the area. Among the ones outside Rokuhara, only 5 dealt with houses in the area, namely the ones closer to the area itself. The others just gave me some indications on the real estate.
[43] 1 room plus Dining-Kitchen.
[44] *Shikikin* is a security deposit one has to pay when he/she enters the room and that, as the tenant leaves the room, is refund, unless the landlord finds damages. *Reikin* is an amount one has to pay to the landlord as he/she enters the room. It is paid to thank the landlord for choosing him/her and it is not refund. This is an old habit in Japan and in many areas – particularly residential ones – it is disappearing. Yet, it is still extremely widespread in the whole Kyoto.
[45] Community fees in Rokuhara were 300 Yen a month in 2008.

conditions and at reasonable prices, nearly nobody seemed to want to live in Rokuhara. Therefore, I started to carry out a small survey in order to understand how Rokuhara was perceived in Kyoto and the result was surprising: most of the people I interviewed defined Rokuhara as an outcaste area, a *buraku* 部落.

3.4 The Buraku Issue

Before analyzing the perception of Rokuhara and how it is represented as a *buraku*, I think that an introduction to the so-called buraku 部落 (or *dōwa*同和)[46] issue, or *buraku* (or *dōwa*) *mondai* 部落（同和）問題 would be helpful in order to understand the contemporary conditions of the area.

This topic is an extremely controversial one, which has been widely analyzed, discussed, and debated in scholarship both inside and outside Japan, as well as in public culture in Japan, at least in the last fifteen years. An extremely huge amount of studies deal with the most various aspects of it, with approaches varying from historical to socio-anthropological ones, going also through political and economic approaches.

Burakumin 部落民 ("people of the *buraku*") are presented as people who are discriminated against, and, generally speaking, researches tend to focus on the development of this category, on their life-style, or their identity as a "minority" in contrast to the majority of "mainstream Japanese".[47]

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[46] The word *buraku* (hamlet) stands as an abbreviation for *tokushū buraku* 特修部落 ("special hamlet"), or for *hisabetsu buraku* 被差別部落 ("discriminated hamlet"). However, this word, is considered to be a discriminatory one, therefore the expression *dōwa chiku* 同和地区 ("integration area") is generally preferred, especially where the problem of discriminated areas is still strong, namely in Kansai, particularly in Kyoto, Osaka and Nara. In other places in Japan, where the problem is no longer existing, the word buraku is normally used as a synonym of *shūraku* 集落, literally "hamlet" or "village". See DE VOS (ed.) 1966. *Japan's Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality*; FUJITA 1998. *Burakumin to ha nanika 部落民とは何か*; KITAGUCHI 1999. *An Introduction to the Buraku Issue. Questions and Answers*; MAHER 1995. *Diversity in Japanese Culture and Language*.

[47] See ACITELLI-DONOGHUE 1978. "The Origin and Development of the Japanese Pariah." In *Pariah Persistence in Changing Japan: A Case Study*; DALE 1986. *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*; GLUCK 1993. "The Past in the Present." In *Postwar Japan as History*; HOSHII 1993. *"Minorities" in Japan's pseudo-democracy*; HOWELL 1996. "Ethnicity and Culture in Contemporary Japan."; KITAGUCHI 1999. *An Introduction to the Buraku Issue. Questions and Answers*; MACDONALD 1995. "The Politics of Diversity in the Nation-State." In *Diversity in Japanese Culture and Language*; MCLAUCHLAN 2004. *Prejudice and Discrimination in Japan. The Buraku Issue*; MILLER 1983. *Japan's Modern Myth: The Language and Beyond*; WEINER 1997. *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*; YOSHINO 1997. "The Discourse on Blood and Racial Identity in Contemporary Japan." In *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*.

Throughout history, Japanese society has defined certain types of people or occupations as "low", "defiled", or as existing somehow outside society and below the majority. "Polluted" or "base" groups or occupations have been identified according to a large number of historically variable, and sometimes conflicting criteria.[48]

At certain times and places, in fact, distinctions were made in a loose or informal way. In other cases, discrimination was codified and backed by state force, producing rigid, caste-like categories. Religious concepts and motivations, especially those determining "defiling" or "polluting" activities, often played an important role in defining or legitimize who was placed on the bottom of the social ladder.[49]

However, as Herman Ooms warns, echoing the conclusions of a generation of Japanese scholars, the function of pollution cannot be essentialized and granted final explanatory value. In Tokugawa Japan, for example, carrying out funerals, killing animals, or handling night soil were typical activities of Buddhist monks, hunter-peasants, and members of the merchant class respectively, none of whom was considered polluted.[50]

On the other, hand discriminatory practices have always been a matter of fact. Groemer states that:

> Discriminatory practices and concepts in the medieval era were closely linked to highly heterogeneous attributes of those targeted: economic and political position, location within

[48] See ACITELLI-DONOGHUE 1978. "The Origin and Development of the Japanese Pariah." In *Pariah Persistence in Changing Japan: A Case Study*; DE VOS (ed.) 1966. *Japan's Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality*; GROEMER 2001. "The Creation of the Edo Outcaste Order."; HANE 1982. *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcastes. The Underside of Modern Japan*; HATANAKA 1995. *Burakushi no owari 部落史の終わり*; HONDA 1993. *Edo no Hinin. Burakushi Kenkyū no Kadai 江戸の非人研究の課題*; KIKUCHI 1967. *Bessho to tokushū buraku no kenkyū 別所と特修部落の研究*; KYŌTO BURAKUSHI KENKYŪJO (ed.) 1995. *Kyōto no burakushi. Zenkindai 京都部落史研究所・前近代*; MONMA 1999. *Sabetsu to kegare no shūkyō kenkyū. Kenryoku toshite no "wa" 差別と穢れの宗教研究・権力としての「和」*; MORRIS-SUZUKI 1996. "A Descent into the Past. The Frontier in the Construction of Japanese Identity." In *Multicultural Japan. Paleolithic to Postmodern*; NAGAHARA 1979. "The Medieval Origins of the Eta-Hinin."; NYUNOYA Tetsuichi 1997. *Nihon chūsei no mibun to shakai 日本中世の身分と社会*; NYUNOYA Tetsuichi 2005. *Mibun, sabetsu to chūsei shakai 身分・差別と中世社会*; OKIURA 2005. *Kegare. Sabetsu shisō no shinsō ケガレ・差別思想の深層*; OKIURA 2000. *'Burakushi' ronsō wo yomitoku. Sengo shisō no nagare no naka de 「部落史」論争を読み解く・戦後思想の流れの中で*; YAMAMOTO 1999. *Hisabetsu buraku no kenkyū 被差別部落の研究*; YAMAMOTO 2000. "Kindai hisabetsu buraku no jinkō hendō to sono ruikei 近代被差別部落の人口変動とその類型." In *Kenkyū kiyō. Daigokan 研究紀要・第5 巻*

[49] GROEMER 2001. "The Creation of the Edo Outcaste Order.", 264.

[50] See OOMS 1996. *Tokugawa Village Practice. Class, Status, Power, Law*, 275.

> the division of labor, age, gender, and relationship vis-à-vis institutions of control and oppression. Moreover, ancient taboos on disease, the taking of life, and handling the dead all played a large role in determining who was targeted for discrimination.[51]

Although most of scholarship traced back the origins of this phenomenon in the Edo period, recent researches showed that the roots of formation of outcaste in Japan have to be dated back to the Heian and medieval period. Among these jobs, there was the disposing of dead bodies.[52]

3.4.1 Origins and Development

In the 10th century, Kyōto from around the 10th century AD. Kyōto was the centre of power and culture in those days, and as society developed, the gap between those with wealth and power and those without widened. Those who could not pay the high taxes that supported the noble class were ostracized and forced to lived in undesirable areas, such as in river flood plains. It was the fear of such ostracism, then, that encouraged the rest to endure the high taxes. Marginalized people ended up doing the "3-D" jobs (dirty, difficult and dangerous) that society needed done but which nobody wanted to do.[53]

In 1015, a plague struck Kyōto, forcing its society into a crisis mode. Without the removal of dead bodies, there could be no return to normalcy, and so those who were already viewed as *kegare* were pressed into service to perform *kiyome* 清め ("purification").[54] Needless to say, this was a vicious cycle, as *kiyome* performers were then perceived as even more defiled people. The undesirable land that was designated for them was thus not taxed and was viewed as simply "outside the system." This led to a codification of a caste-like system that was the direct antecedent of *buraku* discrimination.

These marginalized *kiyome* were further categorized into two separate groups that later became known by the very derogatory terms of *hinin* 非人, literally "non-human," and *eta* or *heta* 穢多, literally, "much pollution". This distinction, however, was something that

[51] GROEMER 2001. "The Creation of the Edo Outcaste Order.", 264.
[52] See NAGAHARA 1979. "The Medieval Origins of the Eta-Hinin."
[53] See ACITELLI-DONOGHUE 1978. "The Origin and Development of the Japanese Pariah." In *Pariah Persistence in Changing Japan: A Case Study*.
[54] The word indicated not only the practice of purification, but also the people performing it. See FUJITA 1998. *Burakumin to ha nanika 部落民とは何か*.

developed over a long time period, and as various occupations became more specialized, various groupings within these larger categories also began to appear.

The first basic distinction to be made was that between the disposal of the carcasses of dead animals and the bodies of dead humans, since the latter involved rituals of mourning and dignified burials. *Kiyome*, who specialized in the handling of dead humans were the group from which *hinin* category developed, while those that dealt with dead animals became *eta*. This latter category was considered the more defiling, thus *eta* were more associated with *kegare*.

Consequently, *eta* developed a monopoly on animal skins and the production of leather goods. In fact, as their own "separate" society developed, some became rather wealthy in their own right. This, however, was not a path to acceptance in the general society, for even a wealthy *eta* was still an *eta*.[55]

The category of *hinin*, included also people who were ostracized for reasons other than being associated with "defiling" occupations. It was often a form of punishment, and those who became *hinin* for such a reason could return to their original status in regular society if certain conditions were met within a maximum of ten years. Needless to say, that was not a common pattern, and so once demoted, they were basically stuck there, and their children had no way out at all, unless they were successful at leaving one area and infiltrating into another with a false identity. Yet, as the social system became increasingly strict and more centrally controlled, such escapes became far more difficult.

Another reason why people had been made "*hinin*" were "defiling" skin diseases and the like. While actual "leprosy" (now known as "Hansen's Disease") certainly existed, many other skin disorders were simply associated to it. Since these conditions were generally considered to be curses placed on such people by the gods, even the families of victims were left with no choice but to ostracize them and expel them to the outcaste "*hinin*" community.

[55] TOTMAN 2000. *A History of Japan*

This was basically the situation from the beginning of the Edo period onward, as the various medieval fiefdoms that had existed up until that time were unified under the "shogun" warlords.

The long period of warfare that eventually led to the unification of Japan under the Tokugawa Shogunate had the result of making the production of leather products (body armour containing leather, etc.) of critical importance. This "defiling" task, however, was monopolized by the *eta*, and so while they were despised and ostracized, their services were viewed as being of critical importance. Thus, they were tolerated by regular society provided they kept their proper distance.

During the seventeenth century, Japan's social order took shape in the form of a hereditary four-status order called *shi-nō-kō-shō* (士農工商), namely a system composed by warrior-rulers (*samurai* 侍 or *bushi* 武士), peasants, artisans, and merchants. There were restrictions on intermarriage, social interaction, and clothing, justified by reference to Confucian theory. The functions of the four groups were seen as symbiotic, such that together they would constitute a stable and virtuous society.[56]

Yet, not everyone fit into this structure: below the four classes, there were eta and *hinin*. The former had a higher status of the latter and were organized in structured communities, led by the *etagashira* 穢多頭, literally "Chief eta". Moreover, also the thousands of lesser clerics who staffed Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, the shop hands and household servants and day labourers who lived on the margins (both socially and geographically) of urban communities were not included in the four-classes systems. Some day labourers were landless peasants, others came from the populations of eta and *hinin*. Found mainly in the Kyoto vicinity or in central Japan, these pariahs generally lived in their own communities, pursued their own professions, and were subject to their own leaders. On the edge of this pariah population were the entertainers: singers, dancers, and actors who were associated with the licensed quarters.[57]

[56] See Ibid., 225.
[57] See KYŌTO BURAKUSHI KENKYŪJO (ed.) 1995. *Kyōto no burakushi. Zenkindai 京都部落史研究所・前近代*; NEARY 2003. "Burakumin at the end of history.(history of social class in Japan)." In *Social Research*.

Pariah communities had developed in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as leather workers (*kawata*)[58] and as handlers of animal and human corpses. Local elites encouraged their development during the time of constant warfare since leather was a key item in the production of amour. With the outbreak of peace after 1601, demand for these goods declined and the communities were relocated to the margins of towns or to sites where they formed their own villages.

Outside the four-class system, however, there was not much to distinguish them from artisans in towns or peasants in the countryside. But from the eighteenth century, regulations were introduced by central and local government that elaborated symbols of status distinction and enforced separation of residence and function. Different demographic trends were also present. Peasant smallholders produced families of modest size but pariah groups did not face the same procreative constraints. As a result the pariah population grew, despite attempts by government to restrict it. This altered power relationships between neighbouring pariah/non-pariah communities, creating tensions and increased status consciousness.[59]

3.4.2 Modernization and Liberation of Pariah Groups

With the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the opening up of Japan to the outside world again, the Meiji government was faced with numerous challenges in transforming Japan from a feudal state to one more in line with what they saw in the "superior" West (at least from the standpoint of military power and technology).

A new ruling class was created from court nobles and some former *samurai*, but most former *samurai* had to make do with their essentially hollow rank. Moreover, the government had to deal with the even more difficult issue of what to do with *eta* and *hinin*.

Some pushed for a type of "affirmative action" plan to give training and then release them gradually into regular society according to their performance. The general consensus was that this shifting of individuals from the "outcaste" status to the "commoner" one should be

[58] Several compounds might be used write the word *kawata*. Besides 皮多, among others, also 皮田, 川田, 革多, 革田, 河田 can be found.
[59] NEARY 2003. "Burakumin at the end of history.(history of social class in Japan)." In *Social Research*. ; TOTMAN 2000. *A History of Japan*.

done gradually, but with the rewriting of a whole host of laws that were interrelated, the authorities basically had to settle for a sudden end to the system.

The term used to describe this abandonment of the feudal social system is Kaihōrei 解放令, literally "Emancipation Edict". Yet Uesugi points out that the term *kaihō* ("liberation") never appears even once in the entire document. The original document didn't actually have a title as such, but the term used to refer to it was Senmin Haishirei 賤民廃止令, "Order to Abolish (the System of) Ignoble Peoples." In other words, it was simply a repealing of the class system as such and was not based in any concept of human rights and justice. Doing away with the feudal system, promoting industrialization and establishing things such as private ownership of property and a universal tax system meant that the old system of enforced class identity (including rules of where people could live) could no longer be maintained.

Thus, ending the caste system was simply a matter of expediency. The term Kaihōrei was first applied to the ending of the feudal caste system during the Taishō Era (1912-1926) as a part of "revisionist history."[60] The ideological legitimization for liberation of the pariah groups was that the kind of discrimination going on in the Edo period was in reality against the will of the emperor, and so it was out of the great magnanimity of the emperor that these outcastes had been emancipated.[61]

Therefore, at least theoretically speaking, "mainstream" population, including pariah groups, was theoretically levelled as "commoners" (*heimin* 平民). Yet former pariah groups changed denomination and were identified as "former *eta*" (*kyūeta* 旧穢多) in official documents, whereas they used to call themselves "new commoners" (*shinheimin* 新平民). They were identified through the family register (*koseki* 戸籍), namely by blood line or descent from former medieval pariah.[62]

[60] See UESUGI 2004. *Korede wakatta! Buraku no rekishi これでわかった!部落の歴史*, 168.
[61] See Ibid., 175.
[62] See ACITELLI-DONOGHUE 1978. "The Origin and Development of the Japanese Pariah." In *Pariah Persistence in Changing Japan: A Case Study*; FUJITA 1998. *Burakumin to ha nanika 部落民とは何か*; TOTMAN 2000. *A History of Japan*.

By 1910 former status had little meaning in the lives of most Japanese except for the former pariahs, now commonly referred to as *burakumin*. They faced discrimination in the developing job market, in schools, in marriage, and in myriad other ways when they interacted with "mainstream" community.

In 1969, the government passed the Special Measures Law for Assimilation Projects to provide funding to these communities. Communities deemed to be in need of funding were designated for various Assimilation Projects (*dōwa taisaku jigyō* 同和対策事業), such as construction of new housing and community facilities such as health centres, libraries and swimming pools. The projects were terminated in 2002 with a total funding of an estimated 12 trillion yen over 33 years, with the living standards issue effectively resolved.

Burakumin became politically active from the 1890s onwards and, despite governmental attempts to restrain their activity, in 1922 formed the Suiheisha 水平社, or "National Levelers' Society". This group demanded the complete emancipation promised in an 1871 edict, including economic and occupational freedom, and protection of members' human dignity. The movement remained active until the 1930s, but was finally unable to hold out against pressure from the wartime state.[63]

The movement revived in the 1950s as Buraku kaihō dōmei 部落解放同盟 "Buraku Liberation League" (BLL hereafter) and continued to confront instances of discriminatory words, deeds, and policies while demanding a comprehensive program of improvements to address the difficulties group members encountered. In the 1960s, following rapid economic growth, the state was persuaded to fund improvements to streets, schools, clinics, and housing in *buraku* communities and to provide rent subsidies and other assistance to families in those communities, in order to promote their "integration" or "assimilation" (*dōwa* 同和).[64]

[63] See NEARY 1989. *Political Protest and Social Control in Pre-war Japan: the origins of Buraku liberation*.
[64] See Ibid; NEARY 2003. "Burakumin at the end of history.(history of social class in Japan)." In *Social Research*. An interesting tractation of policies for the construction of the nation state in modern Japan, based on "assimilation" to "mainstream" society and obliteration of differences can be found in ABE 1995. *Seken to ha nani ka 世間とは何か*; BEFU 2001. *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*; DALE 1986. *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*; HOSHII 1993. *"Minorities" in Japan's pseudo-democracy*; MACDONALD 1995. "The Politics of Diversity in the Nation-State." In *Diversity in Japanese Culture and Language*; MILLER 1983. *Japan's Modern Myth: The Language and Beyond*;

The remedial action taken by the government provided younger *burakumin* with more education, skills, and connections, and better paying jobs that enabled them to marry and settle more freely outside their communities. Government provided substantial sums of money for these improvement programs. The amount spent between 1969-1993 is estimated at about 134 billion dollars. The government has, however, refused to make discrimination illegal.[65]

The BLL continues to campaign against residual discrimination but, as more and more young *burakumin* leave their communities, there is less support for its activism. Passing into the mainstream is still hampered by educational and economic disadvantage.

3.5 Making the Buraku Exist

Although, as I tried to show, the *buraku* issue is an extremely complex one, that involves socio-economic, political and symbolic dynamics, as well as local and temporal differences, it is clear that the relationship with narratives linked to pollution and defilement has always had a fundamental role in the identification of discriminated people.[66]

Furthermore, from the Tokugawa period onwards, although the boundaries of discriminated groups (first *eta* and *hinin*, then *burakumin*) were actually open and changing according to contextual dynamics, they were represented as homogeneously composed by polluted people.[67] Therefore, although a focus on perception of *burakumin*

WEINER 1997. *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*; YOSHINO 1997. "The Discourse on Blood and Racial Identity in Contemporary Japan." In *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*.

[65] See NEARY 2003. "Burakumin at the end of history.(history of social class in Japan)." In *Social Research*.

[66] For a complete analysis of the concept of pollution, see MONMA 1999. *Sabetsu to kegare no shūkyō kenkyū. Kenryoku toshite no "wa" 差別と穢れの宗教研究・権力としての「和」*; NAMIHIRA 1987. "Pollution in the Folk Belief System."; OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1984. *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan. An Anthropological View*; OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1987. *The Monkey as Mirror. Symbolic Transformations in Japanese History and Ritual*; OKIURA 2005. *Kegare. Sabetsu shisō no shinsō ケガレ・差別思想の深層*; RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*; VALENTINE 1990. "On the Borderlines. The Significance of Marginality in Japanese Society." In *Unwrapping Japan*.

[67] The construction of "the Japanese" as homogeneous and, by contrast, of discriminated group as such is a topic that has been analyzed by an impressive number of researches. Among others, see BEFU 2001. *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*; BEFU 2008. "Foreword. Toward Zones of Hybridity in Japan." In *Transcultural Japan. At the Borderlands of Race, Gender and Identity*; MACDONALD 1995. "The Politics of Diversity in the Nation-State." In *Diversity in Japanese Culture and Language*; WEINER 1997. *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*. For a discussion about the

and the *buraku* might be considered a marginal topic in research about this topic, I think it is not borderline at all.

This kind of approach is also supported by researches carried out by Hatanaka Toshiyuki.[68] He maintains that

> *Buraku* discrimination is status discrimination which was formed within the social structure of the modern emperor system and systematically supported and re-created within it. At the stage of its formation it was modelled on early modern status discrimination but this was qualitatively different to the discrimination characteristic of modern Japan. The *buraku* problem is *buraku* discrimination and structural social problems closely related to *buraku* discrimination. Post-war the social structure which supported and re-created this kind of discrimination was dismantled but social problems nevertheless remain for a variety of reasons (as remnants of the modern *buraku* problem) and amount to the *buraku* problem, for which a resolution is now in sight.[69]

Analysing this passage, Neary points out that

> Several points should be noted in this set of definitions. First, the emphasis that is placed on the discontinuity between the early modern and modern: for Hatanaka, the *kawata* village does not become the *buraku* community. Status discrimination is and was entirely a product of the contemporary social structure, and just as the social structure of Japan in 1800, 1930, and 2000 was quite different, so, too, was the nature of status discrimination. Second, the problems encountered by *burakumin* in the twentieth century have only in part been caused by discrimination. Conversely, ending discrimination will not completely resolve their problems. Third, the modern emperor system – which was a central part of the structure that supported and recreated *buraku* discrimination – was dismantled by the United States occupation. Hatanaka accepts that there was some delay in the full implementation of the reforms in the 1950s and that discrimination was used by reactionary ruling class policies. Yet, while a solution to the *buraku* problem was not possible under the Meiji constitution, the postwar constitution has been more effectively

boundaries of *burakumin* and the *buraku*, see DAVIS 2000. "Blurring the Boundaries of the Buraku(min)." In *Globalization and Social Change in Contemporary Japan*.
[68] HATANAKA 1995. *Burakushi no owari* 部落史の終わり.
[69] Ibid., 198.

> implemented and its central ideas internalized so that the situation of the *buraku* will improve to the extent that their problems are resolved.[70]

In his study, Hatanaka analyzes the socio-economic changes that occurred from the Meiji period onwards, suggesting that occupation, place of residence, and lineage, that were the defining features of *kawata*, presently, no longer explain the contemporary status of *burakumin*. In fact, present-day *burakumin* are, with some exceptions,[71] no longer linked to polluted jobs and even in the early modern period relatively few *kawata* could make a living from the leather trade.

Lineage explains little because it does not tell us how or why different societies treat these groups as outsiders. Simple facts about residence do not tell us very much anymore either. We know that – although the pattern varies greatly – in the early 1990s on average only 41.4 percent of those living in areas defined by the local government as *buraku* were linear descendants of pre-war *burakumin*, let alone pre-twentieth-century *kawata*, with the range going from 2.7 percent to 97.7 percent. Moreover, some suggest that if a *burakumin* is anyone who had one grandparent who was a *burakumin*, the population could be as high as ten millions.[72]

According to Hatanaka, a person is a *burakumin* when he or she is perceived as such and when he or she identifies him/herself as such, therefore, provocatively, he states that "even though *buraku* do not exist, they are made exist".[73]

As a consequence of social mobility and changing socio-economic variables, what according to other scholars where the identifying characteristics of *burakumin* during the early modern and modern periods – namely lineage and "blood link", occupation and place

[70] NEARY 2003. "Burakumin at the end of history.(history of social class in Japan)." In *Social Research*.
[71] One of these exceptions is represented by the building of drums (*taiko* 太鼓). This is often portrayed as a "traditional" *burakumin* activity from *burakumin* as well. Yet, even though it is true that most of *taiko* production is, generally speaking, an occupation for *burakumin*, it is also true that it involves an extremely small number of people. See KOBAYASHI 1994. "Heartbeat in the Diaspora: Taiko and Community."; MOGI 2008. *Taiko. Il Tamburo Giapponese Tradizione e Rinnovamento*; SHAWN 2005. "Of Roots and Race: Discourses of the Body and Place in Japanese Taiko Drumming."
[72] See HATANAKA 1995. *Burakushi no owari 部落史の終わり*, 75.
[73] Ibid., 15.

– are no longer sufficient to identify them.[74] Additionally, the current use of the two terms *burakumin* and *buraku* may be confusing, since living in a *buraku* community does not mean anymore to be of *burakumin* ancestry, nor the other way round.[75] According to Hatanaka, in fact "the problem is not one of *buraku* liberation but liberation from the concept of *buraku*".[76]

Indeed, the very concept of *buraku* has become pretty blurry. The reason is that, especially after 1975. In November 1975, in fact, the Osaka branch of the BLL was struck by getting to know about the existence of a book called "Comprehensive List of *Buraku* Area Names" (*Tokushū Buraku Chimei Sōkan* 特殊部落地名総鑑). Investigations revealed that copies of the hand-written three hundreds and thirty-page book were being secretly sold by an Osaka-based firm to numerous firms and individuals throughout Japan by a mail order service called Cablenet, at between ¥5,000 and ¥50,000 per copy.

The book contained a nationwide list of all the names and locations of *buraku* settlements (as well as the primary means of employment of their inhabitants), which could be compared against an individual's address to determine if they were *buraku* residents. More than 200 large Japanese firms, including (according to the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Centre of Osaka) Toyota, Nissan, Honda and Daihatsu, along with thousands of individuals purchased copies of the book.

Although the production and sale of the book has been banned, numerous copies of it are still in existence, and in 1997, an Osaka private investigation firm was the first to be

[74] For a definition of *burakumin* based on historical continuities with *kawata* and *eta*, see, for instance ACITELLI-DONOGHUE 1978. "The Origin and Development of the Japanese Pariah." In *Pariah Persistence in Changing Japan: A Case Study*; DE VOS (ed.) 1966. *Japan's Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality*; FUJITA 1998. *Burakumin to ha nanika 部落民とは何か*; KIKUCHI 1967. *Bessho to tokushū buraku no kenkyū 別所と特修部落の研究*; NEARY 1997. "*Burakumin* in Contemporary Japan." In *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*; OKIURA 2000. *'Burakushi' ronsō wo yomitoku. Sengo shisō no nagare no naka de 「部落史」論争を読み解く・戦後思想の流れの中で*; UESUGI 2004. *Korede wakatta! Buraku no rekishi これでわかった!部落の歴史*; YAMAMOTO 1999. *Hisabetsu buraku no kenkyū 被差別部落の研究*

[75] See SU-LAN REBER 1999. "Buraku Mondai in Japan. Historical and Modern Perspectives and Directions for the Future." In *Harvard Human Rights Journal*. See also DAVIS 2000. "Blurring the Boundaries of the Buraku(min)." In *Globalization and Social Change in Contemporary Japan*.

[76] HATANAKA 1995. *Burakushi no owari 部落史の終わり*, 19.

charged with violation of the 1985 statute for using the text. It is likely that more of Japan's highly-lucrative private investigation market still enjoy ownership and use of the book.[77]

However, as a consequence of this incident, public controls on the diffusion of secret names of *buraku* areas have become stricter, thus understanding where *buraku* areas are has become pretty difficult. In fact, since *burakumin* are not fixed in a homogeneous category, their "identity" is still too often associated with a vacuum-like set of cultural and social traits, or, simply, to the idea of "poverty".

In 1995 the Kyoto branch of the BLL carried out a survey in collaboration with the City Hall, in which it seems clear that *burakumin* were still associated to poverty by a large part of the population in the city. In fact, although 32 percent of the total stated that *burakumin* are "normal" (*futsū* 普通) people, 30.1 percent defined them "poor" (*mazushii* 貧しい). Moreover, 30.1 percent of the total declared *burakumin* are "slightly poor" (*yaya mazushii* やや貧しい), whereas only the 10.4 percent declared burakumin are "slightly rich" (*yaya yutaka* やや豊か).[78] This shows a persistence of associations between "poverty" and *buraku* areas, that is actually different from the real conditions of *dōwa chiku*.[79]

According to this survey, *burakumin* were perceived as normally hard workers (45.5 percent), yet people who to thought they are slightly lazy (17,1 percent) were more that people who thought they were particularly hard workers (9.7 percent). *Burakumin* were thought to be rough (34 percent), more than normal (24 percent), or mild (5.4 percent).

Moreover *buraku* areas were represented as normally developed (42.0 percent) or slightly backward (26,5 percent), closed (34,8 percent) more than normal (22.3 percent), and

[77] See BURAKU KAIHŌ DŌMEI and SU-LAN REBER 1999. "Buraku Mondai in Japan. Historical and Modern Perspectives and Directions for the Future." In *Harvard Human Rights Journal*.
[78] See KYŌTOSHI 1995. *Jinken to dōwa mondai ni tsuite no ishiki chōsa hōkokusho* 人権と同和問題についての意識調査報告書, *"Dōwa chiku" no imēji* 「同和地区」のイメージ, 113. Unfortunately, this survey on representations of the *buraku* among "mainstream" society, is the only one to have been carried out in Kyoto. Therefore a diachronic analysis of changes in the perception of *dōwa* areas is impossible.
[79] On *buraku* conditions and their representations linked to poverty, see HATANAKA 1995. *Burakushi no owari* 部落史の終わり, 21-46.

normally clean, although 28.6 percent of the total stated that they thought *buraku* were slightly dirty.[80]

As interesting as these figures can be, they are based on a superimposition of people and place: *burakumin* and *buraku* are identified, starting from the assumption of the historical continuity I pointed out before. Yet, trying to follow Hatanaka's theoretical approach and to analyze discrimination against *burakumin* separately from the area in which they dwell, might offer new perspective of comprehension of this phenomenon.

3.5.1 Discriminated People?

Generally speaking, scholarly literature on the *buraku* issue focused on problems of discrimination against *burakumin*: they experienced difficulties in finding a job, in entering university, they were bullied in the high school. They were generally avoided and discriminated against in the civil society, not even letting them take part to social life events, like *matsuri* and, most indicatively, in case they wanted to marry a "non-*buraku*" person, they were discriminated by the partner's family.[81]

Yet, according to governmental surveys, the rate of discrimination against *burakumin* has decreased. These surveys, in fact, seem indicate not only an increasing rate of acceptance into universities, but also an even more indicative increasing rate of intermarriages between *buraku* and non-*buraku* people, especially in the range between 25 and 35 years old (from 60 to 80 percent in 1994, when the most recent governmental survey was published. In the same year, the rate of intermarriages among people over 65 was only around 10 percent).[82]

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[80] See KYŌTOSHI 1995. *Jinken to dōwa mondai ni tsuite no ishiki chōsa hōkokusho 人権と同和問題についての意識調査報告書*, 105-176.

[81] See for instance, DE VOS (ed.) 1966. *Japan's Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality*; DONOGHUE 1978. *Pariah Persistence in Changing Japan: A Case Study*; FUJITA 1998. *Burakumin to ha nanika 部落民とは何か*; KARIYA 1995. "The Confidence to Live! Experiencing the Buraku Liberation Movement." In *Diversity in Japanese Culture and Language*; KIKUCHI 1967. *Bessho to tokushū buraku no kenkyū 別所と特修部落の研究*; KITAGUCHI 1999. *An Introduction to the Buraku Issue. Questions and Answers*; MARTIN 1979. "Marriage Relations in a Discriminated *Buraku* (*Hisabetsu-Buraku*)." In *European Studies on Japan*; MCLAUCHLAN 2004. *Prejudice and Discrimination in Japan. The Buraku Issue*; NEARY 1997. "*Burakumin* in Contemporary Japan." In *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*; VALENTINE 1990. "On the Borderlines. The Significance of Marginality in Japanese Society." In *Unwrapping Japan*

[82] See SŌMUCHŌ 総務庁. 1994. *Dōwa chiku jittai haakutō chōsa 同和地区把握等調査*.

Moreover, according to more recent surveys carried out in Kyoto by the City Hall, discrimination rates seem to have diminished.[83] The 78.6 percent of interviewed people answered they would not change their relationship with a friend who turned out to be from a *buraku*, with a top peak of 88.9 percent among twenties, decreasing to reach 68.8 percent among over seventies. The 7.4 percent of the total stated they would keep on meeting him/her, maintaining a superficial relationship, but trying to avoid him/her. Only 0.7 percent claimed they would stop the relationship with the *burakumin* (see Graph.1).

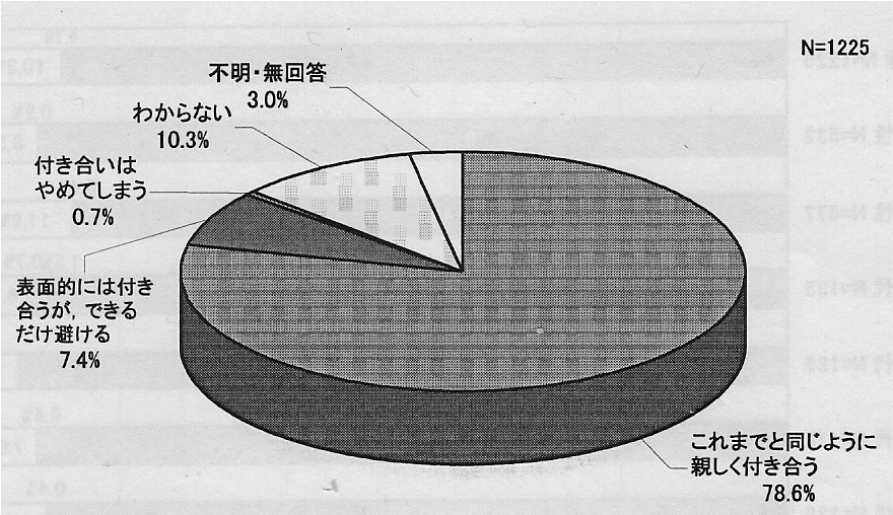
These figures not only show a decreasing discrimination rate, they also show that discrimination was related to the generational divide (see Tab.1). This could be linked to the change and development of actual conditions of *buraku* areas, that have become far better from the sixties on, as well as the increasing education about *burakumin* and the ideology of human rights.

Similarly, rates of attitudes towards marriage discrimination were changing, even though figures are lower. The survey presented the following question "[What would you say] in case a person very close to you (*mijikana hito* 身近な人) asked you for some advice, after his/her parents opposed to his/her marriage with a person from a *buraku*". 17.4 percent answered that "Since the place of origin has no relationship with marriage, they should get married". 46.9 percent replied that "If their will is strong, they should get married". 21.0 percent replied that "Since the strong objection of the family is a matter of fact, he/she shoud think about it carefully", whereas 1.8 percent of the total replied that they would "Oppose the marriage" as well (See Graph.2).

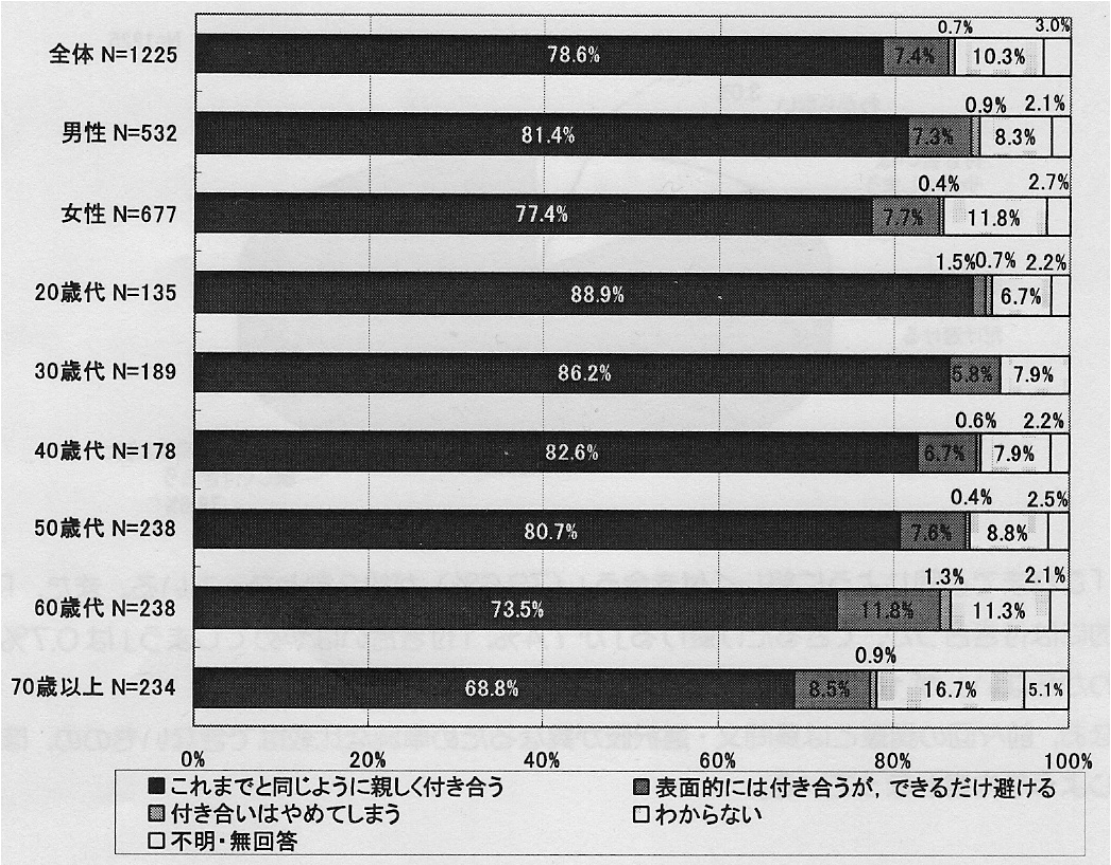
Figures are not uniformly distributed according to age (see Tab.2), yet people who stated they would oppose the marriage are very few anyway, with a high peak of 4.2 percent among people in their sixties and the lowest peak of 0 percent among people in their twenties.

According to these data, discrimination against *burakumin* seems to have become weaker, as also most of my informants in the BLL confirmed. Yet, although the problem – or at least a relevant part of it – seemed to have been solved, actually it was changing its form.

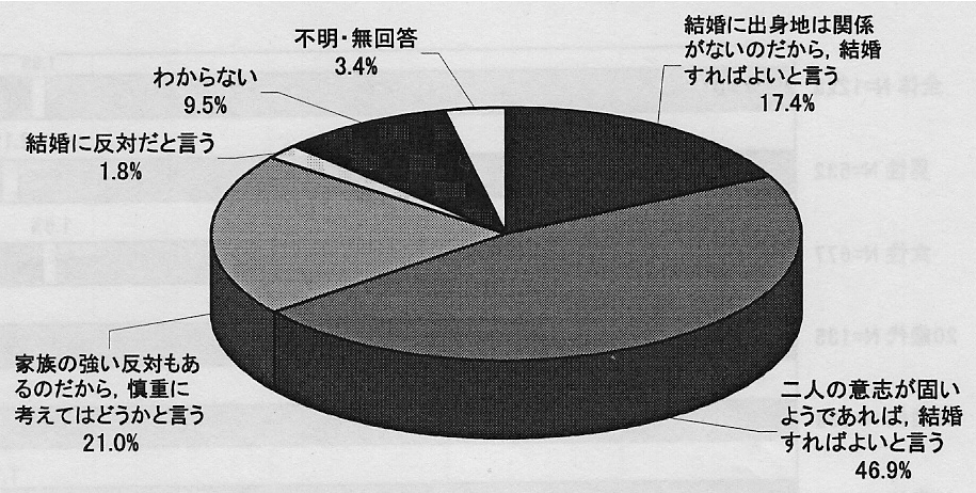
[83] See KYŌTOSHI. 2005. *Jinken mondai ni kansuru ishiki chōsa 人権問題に関する意識調査.*



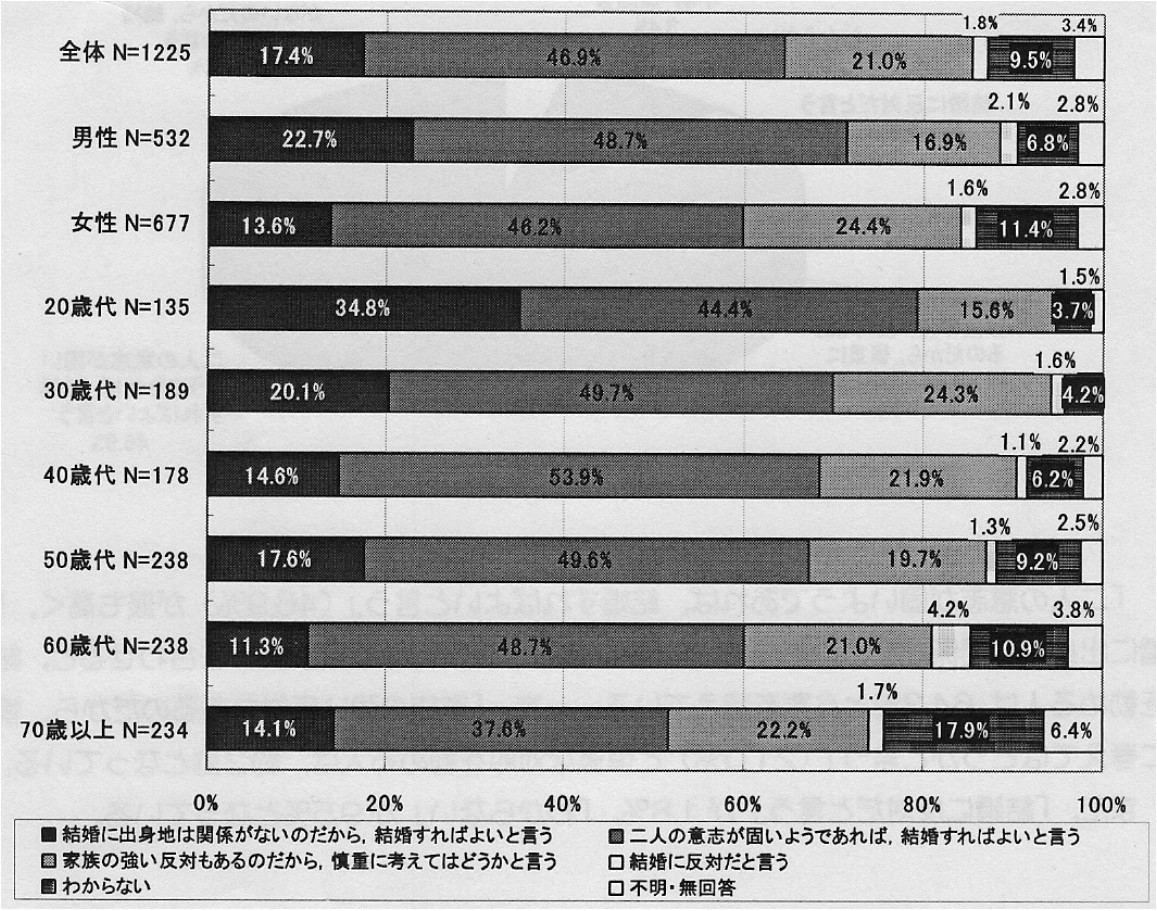
Graph. 1: Distibution of attitudes towards relationship whith a friend who turned out to be a *burakumin*. Total



Tab. 2: Distribution according to gender and age



Graph. 2: Distibution of attitudes towards a close friend who wants to marry a *burakumin* and whose parents opposed. Total



Tab. 3: Distribution according to gender and age

3.5.2 The *Buraku* we Don't See

Presently, most of researches, as well as surveys that are carried out by scholars, universities and governmental institutions, refer to registered *dōwa chiku*.

Institutionally speaking, in fact, *buraku* areas were registered as such between the beginning of the Meiji period and the post-war, according to the zones around Japan. In Kyoto, for instance, nearly all of the *dōwa chiku* were registered during the Meiji period.[84] Generally speaking, registered *dōwa chiku* were *eta* villages during the medieval period and, in Kyoto, all contemporary registered *buraku* areas were previous *eta* villages. On the one hand, this "crystallized" the perception of those areas as "*eta* villages",[85] yet, on another, it allowed people of the areas to benefit from governmental funding for their improvement.

In fact, *eta* were organized in structured communities and used to dwell in precise areas, therefore they were more identifiable and had a stronger sense of community than *hinin*. Unlike *eta*, *hinin* were generally confined in what were considered "public lands" (*kōshūgai* 公衆街). Whereas the "new commoners" ended up with the newly produced deeds to the plots of land they had lived on, the public land on which *hinin* had been forced to live was not deeded to them.

According to Uesugi, in the long run, this may have worked to their advantage, since their existence as a separate group, together with the discrimination that went along with it, has for the most part simply faded away.[86]

There are exceptions, though, as can be seen in the treatment of those with Hansen's disease and cholera. Prior to the development of effective treatment of this communicable disease, the need to prevent its spread by taking steps to quarantine victims in colonies is understandable – even though the deplorable violations of human rights still deserve condemnation. However, with the development of effective medications from the 1940's,

[84] See KYŌTO BURAKUSHI KENKYŪJO (ed.) 1995. *Kyōto no burakushi. Zenkindai 京都部落史研究所・前近代*.
[85] On "crystallization" of buraku areas a seta villages, see HATANAKA 1995. *Burakushi no owari 部落史の終わり*, 47-60.
[86] See UESUGI 2004. *Korede wakatta! Buraku no rekishi これでわかった!部落の歴史*.

any need to quarantine such people disappeared. Nevertheless, it was not until 1996 than Japan finally repealed this system of forced isolation in "leprosaria", that were placed in former *hinin* areas,[87] thus, again, reproducing a signification system, based on historical continuity.[88]

While perhaps not exactly the same *kegarekan* 穢れ感 ("feeling of defilement") that was the basis for such discrimination in ancient times, the related concept of excluding and marginalizing those who are different has remained strong.

Moreover, these areas were chosen as they were defined *hinmin buraku* 貧民部落 ("villages of poor people), or *hinkon buraku* 貧困部落 (literally "poverty villages"), among which also Rokuhara appeared. Since people living in these areas refused to be compared to *eta*, since they were not in the same status, the areas were not registered as *dōwa chiku* and, therefore, they could not benefit from governmental funding, thus remaining poor and becoming so-called "slums" (*suramu* スラム).[89]

Since no institutional "crystallization" of previous *hinin* villages was done, these areas were considered as normal areas to renovate and develop. In 1890, for instance the "clearance" (*kuriaransu* クリアランス) of the area called Daibutsumae 大仏前, that also included Rokuhara, was considered completed.

Yet, as I will try to show below, contemporary Rokuhara provides an interesting test case, not only to show that "clearance" was far from being completed, but also to show that some changes regarding the *buraku* issue have occurred.

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[87] Namely where *hiningoya* 非人小屋 were.

[88] On leprosaria and *hinin* areas, see KOBAYASHI 2001. *Kindai nihon to kōshū kaisei. Toshi shakaishi no kokoromi* *近代日本と公衆衛生・都市社会史の試み*; UESUGI 2004. *Korede wakatta! Buraku no rekishi* *これでわかった!部落の歴史*.

[89] As far as I under stand, researches on slums in Japan are extremely few. As for slums in Kyoto, the only research I could find out is KOBAYASHI 2001. *Kindai nihon to kōshū kaisei. Toshi shakaishi no kokoromi* *近代日本と公衆衛生・都市社会史の試み*, to which this paragraph is highly indebted. I am mostly grateful to my informants in Kyōto buraku kenkyūjo for letting me know about it. Needless to say, research in Western languages about the conditions of former *hinin* after the Meiji period are completely absent and, as far as I understand, the very existence of *hinin buraku* is unknown in the West. This is due to the fact that, generally speaking, since *hinin buraku* were not institutionalized as *dōwa chiku*, former *hinin* are not related to the *buraku* issue and are generally thought to have been absorbed by "mainstream" society after the Meiji period. See, for instance, NEARY 2003. "Burakumin at the end of history.(history of social class in Japan)." In *Social Research*.

3.6 Constructing Hell

As I have tried to point out so far, discrimination against *burakumin* and *buraku* areas were tightly linked to how they are represented and perceived. Moreover, as the very definition of *buraku*/*burakumin* has become blurry and information about discriminated areas is hidden and controlled, the concept of *buraku* has become a complex ideoscape of contested and negotiated associations and ideas, largely dependent on how *buraku* areas are perceived and/or represented.

Consequently, this complex ideoscape affect the very identification of *buraku* areas, in the sense that, since, normally, people cannot access information about *buraku* areas, there is the risk that a person identifies poor areas with *buraku* and, consequently, that he/she behaves accordingly, possibly discriminating people of the area.

Historical and symbolic narratives, along with religious practices connected to death that are promoted in pamphlets of the temples, website and in the media when Rokuhara was described, and to narratives and values related to "tradition", provided a strong link between the history of the area and its contemporary conditions among people who knew Rokuhara. In other words, most of the people who knew the link between the history of the place and practices linked to death, tended to identify Rokuhara as a *buraku*.[90]

Among people who knew about Rokuhara and its history, answers where all nearly similar, and ranged from "it's a little weird place" (ちょっと変な所) to "It is definitely a buraku" (絶対部落だ). I report here the words of one of my informants, who was particularly explicit about what he thought about Rokuhara:

> You know the history of that place, don't you? It was a *hinin* area and it was the place for dead bodies and death rituals. It's also different from all other areas in Kyoto, with all

[90] Ethically speaking, publishing the name of *buraku* areas is not acceptable in scholarship, since they are hidden and controlled in order to prevent discrimination against them. In fact, in most of the scholarship, the names of studied areas are not explicated, whereas pseudonyms are created instead. Yet, as Rokuhara is not a registered *buraku* area, I think that naming it is not a problem. Contrariwise, I hope this study serves to solve part of the discrimination problems linked to Rokuhara, by showing it is not a *buraku* area. Furthermore, I am trying to explain the socio-economic and symbolic mechanisms of signification that lie beneath the identification and representation of the area as a *buraku* and of *buraku* in general, in order to deconstruct discrimination problems, rather than increasing existing issues, or creating new ones.

> those narrow and bending streets, there is a weird atmosphere. No doubt it's a *buraku* area. (Man, 47, 2007)

The fact that Rokuhara was perceived as a *buraku* is not surprising: it is widely accepted in scholarship that symbolic narratives of pollution, especially when linked to images of death and corpses, are connected to representations of social liminality,[91] as I explained in the first chapter.

Yet, since knowledge about Rokuhara was, obviously, not uniformly distributed among the populace, also the perception of the place accordingly changed. In fact, according to the survey I carried out, nobody living in the neighbouring areas defined Rokuhara as a *buraku*. Conversely, the further from Rokuhara my informants lived – obviously, just in case they knew the history of Rokuhara – the higher the probability that they defined Rokuhara as a *buraku* area:

> An area like that, with that history, is certainly a *buraku*. I have never been there, but I don't even really want to go… It's kind of creepy. (Woman, 28, living in Ōmiya)

> I always thought Rokuhara is a kind of weird place, full of sprits of the dead. I think it's probably a *buraku*. (Man, 52, living in Shimogamo)

> I don't know whether Rokuhara is actually a *buraku* or not, but there are quite a few *buraku* areas in Higashiyama-*ku* and I think that an area with such a history and that connection with the otherworld is probably a *buraku*. (Woman, 62, living in Nijō)

This depended on the fact that people who did not have direct access to information about the area tended to rely on the image of it, in order to identify it.

[91] See, for instance, KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは*; OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1984. *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan. An Anthropological View*; OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1987. *The Monkey as Mirror. Symbolic Transformations in Japanese History and Ritual*; RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*.MONMA 1999. *Sabetsu to kegare no shūkyō kenkyū. Kenryoku toshite no "wa" 差別と穢れの宗教研究・権力としての「和」*; NAMIHIRA 1987. "Pollution in the Folk Belief System."; OKIURA 2005. *Kegare. Sabetsu shisō no shinsō ケガレ・差別思想の深層*; VALENTINE 1990. "On the Borderlines. The Significance of Marginality in Japanese Society." In *Unwrapping Japan*

Moreover, ideas of poverty linked to representations of *buraku* areas also contributed to identify Rokuhara as a *buraku*, at least as a possibility:

> There are rich areas, right? Rich and important people (偉い人間) work in rich areas. However there is always need for someone to do humble or dirty jobs for them, like cleaning floors or toilets… People who do these jobs must be poor, otherwise they would have afforded the education to get some better job, right? These poor people will live around rich areas, so that they can easily go to work everyday. These poor areas all around the rich areas are *dōwa chiku* and the poor people who live there are *burakumin*. Now, Rokuhara is very close to Gion and it is a poor area, so I think it is a *dōwa chiku*. (Woman, 29, living in Nakagyō-*ku*)

> I don't know whether Rokuhara is a *dōwa chiku* or not, but I think it might be. Everybody knows the big *buraku* areas, but there are so many of them, especially in Kyoto. Almost everywhere there are some small *dōwa chiku* and the people who live around them know that. They are poor places and they are mainly around rich areas, but it depends on the history of that particular zone. (Woman, 45, living in Kamigamo)

People living in Rokuhara, though, did not confirm this perception, stating that the area was a kind of *buraku*, but in "older times" (*mukashi* 昔) and that presently things are different. Most of them even refused to talk about the issue, or changed the topic of the conversation. As Rokuhara *kaichō* told me:

> When I was young, the way of life was different here. We used to go to Chinnōji to greet the abbot and we used to play in the precincts of the temple. Sometimes we also used to go to Wakamiyajinja to play. There was an old man who used to tell us old stories. It was very interesting and I really liked it, even though it was creepy sometimes. He used to talk about dead bodies, spirits and skulls that can be found if you dig in Rokuhara. However, when he talked about *hinin*, I used to close my ears: I did not want to think that our ancestors were like that. Now it is different and we are normal people. Actually, talking about skulls, I have never heard that anybody found one, even when they built new mansions. I think it might even be true that there are skulls, but there are no more than in other areas in Kyoto.

This refusal of the past was not surprising: the place is not registered as a *dōwa chiku* because people living in Rokuhara during the Meiji period refused to be equalized to *eta*,

as I pointed out above. Moreover, the *kaichō* tried to deny historical narratives related to death, by putting Rokuhara on the same level of other "normal" areas in Kyoto. Interestingly enough, this presupposed the acknowledgment that such narratives connoted the area as a "particular" one.

The abbot of Rokudō Chinnōji, differently, confirmed the perception of the area from the outsider's point of view:

> Abbott: During the *heian* period, corpses were thrown here. This is why the area is linked to death and why Rokuhara is called the "entrance of hell". It was like this all along the medieval period. If you dug here, you could find skulls and bones everywhere.
> I: I see. So, this is why during the medieval period people in the area were despised (*misageraremashita* 見下げられました)…
> Abbott (bursting out laughing): It's like this in these days as well! (*ima mo sōdayo*! 今もそうだよ！)[92]
> I: What do you mean?
> Abbott: Nobody will tell you here, because the community is trying to cancel the problem, but I talk to the people here. They come here to have some advice, so, believe me, I know there are problems. Actually, It's not really a problem with the people. Discrimination problems are really few. But no one in Kyoto wants to enter the area to live here, so there are a lot of economic problems.

The Abbott pointed out that discriminatory practices against the people in Rokuhara were not a big problem. This is coherent with the analysis of discrimination against *burakumin* I proposed above, as well as with the data provided by the governmental surveys. Nevertheless, the testimony of the Abbott shed a different light on the problem. In fact, even though discriminatory practices against the people seemed to have decreased, a new object of discrimination seemed to emerge: areas.

[92] This conversation occurred around half of the interview. Interestingly enough, the Abbott changed the conversational register with this sentence. Before, he had spoken using the normal kind form (*desu*/*masu* form), whereas, in this sentence, he used the plain form, which is more confidential. I could not say whether he did so because he had an instinctive reaction in front of the "naivety" of my question, or whether he wanted to stress the confidentiality of this information. Actually, he kept on talking by using the confidential form until the end of the interview.

3.7 Landscapes of Discrimination

People in Kyoto tended not to enter Rokuhara to live. This was one of the causes to understand the contemporary problems that the area experienced, such as its high depopulation and ageing rates, as well as the impressive number of vacant houses.

These problems did not occur when people in the area used to live in their family houses, because they could combine their job and their accommodation. Yet, as the possibility to find a job around the area became less and less, people started to leave Rokuhara, but there were no people available to enter what was perceived as a *buraku*, even though, institutionally speaking, it is not.

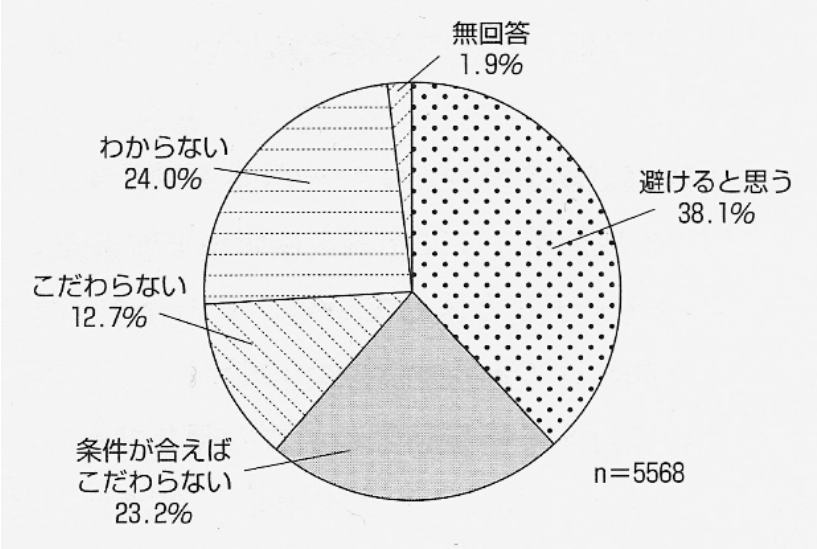
What happened in Rokuhara is perfectly coinciding with the situation in many *dōwa chiku*, thus confirming, on the one hand, the identification of Rokuhara and *buraku*. On the other hand, yet, this shows an arbitrariness of identification and, consequently, discrimination processes, that appear to be mainly based on representations, perceptions and signification of certain areas, rather than on historical continuities.

These stereotyped representations (i.e. poverty, closeness, backwardness, dirtiness) constituted an ideoscape by which *buraku* areas were not only identified, but also – like in the case of Rokuhara – constructed by "outsiders".

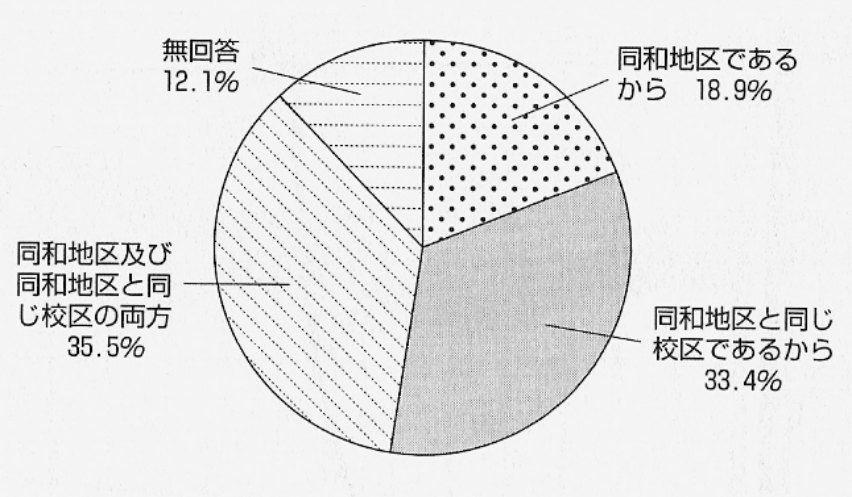
Although the ways in which they were constructed changed according to the areas, according to Okuda, areas that shared the same School District (*kōku* 校区) with a *buraku* tended to experience discrimination problems. He based his researches on the "Survey on the Actual Conditions of Human Rights Among Workers in Dealing of Buildings in Residential Areas" (*Takuchi kenbutsu torihiki gyōsha ni kan suru jinken mondai jittai chōsa* 宅地見物取引業者に関する人権問題実態調査), held in Osaka prefecture in 2003.

According to this survey, in fact, 38.1 percent of the interviewed people would avoid living in a *dōwa chiku*, 23.2 percent stated that they would live there if they met their required conditions and 12.7 percent claimed they would not avoid the *buraku* (see Graph.3).

Yet, when it came to define the *buraku* area, this surveyed showed that, among deals that were not concluded because of some relationships with *dōwa* areas, 18.9 percent of the deals were not concluded because the interested area was a *buraku*, whereas 33.4 percent of the deals failed because the area was in the same School District as a *dōwa chiku* (see Graph.4).[93]



Graph. 3: Distribution of attitudes towards entering a house in a *buraku* area. Published in OKUDA 2007, 44



Graph. 4: Distribution of attitudes towards failed deals. Published in Ibid. , 47

[93] See OKUDA 2007. *Minasareru sabetsu. Naze buraku wo sakeru no ka 見なされる差別・なぜ部落を避けるのか*, 42-47. Unfortunately there are no similar data about Kyoto, but, according to my informants in the BLL, a similar associative phenomenon has occurred in Kyoto as well.

This situation produced drawbacks on the market of the real estate and became a serious problem for interested areas, that, being discriminated against in spite of the fact they were not *dōwa chiku*, began to suffer from the same discriminatory symptoms of *buraku* areas and, consequently, of economic and social problems.[94] In other words, they have actually been made *dōwa* areas and, conversely, *buraku* have become larger than registered ones, because also surrounding areas were identified as such and discriminated against.

The trend to avoid these areas was due to the risk that, if a non-*buraku* person started to live in a *dōwa* area, he/she would be identified with it by "outsiders", thus ending up to be discriminated against as a *burakumin*. This is reported not only by Okuda, but also by a series of ethnographic studies about *dōwa chiku* and the *buraku* issue.[95]

Fig. 33: Instruction sign for recycling in Korean in Rokuhara

[94] On discrimination and real estate, see also OKUDA 2006. *Tochi sabetsu. Buraku mondai wo kangaeru 土地差別・部落問題を考える.*

[95] See, for instance, DAVIS 2000. "Blurring the Boundaries of the Buraku(min)." In *Globalization and Social Change in Contemporary Japan*; DONOGHUE 1978. *Pariah Persistence in Changing Japan: A Case Study*; MCLAUCHLAN 2004. *Prejudice and Discrimination in Japan. The Buraku Issue.*

As a consequence of cheap prices of housing, emigration of "original" populace and absence of "mainstream" Japanese people who enter the *buraku*, these areas have started to be occupied by other social liminals, such as poor Japanese people and foreigners (especially Chinese and Koreans), as the extremely interesting study carried out by Davis pointed out.[96]

This happened also in Rokuhara, as the many signs for regulation of recycling of litter, written also in Chinese, English and Korean, show. Again, this is also an evidence of the superimposition between registered *buraku* areas and an area – Rokuhara – that has been made as such, according to its symbolic signification, its "tradition" and the emphasis and evaluation of it, and the signification of representations of hell in Kyoto.

3.8 Conclusions

Narratives connected to afterlife and hell in Rokuhara were part of a complex ideoscape that went beyond religious symbolic discourses. Indeed, religious symbolism provided the clue to construct the identity of the area, both from "insiders" and from "outsiders" perspectives. Yet their signification were greatly different.

As Komatsu points out, all along the history of Rokuhara, religious symbolic representations of death and pollution were linked and nearly coincided with geographic, economic and social liminality.[97] However this changed according to urbanization processes, as well as to changes in the socio-political and economic dynamics that involved not only the area, but the whole Kyoto.

Yet, a strong emphasis on "tradition" and "continuity" of religious symbolism and practices linked to death and the afterlife kept on characterizing the area, thus providing a symbolic link with the past, even in contemporary Rokuhara. This certainly attracted tourists and religious practitioners, thus providing an important income, especially for the temples, but, indirectly, also for the whole area.

[96] See DAVIS 2000. "Blurring the Boundaries of the Buraku(min)." In *Globalization and Social Change in Contemporary Japan*.
[97] See KOMATSU 2002. *Kyōto makai annai 京都魔界案内*; KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは.*

On the one hand, people living in Rokuhara accepted religious symbolism and practices linked to death as unquestioned elements for construction of identity of the area, and, consequently of their own, but tried to cancel and forget the link with social and economic liminality, maintaining that their contemporary status was different from former *hinin*. On the other hand, though, the promotion of the area as connected to death and the afterlife, provided the identificatory element for "outsiders" to (re-)construct and (re-) produce the link between pollution and defilement of death in the past and contemporary Rokuhara, thus discriminating against the area.

The "field of possibility" that lied behind this complex ideoscape[98] of symbolism and significations, was created by socio-economic dynamics and laws that limited the re-evaluation of the area. This provided a further association between Rokuhara and *buraku* areas, from the "outsiders" point of view, that was legitimized by narratives linked to historical continuity, as well as to pollution of death, that were particularly significant especially in Kyoto, a city which is represented on a national level as the unquestioned representative of "Japanese culture".

This was possible because the process of signification of symbolic narratives linked to death and the afterlife in contemporary Kyoto, tended to be associated to the history of *buraku* that, in turn, were identified and even constructed according to a complex ideoscape that was legitimized by authoritative narratives of historical continuity.

Furthermore, as I tried to analyzed above, this process produced an enlargement of discriminated areas or, like in the case of Rokuhara, the construction of new ones through associative processes.

The dynamics of discriminatory practices have also changed: in front of a decreasing rate of discrimination against a constructed "ethnicity" (e.g. *burakumin*), discrimination and associations to defilement and pollution has moved towards areas. These areas, in turn, started to suffer from the same symptoms and problems of registered *dōwa chiku*, thus

[98] See APPADURAI 1988a. "Putting Hierarchy in its Place."; APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

providing a feedback and – to a certain extent – further legitimization to their identification with *buraku* areas and causing further discrimination against them.

It was evident how symbolic construction of space played a fundamental role in these dynamics of construction of identity, especially from the "outsiders" perspective.

Rokuhara constituted a borderline case in Kyoto. In fact, from the Heian period onwards, there were other areas that were linked to death practices. Yet, all of them were registered as *dōwa chiku* during the Meiji period, differently from Rokuhara. Conversely, there were also many other *hinin* areas, that were not registered as *dōwa chiku*, some of which also became slums,[99] but they did not present the same strong symbolic link to death and the afterlife, as Rokuhara did.

I think that, since it would certainly be interesting to understand their actual present situation, they might constitute an important field for further research.

[99] I obviously cannot name either *dōwa chiku*, or former *hinin* areas because of ethical issues.

Chapter 4 – The Pride of Living in Hell – Ashikuraji and the Tateyama Museum

In this chapter I will take into consideration the case of the narratives of hell and the afterlife connected to the cult of Tateyama (Tateyama *shinkō* 立山信仰) in Ashikuraji 芦峅寺 (Toyama 富山 Prefecture, Province of Tateyama 立山), a village that constituted the major centre of the cult up to the Meiji period, and that provided the setting of the Museum of Tateyama of the Toyama Province (Toyama *kenritsu* Tateyama *hakubutsukan* 富山県立立山博物館) from 1992.

The main aim of this chapter will be analyzing processes of (re-)production of symbolic narratives connected to hell and the afterlife as related to construction of identity and of "community", according to the value of given to the cult as "traditional". This caused conflict with the museum, that tried to propose some "contemporary style" representations of the cult, that were denied by most of the villagers.

In order to do so, I will show how the signification of narratives on the cult and their significations were negotiated within the village, taking into consideration the complexity of variables that contributed to the (re-)production of the cult of narratives on hell and the cult of Tateyama in Ashikuraji.

This chapter, thus, will shed light of processes of signification of those narratives, as one of identifying element chosen by a group of people in order to (re-)produce the "community" to which they felt they belonged. Differently from the previous chapters, in which narratives of death and the afterlife were a part of identifying processes imposed by "outsiders", in this chapter I will take into consideration signification processes operated by people directly related to the cult, thus also implying some reflections on the concept of "community".

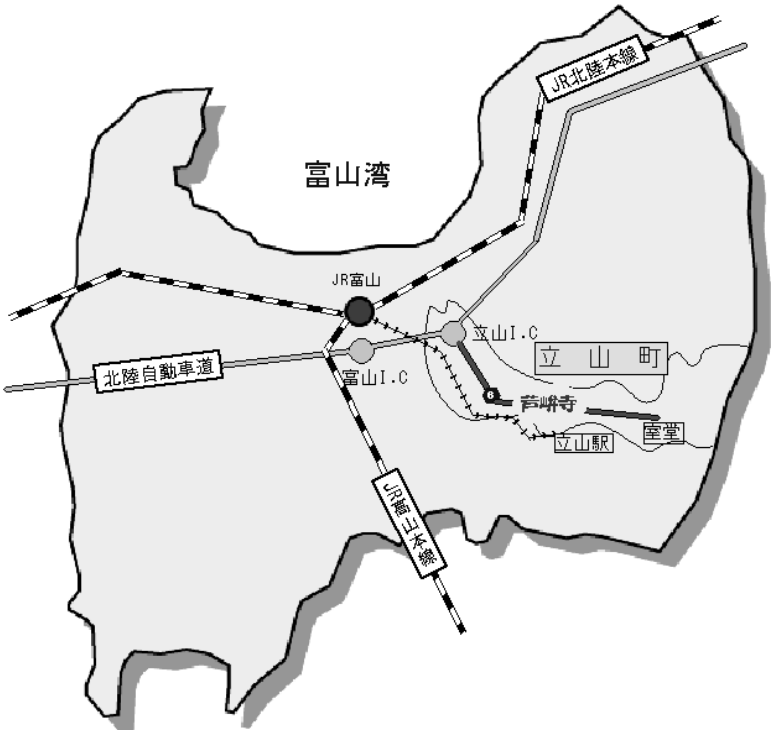


Fig. 34: Access to Ashikuraji. From TATEYAMACHŌ ASHIKURAJI

Ashikuraji is a small village about thirty Kilometres away from Toyama and about fifty from the small city of Tateyama, on the Northern Japanese Alps (Kita Arupusu 北アルプス), on the side of the volcanic massif of Tateyama 立山, that raises from the plain of Toyama through several plateaux (Senjugahara 千寿ヶ原, Bijodaira 美女平 and Tengudaira 天狗平), to the three peaks of Jōdosan 浄土山, Oyama 雄山 and the Bessan 別山 at altitudes of approximately three thousand meters.

Ashikuraji looked more like a bunch of houses on a street, rather than a village: the road that connected Toyama to Tateyama cut Ahikuraji nearly in the middle and few renewed "traditional" houses flanked the sides of the street. The *ryokan* 旅館[1] where I would stay, called Sōshinbō 相真坊, was just on the right side of the wide complex of the Oyamajinja 雄山神社, the only sanctuary of the village.

On the other side of the inn, there was a new building, made of glass and bluish concrete, that looked odd in some way among the old houses, the surrounding mountains and the

[1] Japanese Inn.

nearly one meter-high snow that had accumulated all around. That was the Museum of Tateyama.

As I stated above, Ashikuraji, used to be the centre of the cult of Tateyama up to the Meiji period. As the Buddhist connotations of the names of the surrounding mountains suggest, Tateyama was a centre of *shugendō* 修験道 and of the cult of the mountains (*sangaku shinkō* 山岳信仰). The cult originated before the arrival of Buddhism, but it had a main boom all over Japan during the Edo one. The mountain chain of Tateyama used to be thought as a *mandala* during the medieval and early-modern periods, therefore, one of the main products of the area were the Tateyama *mandara* 立山曼荼羅, that illustrated the religious geography of the mountain. Since in most of them the part dedicated to hell, the hell valley (*jigokudani* 地獄谷) was extremely extensive, I decided to investigate the contemporary conditions of this religious site as well.

Since 1992, Ashikuraji has been the setting of the museum of Tateyama, which illustrated the development of the cult, as well as its environment and the geologic and morphologic characteristics of the mountain. Moreover, it offered new re-elaborations of representations of hell, displayed in an animated film and in a sort of theme park, inspired by the Tateyama *mandara*, that had not only the aim to show how hell and the afterlife could be, but to let visitors live and experience them. Moreover, researchers of the museum, studied also the ritual practices connected to the cult of Tateyama that still occur all through the village's yearly ritual calendar (*nenjūgyōji* 年中行事).

At first I visited the museum, where I introduced myself to Fukue-*sensei*, the most highly-considered specialist of the cult of Tateyama in whole Japan and to his assistant, K.-san, who guided me through the museum and the village, kindly explaining the history of that desolated hell, up on the mountains.

4.1 History of Tateyama and Ashikuraji[2]

The first information we have about Tateyama as a religious site, date back to the Nara period. In fact, it was quoted in the Man'yōshū 万葉集, the famous "Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves", the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry, compiled around 759 A.D. Yet the mountain, that was in the Province of Etchū 越中 at the time, was sacralised and mandalized around the second half of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century, when it became a basis for ritual and ascetic practices of *shugenja* 修験者 and *yamabushi* 山伏, connected to the Tendai 天台 sect.[3] This can be understood by the findings pieces of a staff (*shakujō* 錫杖) used by the *yamabushi*, which dates back to this period.[4]

The cult of Tateyama was mentioned also in collections of Buddhist stories (*setsuwa* 説話), such as the *Dainipponkoku hokekyō genki* 大日本国法華経験記 and the *Konjaku monogatari* 今昔物語, that dates back to the Heian period. This sources describe Tateyama as a religious site, that people used to visit in order to meet the spirits of the deceased, who had fallen into hell. In fact, during the early stages of its history, Mount Tateyama was renown for being directly connected to hell, outside the circle of *yamabushi*. Buddhist stories, as well as *nō* plays, such as Utō 善知鳥, recount how a monk would meet the emaciated figure of a woman on the mountain, who, after confessing that she was indeed dead and had fallen into hell, would beg him to ask her relatives to perform some rituals

[2] This paragraph is highly indebted to Fukue's main works. See FUKUE 2005. *Tateyama mandara. Etoki to shinkō no sekai 立山曼荼羅：絵解きと信仰の世界*; FUKUE 2006. *Tateyama shinkō to nunobashi daikanjōhōe 立山信仰と布橋大灌頂法会*. References about the history of the Tateyama cult can also be found in TATEYAMACHŌ KYOIKU IINKAI (ed.) 2001b. *Tateyama-chōshi. Jōkan 立山町史・上巻*, 113-125.

[3] For an analysis of early Tateyama cult and on mentions of the mountain cults in Man'yōshū, see HIROSE 1992. *Tateyama no ibuki. Man'yōshū kara Kindai tozan kotohajime made 立山のいぶき ー万葉集から近代登山事始めまで*.

[4] See FUKUE 2006. *Tateyama shinkō to nunobashi daikanjōhōe 立山信仰と布橋大灌頂法会*; TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN 1991a. *Jōsetsu tenji sōgō kaisetsu 常設展示総合解説*, 36.

necessary for her salvation.[5] The volcanic hell valley on the mountainside provided the setting for ritual practices and belief.[6]

The legendary origins of this cult are described in the *Tateyama kaizan engi* 立山開山縁起, compiled in from the middle to the end of the Edo period.[7] According to this text, the mountain was opened[8] by Saeki no Ariyori 佐伯有頼, who, following his white hawk that had escaped, penetrated into the forest of the mount. As he proceeded in the forest, through various hardships, looking for his hawk, he was suddenly attacked by an enormous fierce bear, that run towards him. Ariyori had the time and quickness to shoot an arrow, that hit the bear right in the middle of its chest. The wounded beast withdrew, escaping into the Tamadono 玉殿cave.[9] Ariyori followed the traces of the bear and entered the cave as well. Yet, instead of the wild beast, he found three statues of the triad Amida 阿弥陀, Kannon 観音 and Seishi 勢至. He worshipped the statues and, in so doing, he noticed that the arrow he shot, was stuck right in the middle of Amida's chest. Ariyori was astonished, but Amida told him: "In order to save the people of this ruined world, I manifested hell, the Pure land and all the other realms in this mountain and I was waiting for you. […] The white hawk is the God Tachio of Mount Tsurugi (Tsurugizan Tachio Tenjin 劒山刀尾天神) and the bear was myself. Quickly become a monk. I want you to open Tateyama!"[10]

Moved by Amida's words, Ariyori followed his will and left the world. He opened the mountain, building temple-sanctuaries on Tateyama, dedicated to Amida's triad and making it one of the most important religious and pilgrimage sites in the whole country.

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[5] For a review of early Tateyama cults, with a special emphasis on women salvation, see SEIDEL 1992-93. "Mountains and Hells. Religious Geography in Japanese *mandara* paintings."; SEIDEL 1996-97. "Descente aux Enfers et Rédemption des Femmes Dans le Bouddhisme Populaire Japonais. Le pélegrinage du Mount Tateyama." For a brief account of the legends, see FORMANEK 1998. "Pilgrimage in the Edo Period. Forerunner of Modern Domestic Tourism? The Example of the Pilgrimage to Mount Tateyama." In *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*.

[6] For a full analisys of the sources that mention the cult of Tateyama during the Heian period, see SEIDEL 1992-93. "Mountains and Hells. Religious Geography in Japanese *mandara* paintings."; SEIDEL 1996-97. "Descente aux Enfers et Rédemption des Femmes Dans le Bouddhisme Populaire Japonais. Le pélegrinage du Mount Tateyama."

[7] On the *Tateyama kaizan engi* and on the legendary foundation, see FUKUE 2005. *Tateyama mandara. Etoki to shinkō no sekai 立山曼荼羅：絵解きと信仰の世界*, 16-33.

[8] The "opening of a mountain" (*kaizan* 開山), means sacralise the mountain, making it a place for religious practices, by tracing paths and building a small temple-sanctuary in it. See Ibid., 16.

[9] This cave actually exhists in the Murōdō 室堂, in the middle of Tateyama. See Ibid., 17.

[10] Ibid., 18.

As this practice began to flourish, some practitioners began to settle down on the mountain and to build the first houses and small villages, in order to perform rituals. Ashikuraji was probably a "religious village" (*shūkyō sonraku* 宗教村落) already in the beginning on the Kamakura period. Actually, Tateyama was listed in the thirteenth century *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 as one of the most relevant centres of *shugendō* in the whole Japan, together with the better known mounts Ōmine and Fuji. The mount actually became famous as one of the "Three Great Sacred Mountains in Japan" (*Nihon no sandai reizan* 日本の三大霊山), along with Mount Fuji and Hakuzan.

During the medieval period, Ashikuraji, that occupied a strategic position at the entrance of the valley, passed under the control of various provinces: Etchū, Kaga 加賀, Noto 能登 and Etchū again, every time offering its services of military religious groups. Eventually, in the late fourteenth century, it permanently passed under the Kaga-*han* and abandoned its military duties, with the purpose of performing religious services and managing all the religious activities in the Province.[11]

Since Tateyama is close to the Hokurikudō 北陸道a certain number of travellers – especially itinerant monks – visited the mountain since the early medieval period and increasing number of pilgrims are also hinted by the fact that the Bakufu in 1484 lifted the barrier stations along the Tateyama pilgrimage road.[12]

On the wave of the increasing popularity of Tateyama as a religious site, from the seventeenth century on, the monks (*oshi* 御師) of the temples at the foot of Mount Tateyama – one in Ashikuraji, the other in the close Iwakuraji 岩峅寺 – began to promote ritual pilgrimages on the mountain among laymen. The monks who lived in the two religious villages used not only to perform rituals, but also to guide pilgrims on the mountain.

[11] FUKUE 2006. *Tateyama shinkō to nunobashi daikanjōhōe 立山信仰と布橋大灌頂法会*, 13.
[12] For a brief account of the sources that mention these travelers, see FORMANEK 1998. "Pilgrimage in the Edo Period. Forerunner of Modern Domestic Tourism? The Example of the Pilgrimage to Mount Tateyama." In *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*, 186-187.

The two villages were connected to the cult of the mountain not only geographically, but also through religious symbolism and economically. In fact, the main religious building on the top of Tateyama, the Oyamajinja, was also built in the two villages and given the same name. Although they were not the only sites that were connected to the Tateyama *shinkō*, they were by far the ones that mostly prospered.[13] Yet Ashikuraji, that was the last village on the pilgrimage street before entering the mountain, became much popular and wealthier than Iwakuraji. In fact, it provided visitors and pilgrims with accommodation in particular buildings, called *shukubō* 宿坊. They were the normal daily accommodation of the monks living in Ashikuraji, but they were also used as inns for travellers, as well as sites where the monks used to perform rituals linked to the cult of the mountain.[14]

During the Edo period, people in Ashikuraji were listed in the four-classes system as "religious people" (*shūkyōsha* 宗教者), yet they were internally differentiated, according to their role and duties: some families used to focus on accommodation of visitors, others on performing rituals, or guiding pilgrims on the mountain, collecting offerings inside the village or on the mount, or promoting the cult of Tateyama around the country.

In fact, generally speaking, dwellers of Ashikuraji used to make a living on agriculture, in particular *yakihata* 焼畑,[15] but, during the rest season of agricultural activity in Winter, the *oshi* toured the country in order to promote the pilgrimage to the mountain exhorting the local population to visit Tateyama and join its ritual ascent (*zenjō* 禅定). In order to do so, they used to travel with Tateyama *mandara* in their luggage, performing *etoki* 絵解.[16]

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[13] The differences in local cults of Tateyama in the surrounding villages was still a topic under research at the Museum of Tateyama in 2008. On religious activities in Iwakuraji, see FUKUE 2005. *Tateyama mandara. Etoki to shinkō no sekai 立山曼荼羅：絵解きと信仰の世界*; HIROSE 1970. *Tateyama shinkō 立山信仰*, 125-127.

[14] See FUKUE 2006. *Tateyama shinkō to nunobashi daikanjōhōe 立山信仰と布橋大潅頂法会*, 32.

[15] "slash-and-burn agriculture", see *Jim Breen's WWWJDIC Online Japanese Dictionary*.

[16] The basic textbook used for the explanation of the picture, especially by the monks from Iwakuraji, is still extant: it is the *Tateyama tebiki gusa* 立山手引草, whereas there are no sources about the book used by the monks from Ashikuraji. Yet, according to Fukue, they probably used to base their explanations on the *Tateyama ryaku engi* 立山略縁起. See FUKUE 2005. *Tateyama mandara. Etoki to shinkō no sekai 立山曼荼羅：絵解きと信仰の世界*, 19. On the promotional activities carried out by the monks, see also FUKUE 2006. *Tateyama shinkō to nunobashi daikanjōhōe 立山信仰と布橋大潅頂法会*; KAMINISHI 2006. *Explaining Pictures. Buddhist Propaganda and Etoki storytelling in Japan*; SAKURAI 1976. "Minkan shinkō to sangaku shūkyō 民間信仰と山岳宗教." In *Sangaku shūkyō to minkan shinkō no kenkyū 山岳宗教と民間信仰の研究*.

4.1.1 Tateyama *Mandara* and Religious Practices

The Tateyama *mandara* was a local production of the villages surrounding Tateyama. The most famous of them were produced in Ashikuraji and were found in forty-three different places around Japan, an evidence of the popularity and diffusion of the cult of Tateyama.[17] The oldest extant Tateyama *mandara* dates back to the seventeenth century, but their production reached its peak during the nineteenth century.[18]

Generally speaking, they are huge pictures of around two hundred and forty centimetres wide and one hundred and sixty centimetres long and they emphasise the role of the mountain as an actualization and representation of the afterlife, as well as a representation of the legend of the "opening of the mountain" and of ritual activities that were performed in Ashikuraji.

On the side of the mountain the Eight Great Buddhist Hells are depicted in the hell valley, together with Sai no kawara 賽の河原, and a series of hells closely connected to the female life course, such as the Hell of Barren Women (Umazume jigoku 石女地獄), or the Chi no ike jigoku.血の池地獄, all of which corresponded to actual sites in the landscape.[19] On the summit, conversely, the scene of the descent of Amida (Amida *raigō* 阿弥陀来迎), with the two Bodhisattva that assisted him in the foundation legend: Kannon and Seishi, was depicted. It was represented either between Oyama and Jōdosan on its right, or between Oyama and Ōnanjiyama 大汝山 on its left. Yet the Pure Land is not represented, since Tateyama itself was thought to be Amida's realm.[20]

The *oshi* used to promise the laymen that, by ritual ascent of the mountain and physical exhaustion, they would experience the torments of hell already during their lifetime and thereby reduce the weight of their *karma* and their faults. After having passed the torments of hell, they would reach the "Penitence Slope" (Zange zaka 懺悔坂) where, by confessing,

[17] Ibid., 35.
[18] For an extensive explanation of the differences among the various Tateyama *mandara*, see TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN 1991b. *Tateyama no kokoro to katachi. Tateyama mandara no sekai 立山の心と形・立山曼荼羅の世界*.
[19] For an extensive explanation of these hells in Tateyama *mandara*, see FUKUE 2005. *Tateyama mandara. Etoki to shinkō no sekai 立山曼荼羅：絵解きと信仰の世界*, 35-71. On the hells for women, see Ibid., 62-71.
[20] Ibid., 74.

they would further reduce their faults, until they would finally reach the summits, where they would experience the pleasures of the Pure Land and obtain the promise of being reborn there.

Moreover, practitioners could also help female relatives, by purchasing a copy of the *Ketsubonkyō* 血盆経 (*Sūtra of the Blood Bowl*)[21] and having it thrown into the Blood Pond on the mountain top, thus ensuring them salvation from the suffering they would undergo in that hell after death.

In fact, as many of the sacred mountains related to *shūgendō* practices, the ritual ascent was forbidden for women. Therefore, women who visited Tateyama were forced to stop in Ashikuraji, where, however, special rituals were performed for them.

Fig. 35: An example of Tateyama mandara. Published in FUKUE 2005, 2-3.

[21] On this *sūtra*, see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5.

4.2.2 Ritual Practice in Ashikuraji

The main ritual the *oshi* performed for women was the *nunobashi daikanjōe* 布橋大灌頂絵 ("Great Ordination of the Cloth Bridge"), that was invariably depicted on the Tatayama *mandara*, as representative of the human realm. It took place at the foot on the mountain and involved three of the characterizing religious buildings of the village: the Enmadō 閻魔道, the Nunobashi 布橋 and the Ubadō 祖母道.[22]

The oldest record of the first of these buildings dates back to 1466, even though the *kanji* that were used for its name were different: Enmadō was, in fact, written 炎魔堂, namely the "Pagoda of the Demon of Flames". This building was close to a narrow river, at the boundary of the village. The Nunobashi was the bridge that crossed the river, symbolically associated to the Sanzu no kawa. In fact enormous snakes are depicted inside the river, just below the bridge, in some Tateyama *mandara*. The snakes used to threaten the spirits that tried to cross the bridge, according to Buddhist cosmology.

Since the river was associated to the one that traced the boundary between the world of the living and the one of the dead, the other side was considered to be the afterlife and the beginning of the space of Mount Tateyama. The graveyard was on this side and there were no houses, since the place was not considered suitable for the living.[23] Yet, Close to the graveyard, there was the Ubadō, a wooden building dedicated to Onbasama 媼尊, a deity represented as an old and repulsive woman.[24] The origins of this deity is still uncertain, yet it is probable that it was the mountain deity or Yamauba 山姥 of Tateyama. Yamauba were extremely recurrent on the whole Japanese territory and they are often represented as old hags or ogresses. They were part of the Shinto pantheon and they were associated to the god of fertility and of rice fields (*ta no kami* 田の神) and to Dōsojin 道祖神, the deity that protected crossroads. Yet, in Ashikuraji, where hell was, the Yamauba was associated to

[22] For an analysis of this ceremony, as well as of the religious buildongs, see FUKUE 2006. *Tateyama shinkō to nunobashi daikanjōhōe 立山信仰と布橋大潅頂法会*; SEIDEL 1992-93. "Mountains and Hells. Religious Geography in Japanese *mandara* paintings."; SEIDEL 1996-97. "Descente aux Enfers et Rédemption des Femmes Dans le Bouddhisme Populaire Japonais. Le pélegrinage du Mount Tateyama."

[23] Also in April 2009, when I went to Ashikuraji for the last time, there were no houses on this side of the river. My informants told me that, although the place is legally suitable for housing and building, the "non-written rule" not to build there still persists in the village.

[24] Onbasama also be written with the compound 姥尊, or directly in *katakana* オンバサマ. On Ubadō and Onbasama, see FUKUE 2006. *Tateyama shinkō to nunobashi daikanjōhōe 立山信仰と布橋大潅頂法会*, 79.

Datsueba, the old demon-woman, who takes off the clothes of the spirits of the dead at the entrance of hell.[25]

The statues of Onbasama were at the centre of a ritual called *omeshigae* お召し替え, that was still performed in 2009.[26] Women of Ashikuraji used to gather in the Ubadō to change the robe (*koromo* 衣) of the statues. They used to divide into small groups and to sew white cotton, in order to make the new robes, to replace them with the old ones.[27]
The women who took part to *nunobashi daikanjōe*, were gathered in the Enmadō, dressed in the attire of the dead and blindfolded. A long white cloth was laid out, from the Enmadō, across the Nunobashi, to the Ubadō. The women, then, crossed the bridge and it was said that the ones with heavy load of faults, would fall into the river below, where snakes and demons awaited them.

Once they symbolically crossed the Sanzu no kawa, they would enter the world of the dead, where they met Datsueba in the Ubadō. The women would enter the building in pitch darkness, thus experiencing the sadness and desolation of hell. Yet, at a certain moment, the huge doors on the backside of the Ubadō would suddenly be wide open. Women would be bathed in light and would see Tateyama right in front of them, symbolically experiencing rebirth in the Pure Land. Thus, through *nunobashi daikanjōe*, women, who were not allowed to access the mountain, could have an experience that could be

[25] See SEIDEL 1996-97. "Descente aux Enfers et Rédemption des Femmes Dans le Bouddhisme Populaire Japonais. Le pélegrinage du Mount Tateyama."
[26] I assisted to the Onbasama *omeshigae* on the 13th of March 2009. Since the Ubadō was destroyed during the Meiji period (see below), the ritual is now performed on the Enmadō, where also extant statues of Onbasama are conserved, together with copies produced by the Museum of Tateyama. On the extant statues of Onbasama, see TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN 1991a. *Jōsetsu tenji sōgō kaisetsu 常設展示総合解説* and TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN.
[27] The original meaning of this ritual is still uncertain. See FUKUE 2006. *Tateyama shinkō to nunobashi daikanjōhōe 立山信仰と布橋大潅頂法会*, 44-79. On the 13th of March 2009, when I took part to the ritual as a spectator, most of the women who performed it, told me that they did it in order to obtain peaceful or healthy life for them, their beloved ones and people of the village. This shows that, presently, the ritual has become a part of research for obtainment of earthly benefits (*gense riyaku* 現世利益), that links most of ritual and religious practice in contemporary Japan, especially in the context of "traditional" religions (*dentō shūkyō* 伝統宗教). On the concept of *gense riyaku*, see FORMANEK (ed.) 2004. *Practicing the Afterlife. Perspectives from Japan*; MIYAMOTO 2003. *Shomin shinkō to gense riyaku 庶民信仰と現世利益*; READER 1991. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*; READER (ed.) 1998. *Practically Religious, Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* .

assimilated to the one their male counterparts had during *zenjō*, the ritual ascent on the mountain.[28]

This ritual, along with pilgrimages to Tateyama, provided one of the major attractions for people who visited the place. As Formanek points out:

> In the Bakumatsu period around 6,000 are said to have climbed the mountain yearly […]. In addition to these one must count the women participating in the *nunobashi kanjō*, whose number is said not to have fallen below the mark of 3,000 even in years of bad harvest. Nonetheless the number of visitors of the site will not have surpassed 10,000 per year, not very impressive when compared to the numbers visiting Ise. But, within the cluster of smaller-sized pilgrimage centers, that, in the latter half of the Edo period, was able to attract at least as many people as the Ise Shrine, the Tateyama does not occupy such a bad position. Of course it ranks behind those easily accessible […], or those with the advantage of being on the route to Ise or at least within easy reach of it […]. However, pilgrimage to and ritual ascent of holy mountains (*reizan*), although the times of the year during which one could visit them were rather limited due to their altitudes, accounted also for a good part of the overall mobility, altogether attracting 100,000 to 150,000 persons a year. Within this group of *reizan*, approximately the same numbers as for the Tateyama hold true for better-known places such as the Fuji-san or the *Dewa sanzan*.[29]

As I mentioned before, the pilgrimage to Tateyama reached its afflux peak was the latter half of the Edo period, correspondently to the period of diversification of tourist attractions.[30] A document of 1801 shows that the *shukubō* in Ashikuraji had raised from six to thirty-three around the middle of the eighteenth century, when also mountaineering

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[28] Ibid..

[29] FORMANEK 1998. "Pilgrimage in the Edo Period. Forerunner of Modern Domestic Tourism? The Example of the Pilgrimage to Mount Tateyama." In *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*, 172-173.

[30] About pilgrimages, tourism and touristic attractions in early-modern and modern Japan, see ARAMATA 1988. *Ano yo no yūenchi he. Tateyama jigoku meguri to nyonin ōjō あの世の遊園地へ・立山地獄めぐりと女人往生*; BLACKER 1984. "The Religious Traveler of the Edo Period."; FORMANEK 1998. "Pilgrimage in the Edo Period. Forerunner of Modern Domestic Tourism? The Example of the Pilgrimage to Mount Tateyama." In *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*; GRABURN 1983. *To Pray, Pay and Play. The Cultural Structure of Japanese Domestic Tourism*; KIMBROUGH 2006. "Tourists in Paradise. Writing the Pure Land in Medieval Japanese Fiction."; LAFLEUR 1979. "Points of Departure. Comments of Religious Pilgrimage in Sri Lanka and Japan."; READER 1987b. "From Ascetism to the Package Tour. The Pilgrim's Progress in Japan."; VAPORIS 1995. "Breaking Barriers. Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan." In *Japanese Civilization in the Modern World IX. Tourism*

pilgrimages in general reached a peak.[31] This lasted up to the Meiji period when, according to *shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離 and *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈, practitioners of the cult of Tateyama were persecuted and every building and statue connected to it was destroyed.

4.2.3 Modernization and Decline of the Cult of Tateyama

At the beginning of the Meiji period, in 1868, the Tateyama was open to the public and the restriction that prohibited women to access the mountain was gradually cancelled in all the surrounding mountains. The Ubadō was destroyed and so were the Nunobashi and all the buildings. The only building connected to the cult of Tateyama that existed in 2009, the Enmadō was rebuilt in 1928, the Nunobashi in 1970.[32]

Nevertheless, Tateyama did not stop to be an attraction: it became renown for alpinism, as the "Mecca of alpinists" (*arupinisuto no mekka* アルピニストのメッカ), reaching its peak in the Taishō period. People of Ashikuraji, who had lost their religious status, began to work as mountain guides, or in huts on the mountain. Some of them also became famous alpinists at a national level, since they were the first to explore mountain areas in the Meiji period, in order to open new routes.[33] Moreover, it still attracted tourists who visited its hell valley and its historic-religious monuments.

However, according to the development of transports, Ashikuraji lost his strategic position as privileged access to the mountain: first it was bypassed by the railway, completed in 1935, then, from 1955, bus services developed from Toyama directly to Tateyama. Moreover, during the sixties, the street that used to stop at Ashikuraji was asphalted and continued up to the neighbouring Tateyama-chō. This was the definitive cause of the economic decline of the village.

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[31] See FORMANEK 1998. "Pilgrimage in the Edo Period. Forerunner of Modern Domestic Tourism? The Example of the Pilgrimage to Mount Tateyama." In *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*, 173. On documentary sources, see TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN 1991a. *Jōsetsu tenji sōgō kaisetsu 常設展示総合解説*, 58.

[32] See TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN.

[33] On alpinism and Ashikuraji, see TAKAZAWA 2001. *Ashikuraji monogatari. Kindai tozan wo koeta Tateyama gaidotachi 芦峅寺ものがたり―近代登山を支えた立山ガイドたち*; TATEYAMACHŌ (ed.) 2001a. *Tateyama-chō shi. Gekan 立山町史・下巻*; TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN 2005. *Sangaku katsusha 山嶽活寫.*

According to urbanization, people of Ashikuraji started to abandon the previous mainly agriculture-based economy and life-style, being employed in companies in Toyama, or in other cities. People who found a job in Toyama, especially males, started to commute to the city. Yet, because of the distance and – even more importantly – of the hardships of the Winter and of the snow, that make the road extremely slippery and dangerous, most of them decided to leave the city.

月	日	行事
１月	１日	初詣
３月	１３日	お召替え
	１４日	涅槃だんご作り
	１５日	だんごまき
	２１日	先祖供養・数珠繰り
	２２日	先祖供養・還暦祝い
７月	２６日	雄山神社大祭
	２７日	
８月	３日	清流のつどい
	１４日	盆踊り大会
９月	１４日	運動会
	２８日	布橋灌頂会
１１月	３日	地区文化祭

Tab. 4: Annual Cycle of rituals in Ashikuraji. From TATEYAMACHŌ ASHIKURAJI

The *shukubō* were gradually abandoned and they became less and less – from the thirty-three of the late Edo period, only three were extant in 2009 – since they had lost their religious role and could no longer be used as inns, because of the lack of visitors, who directly went to the mountain from the city, or stayed in Tateyama-*chō*, that had become the last outpost before entering the mountain. Most of the families that used to run them left the village, looking for better fortune in Toyama.[34]

[34] See TATEYAMACHŌ KYOIKU IINKAI (ed.) 2001b. *Tateyama-chōshi. Jōkan 立山町史・上巻*, 879-883; TATEYAMACHŌ KYOIKU IINKAI (ed.) 2001a. *Tateyama-chōshi. Gekan 立山町史・下巻*, 752-776.

Nevertheless the remaining people, especially the women of the village, continued to perform rituals at the Enmadō. Although the *nunobashi kanjōe* disappeared, the Onbasama *no omeshigae* and other rituals were still existing in 2009 and were the object of studies and surveys carried out by the researchers of the Museum of Tateyama.

4.2 The Museum of Tateyama

The Prefectural Museum of Tateyama was open in 1992 at Ashikuraji.[35] It was built "as a model for new museums" (*shinhakubutsukan no moderu toshite* 新博物館のモデルとして)[36] and it actually presented various original features. The Museum was divided into three main buildings: the "Exposition Hall" (Tenjikan 展示館), the Yōbōkan 遙望館 (literally the "Hall of Much Desire") and the Mandara Park (Mandara yūen 曼荼羅遊苑).

4.2.1 Tenjikan

The Exposition Hall, the bluish building I saw as I arrived in Ashikuraji, was based on a concept that was stated on the museum's webpage:

> The Exposition Hall is the main structure of the Museum of Tateyama. In the Permanent Exposition, the relationship between humans and nature is displayed, by the use of sources such as original objects, reproductions, models and pictures, contextualized within the connections among culture, history and nature of Tateyama.[37]

The exposition was not only based on a variety of relics and reproduction. There was also a wide display of technology and interactivity in every part of it: explanatory films and *anime*, videos, sounds, moving objects, could be activated by visitors by simply pressing a button. It was structured into three floors, each one featuring different roles. The museum was projected to be visited starting from the top, therefore visitors who entered, paid the ticket just close the door and they were guided up to the stairs, directly to the third floor.

[35] See TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN.
[36] KITANIPPON SHINBUN 6/12/1985. There was a wide information campaign on the ideation, planning and progress of the Museum. Among others, information can be found in KITANIPPON SHINBUN 9/8/1984; 3/31/1984;; 2/1/1986; 3/1/1986; TOYAMA SHINBUN 2/1/1986; YOMIURI SHINBUN 2/1/1986; 5/7/1986.
[37] TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN.

Fig. 36: Tenjikan

The second floor displayed the "Stage of the Cult of Tateyama" (Tateyama *shinkō no butai* 立山信仰の舞台), an exposition mainly about the nature and religious geography of the massif. The exposition focused on the relationship between nature and the Tateyama cult, showing how the various geographical changes, including a devastating earthquake that caused landslides and a flooding that completely changed the morphology of the Tateyama caldera in 1858. It also linked the geography of the mountain to the Tateyama *mandara*, displaying the main features (plants, mineral, gasses) of the places that used to be linked to the afterlife.

The exposition at the first floor, called "World of the Cult of Tateyama" (Tateyama *shinkō no sekai* 立山信仰の世界), focused on representations and explanations of the Tateyama *mandara*, as well as on ritual practices connected to the cult. There were displayed not only original Tateyama *mandara*, but also religious pilgrim robes, paraphernalia, ritual and everyday life objects, as well as statues connected to the cult, such as the ones of Onbasama. A part of the floor was occupied by a reproduction model of the *nunobashi kanjōe*.

At the ground floor, also called "Projectation Exposition Hall" (*kikaku tenjishitsu* 企画展示室), there was the ticket office, a small shop where one could purchase not only the obvious souvenirs of the Museum (from T-shirts and key rings, to reproductions of a Tateyama *mandara*), but also scholarly books on the cult of Tateyama and Ashikuraji, mainly produced by the researchers of the museum itself.

4.2.2 Yōbōkan

The "Hall of Much Desire" was built in the place were, during the Edo period, the Ubadō used to be. As the Tateyama Museum website explains, it works as "Experiential-images hall" (*taiken kei eizō hōru* 体験型映像ホール). This basically meant two things: that in the Yōbōkan two films are projected (three times a day) and that the hall itself provided the way to experience what visitors had seen on screen.

The technical realization of the screenings was interesting itself. The films were projected on three neighbouring screens, that were sometimes used as a single wide screen, sometimes, they were independent. Therefore, for instance, when the shot followed the flight of an arrow, a similar background was displayed on the three screens, but the arrow passed through the three, from left to right.

Conversely, when they were used independently, they showed different scenes. Often the screen on the left and the one on the right had the same display, whereas the central one was different. In most of the cases, the main scene was displayed in the centre, but sometimes also this pattern varied.

Both of the films were produced in 1991. The first to be screened, called *Shin-Tateyama mandara ezu* 新立山曼荼羅絵図, was a twenty-minutes long film, that was divided into two main parts. The first part consisted in an animated representation of local legends linked to the cult of Tateyama. Starting from the legend of the opening of the mountain, the narrative, guided by an explaining voice, represented the *nunobashi kanjōe* and proceeded through the whole mountain, telling the story of every single place that was pictured in early-modern Tateyama *mandara*. This part ended with the Tateyama hell, depicted with

images that recalled pretty much the representations of *Jigoku zōshi*,[38]. The animation was sometimes mixed with actual actors and special effect, with a general dark effect. The drawings sometimes reminded me of "The Wall" by Pink Floyd, sometimes, when the atmosphere was less gloomy, the pictures were pretty similar to of the Edo period paintings.

Fig. 37: Yōbōkan, near the graveyard

The second part of the film mixed up live actors, often dressed in costumes, with computer graphics and stop-motion techniques, in an extremely dark and creepy result.[39] It represented the story of the spirit of a dead man, who was brought in front of Enma to be judge. Put in front of the mirror of karma by a giant demon, who literally lifted him up with two fingers, the spirit saw the faults he committed while he was alive: stealing, homicide and sexual harassment (possibly rape). The spirit pretended not to remember, thus committing also the lying fault and, consequently, having his tongue pulled away by a demon, under Enma's direct order. Subsequently, the judge of the dead condemned the spirit to fall into a "hell in which even demons, being scared, do not go" and the spirit was dropped into a deep and dark hole.

[38] See Chapter 1.
[39] I assisted the screenings a number of times. Everytime a child was in the hall, he/she started to cry, or wanted to go out.

The following scene was introduced by "Japan, 199□" (199□年=日本) and the spirit was shown among shabby poor and monstrous people, while cars were running on a background, shining with red and orange electric lights. The narrating voice was sometimes covered by the noises of engines and hooting horns, while explaining that, one hundred years after the Tateyama *mandara* had disappeared, people have lost their way to salvation. The spirit looked in despair.

The narration proceeded in the beginning of the twenty-first century, but the spectator is not allowed to understand the location: the characters "○○, 200□" (200□年=○○) introduced a hyper-technologic post-industrial city, with weird flying machines and monsters, such as winged monkfishes and centaurs. Suddenly a group of human-like creatures, dressed in "Mad Max"- style dirty robes start playing a mixture of some acid jazz and pop-rock, based on keyboards, guitar and a tenor sax, that sounded very eighties to me. While the weird creatures were playing and dancing on the background, a lump and fat man, with bluish face, completely covered by a white robe and with a sort of turban on his head, kept on floating on the front. The narrating voice explained that humans had destroyed nature and were suffering, confined in prisons of concrete. The camera entered a building and passed through a dark corridor, in which stop-motion animated monsters and old humans were sitting, and passed through what that looked like dingy hospital room, with dirty and shabby beds, on which bandaged skinny bodies were shivering.

The narrative about degradation of humans and nature through pollution, revolts and wars continued, ending up in 20△□, in an unknown location (20△□=○○), where a metallic semi-sphere, from which several dragon-heads come out, spitting fire all around, and two old grey men fighting each other on a monstrous and desolated deadly grey land, with skulls and bodies coming out from the ground. The two old men beat each other, they became stone, they melted with the ground and, eventually, with each other.

The last shot showed the spirit that was thrown into this terrible hell in the beginning, climbing a cliff, in the front, on a flaming background made of stones, rifts and scanty huge buildings. He cried in despair, invoking the pity of Amida. He was saved by the Buddha and taken to the Pure Land, where the narration ended.

The second film, Tateyama 1990, was a naturalistic documentary on the changes of the mountain, its vegetation and animals, through the whole year 1990. As it ended, the three screens clicked and slowly rose up, showing a wide window, from which we could see the Tateyama, reviving the experience that women entering the Ubadō should have had, at the end of the *nunobashi kanjōe*.

4.2.3 Mandara Yūen

The Mandara Yūen was placed five minutes walking from the Yōbōkan, in the space that, during the Edo period, was considered to be the world of the dead. Visitors had to go through a small park to reach the ticket office at the entrance.

> The Mandara Yūen is a structure that focuses on the world of the Tateyama *mandara* that is passed on in Tateyama. It is represented in three-dimensions, to be experienced through the five senses [sight, hearing, smell, touch and void (*kū*空)]. […] It is composed by four areas: the World of the Earth (*chikai*地界), the Path of the Sun (*yō no michi*陽の道), the World of Heavens (*tenkai*天界) and the Path of Darkness (*kurayami no michi*闇の道).[40]

The Mandara Yūen was, in fact, a sort of theme park, in which the Tateyama *mandara* was actualized in a "contemporary way" (*gendaitekini* 現代的に).[41] Visitors could experience hell by entering a concrete building with red light and darkness, hearing the screams of the damned, as they walked through the path, or walking among rusted metal pointed columns, in a post-industrial landscape. They could smell the stink of *gaki*, by inserting the head in some holes, or hear the sounds of nature and animals, by using enormous flower-shaped funnels placed in the middle of a lawn, or visiting the heavens, a huge underground building in which contemporary artworks were placed. Just before the entrance of Heaven, a stylized representations of Tateyama welcomed the visitors who arrived from the path that connected all the other realms. At the end of the World of Heavens, visitors went out through a uterine tunnel, in a path that re-produced a symbolical rebirth.[42]

[40] TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN. As researchers of the Musuem told me, the choice of "void" as a sense, was a clear reference to Buddhist thought, as well as a way to convey a sense of the atmosphere of the Tateyama *mandara*.
[41] See Ibid.
[42] Information can be found in TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN and in the pamphlet of Mandara Yūen (see Fig. 6)

Fig. 38: A particular of hell in Mandara Yuen. From TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN

The Mandara Park was built according to a project by a famous architect from Tokyo, whose pseudonym was Rokkaku Onitake 六角鬼丈 and constituted one of the major discussion points about these contemporary-styled representations of Tateyama mandara in Ashikuraji.

Fig. 39: Mandara Yūen guide pamphlet, illustrating the map of the whole park, as well as some of the experiences visitors can enjoy by walking through the three worlds

4.3 Symbolic Denial

As I visited the museum for the first time, I was extremely excited: it was the first place in which I could actually see some contemporary representations and re-elaboration of the whole symbolic complex of hell. All the *Blade Runner*-like post-industrial and post-apocalyptic atmosphere was extremely interesting and its link to environmental pollution, destruction of nature and wars was intriguing. Those narratives provided new landscapes for narratives about hell and the afterlife and, interestingly enough, death was nearly not mentioned. Indeed afterlife, particularly hell, was actualized as a representation of contemporary society rather than an otherworld and, since a proper reference to where they were supposed to be was missing or deliberately hidden, like in the case of *Shin-Tateyama mandara ezu*, it was not necessarily only Japanese society to be problematized. It was the whole post-industrial and post-capitalist world.

Yet, as I firstly talked about the museum with the owner of the *ryokan* where I stayed, I was surprised not to hear any enthusiastic comment about it:

> The film still explains the history of the cult of Tateyama, but the Mandara Yūen has got nothing to deal with the cult of Tateyama in Ashikuraji, does it? (Woman, 62)

At first, I thought the woman might have been particularly strict about the museum, but, as the days of my stay in Ashikuraji went by and I met more and more locals, I realized that the comments of most of them did were not different from the one of the *ryokan*'s woman, to a certain extent:

> The Yōbōkan… Well, they're images, so they might be fine. But I don't really like the Mandara Yūen. (Man, 45)

> What's that got to do with the cult of Tateyama? (Man, 60)

> Is it that one the cult of Teteyama we want to pass to the next generations? (Man, 60)

> I think it's interesting… It's interesting, but there's something that doesn't fit… It's too difficult. (Woman, 30)

Actually, most of the people living in Ashikuraji expressed negative comments on the museum, especially on the Mandara Yūen, often defining it "difficult" (*muzukashii* 難しい), "too specialistic" (*senmon sugiru* 専門過ぎる), or even "not related with the cult of Tateyama at all" (*Tateyama shinkō to kankei ga nai* 立山信仰と関係がない). Only few people told me they would find it "interesting" (*omoshiroi* 面白い), or "relaxing" (*kokoro ga ochitsuku* 心が落ち着く). In other words, most of the people from Ashikuraji felt some difference between their own representation of the cult of Tateyama and how it was re-produced by the Mandara Yūen and the Yōbōkan.

The denial of the two structures was also expressed in the very map of the village in Ashikuraji's website,[43] in which, whereas the Exposition Hall was represented, there was no trace of the two buildings (see Fig.7).

Actually, as I mentioned before, some rituals connected to the cult of Tateyama continued in 2009, when I visited Ashikuraji for the first time. Most of them, with the exception of

[43] See TATEYAMACHŌ ASHIKURAJI.

the village's *matsuri* and *obon*, were carried out by the women, organized into the "Women association" (*fujinkai* 婦人会). This contributed to the construction of narratives about a "traditional" cult of Tateyama that was passed from generation to generation among people in Ashikuraji and that did not match with the representations provided with the museum.

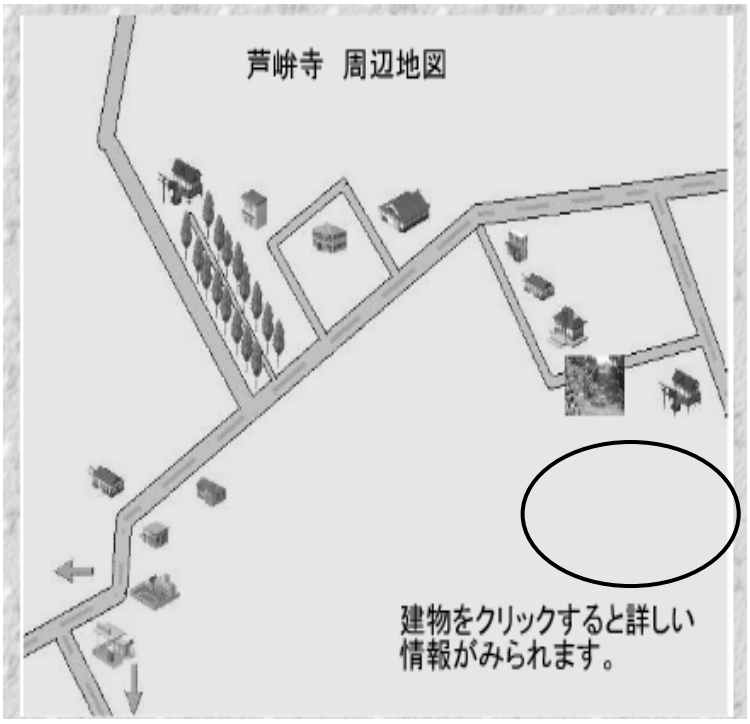

Fig. 40: Map of Ashikuraji, from TATEYAMACHŌ ASHIKURAJI. The circle indicates the area in which the Yōbōkan and the Mandara Yūen were supposed to be

4.3.1 Enjoy the Afterlife

The Mandara Yūen and the film *Shin-Tateyama mandara ezu* provided a landscape and narratives connected to the Tateyama *mandara* that had not only a didactic purpose, but, by letting visitors "experience the Tateyama *mandara*",[44] were also linked to entertainment, that was actually a key feature of the cult of Tateyama during the Edo period as well.[45]

[44] See TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN

[45] Some scholars tried to interpret the Tateyama *mandara* and the mountain itself as ancestors of contemporary theme parks, by contextualizing the cult of the mountain in the general trend of leisure linked to religious practices during the Edo period. See, for instance ARAMATA 1988. *Ano yo no yūenchi he. Tateyama jigoku meguri to nyonin ōjō あの世の遊園地へ・立山地獄めぐりと女人往生*; FORMANEK 1998. "Pilgrimage in the Edo Period. Forerunner of Modern Domestic Tourism? The Example of the Pilgrimage to Mount Tateyama." In *The Culture of Japan as Seen through Its Leisure*; GRABURN 1983. *To Pray, Pay and Play. The Cultural Structure of Japanese Domestic Tourism*; TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA

In particular the Mandara Yūen was basically a theme park based on the Tateyama *mandara*. Indeed, most of the locals I interviewed not only did not recognize as "proper" the representations of the cult of Tateyama provided by the Mandara Yūen, but also they used expressions like "It might be good for children", or "children may even have fun, but it's got nothing to do with the cult of Tateyama".

Nevertheless the Mandara Yūen, as well as the Museum of Tateyama as a whole was extremely successful, at least for the first years after their foundation.[46] I interviewed some visitors during my various stay in Ashikuraji and I gathered only positive comments, such as:

> This place is very interesting: letting people experience hell and heaven is really a good idea. (Man, 45)

> It's kind of weird, but it's fun. I don't really think that, if there are heavean and hell, they are like this, but it's a nice place. (Woman, 34)

> I liked particularly the part of heaven. It felt kind of peaceful (*kokoro ga ochitsuita* 心が落ち着いた). (Woman, 42)

Also the comments about the park I could find on the internet were positive for the most part:

> I liked it so much that, if I lived nearby, I would buy a yearly pass (actually, there is obviously nothing like this) and would visit it everyday. Well, there might even be people who say something like "the state and religion should be separated". I don't even know whether that discussion actually occurred or not, but the Toyama Prefecture, that managed to build a structure with hell and heaven, is GREAT![47]

HAKUBUTSUKAN 2001. *Jigoku yūran. Jigoku zōshi kara Tateyama mandara made* 地獄遊覧 地獄草紙から立山曼荼羅まで

[46] I will provide more precise data on the afflux of visitors in the museum below. So far, suffice it to say that the Museum of Tateyama attracted about twenty thousand people a month for the first two years.

[47] MANDARA YŪEN/TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMACHŌ

> Well, there were quite a few pieces that were difficult to understand, but it was pretty interesting as a pilgrimage through a contemporary hell.[48]

The positive comments about the Mandara Yūen show that the conflict was mostly confined within the village. In fact, although the artistic and architectural value of the Mandara Yūen was recognized by "outsiders", it wasn't by villagers, no matter what their authority was:

> In the beginning, when the Mandara Yūen was built, famous architects came to see it from Tokyo University. They were quite a lot. Especially once… The came and visit the Mandara Yūen… The building… Franky speaking, I thought "Why? *That* thing?" (Woman, 45)

In other words, in order to understand the conflict, it is necessary to analyze the relationship between narratives and significations provided by the park and the film, and those that were shared and negotiated in the village.

In fact, as I mentioned above, narratives about the Tateyama *mandara* provided by the Mandara Yūen and the film, referred to a post-industrial ideoscape, that was different from the basically rural model to which the cult of Tateyama was related by the locals. This happened through processes of representations and appropriation, that have been displayed by studies on theme parks in Japan.[49] However, these studies focused on globalization and representations of "the other", defined according to their national identity.[50] The case of Tateyama was different: here representation and re-appropriation occurred on a translocal level, rather than a transnational one.

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[48] MANJIMARU RYŪ.

[49] On theme parks in Japan, see ALLEN (ed.) 2006. *Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan*; ARAMATA 1988. *Ano yo no yūenchi he. Tateyama jigoku meguri to nyonin ōjō あの世の遊園地へ・立山地獄めぐりと女人往生*; BENEDICT 1983. *The Anthropology of World Fairs*; HENDRY 2000. "Foreign Country Theme Parks: A New Theme or an Old Japanese Pattern?"; HENDRY 2001. ""Who is Representing Whom? Gardens, Theme Parks and the Anthropologist in Japan"." In *After Writing Culture. Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology*; RAZ 2002. "Japan at Play in TDL (Tokyo Disneyland). The dialectics of *asobi* and *rejā*." In *Japan at Play. The Ludic and the Logic of Power*; TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN 2001. *Jigoku yūran. Jigoku zōshi kara Tateyama mandara made 地獄遊覧 地獄草紙から立山曼荼羅まで*; TREAT 1996. *Contemporary Japan and popular culture*

[50] See, for instance HENDRY 2000. "Foreign Country Theme Parks: A New Theme or an Old Japanese Pattern?"; HENDRY 2001. ""Who is Representing Whom? Gardens, Theme Parks and the Anthropologist in Japan"." In *After Writing Culture. Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology*.

Narratives of the Tateyama *mandara* were re-elaborated and (re-)produced by Rokkaku, an architect from Tokyo. This produced what Ivy calls a "displacement of meaning",[51] that, in turn, created new representations, based on an appropriation through differently localized contexts and ideoscapes. This was very similar to the cases taken into consideration by the studies about theme parks, but on a translocal level. Yet, the particularity of the case of Mandara Yūen is that the re-elaborated narratives were re-proposed in the original place, in a process that I would define "re-placement of meaning".[52]

The newly elaborated narratives could not be signified as linked to the cult of Tateyama mandara by the locals, since they were based on an ideoscape that was far too different from their own. This caused "disjuncture and difference"[53] between the two ideoscapes, with the consequent conflict.

This was explained also by one more element my informants pointed out and that showed that the difference was not confined to signification of narratives of the cult of Tateyama, but were deeply related to affiliation and belonging to one place or another. In fact most of my informants pointed out the fact that Rokkaku, the architect who projected the Mandara Yuen, was not from Ashikuraji:

> "The Mandara Yūen was built by a man from Tokyo. He could not understand what the real cult of Tateyama is." (Woman, 62)

In other words, people who rejected the contemporary-style representations of the Tateyama cult, could not accept them as "real". They were not "real" because they were different from the "traditional" ones that could be understood only by people from the village, because they historically belonged to it.

The signification of the representations of religious symbolism related to the cult of Tateyama, thus, implied strong relationship to the identity of the "community" of

[51] See IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. I carried out an analysis of some of the processes of displacement of meaning in the previous chapters.
[52] I intend the expression "re-placement", both in the sense of "placed again" or "newly placed", and in the sense of "substitution", since these narratives had a fundamental didactic purpose.
[53] See APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*

Ashikuraji, that was legitimized by its "history" and "tradition", as well as of the ones of the place. Therefore, in order to understand how the meaning of the cult of Tateyama was constructed, I started to investigate what "being a person of the village" meant in 2009.

4.4 People in Ashikuraji

Differently from what I analyzed in Rokuhara, in Kyoto,[54] the case of Ashikuraji showed a group of people – namely inhabitants of the village – that configured and identified themselves as a "community" (*komyuniti* コミュニティ) and that was recognized as such, both geographically and administratively.

As I showed in the case of Rokuhara, people had problems in identifying themselves as such, because of the high number of "outsiders" that lived in the area, because of the cheap prices of housing. Moreover, people in Rokuhara rejected their history, but they were associated to it by other people in Kyoto, thus being identified by outsider as a particular group.

Conversely, most of the people in Ashikuraji were well aware both of their own role within the group, and of the one of the group itself. Yet, as several studies in anthropology and related disciplined have shown, identity is a contested, essentially labile and political concept.[55] Moreover, as Cohen points out:

> […] the community itself and everything within it, conceptual as well as material, has a symbolic dimension, […] that […] does not exist as some kind of consensus or sentiment. Rather, it exists as something for people "to think with". The symbols of community are mental constructs: they provide people with the means to make meaning. In so doing, they also provide them with means to express the particular meanings which the community has for them.[56]

[54] See Chapter 2.
[55] See, for instance AMSELLE 1999. *Logiques métisses: anthropologie de l'identité en Afrique et ailleurs*; ANDERSON 1983. *Imagined Communities*; ASSMANN 1995. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity."; BEN-ARI 1995. "Contested Identities and Models of Action in Japanese Discourses of Place-Making."; BRUBAKER 2004. *Ethnicity Without Groups*; COHEN (ed.) 1986. *Symbolizing Boundaries*; COHEN 1989. *The Symbolic Construction of Community (Key Ideas)*; COHEN (ed.) 2000. *Signifying Identities. Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*; REMOTTI 1996. *Contro l'identità*.
[56]COHEN 1989. *The Symbolic Construction of Community (Key Ideas)*, 19.

Therefore, according to Cohen, in order to investigate and understand how people configure their "community", it is necessary investigating its boundary.

> […] the boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction. Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished […]. The manner in which they are marked depends entirely upon the specific community in question.[57]

However, although understanding how the boundaries of a "community" are constructed towards the others is definitely central, it is also important to understand the internal processes and social interactions that contribute to create that identity. Namely, it is necessary to investigate the "distribution of culture"[58] within the "community", in order not to have a homogenising view of that particular group.

Ashikuraji was a village with a population of four-hundred and eight people in 2009, constantly suffering of high decreasing and ageing rates (see Tab. 2 and 3).[59] Since the early fifties, in fact, because of the increasing lack of job in the village, due to the urbanization and industrialization that was carried out in the whole country, people of the village started to move to other cities. In case of families with more than one child, only the first-born son used to remain in the family house and continue the main line (*honke* 本家), whereas the others used to move out of the village and create their own family branch (*bunke* 分家).[60]

This provoked a change also in the previous marriage system. Up to the fifties, in fact, marriages among people of the village were the norm. This was also confirmed by the lack of varieties in surnames in Ashikuraji in 2009: the most widespread surname was Saeki 佐

[57] Ibid., 12.
[58] See HANNERZ 1992. *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*; HANNERZ 1996. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*.
[59] TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMACHŌ 2009.
[60] Introductory notions on the Japanese family system can be found in RAVERI 2006 (or. 1984). *Itinerari nel Sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*, in particular 175-183. For more extensive tractation, see OCHIAI 1997. *The Japanese family system in transition: a sociological analysis of family change in postwar Japan*.

伯, followed by Shitaka 志鷹.[61] The five families with different surnames, were outsiders, who moved in the village from other cities in different moments, starting from the seventies.

From the fifties, according to changes in the socio-economic life of the village, that influenced daily life, the rate of people who married outside the village suddenly increased. Yet, since first-born sons used to keep on living in their family houses, their spouses used to move in, according to a marriage praxis that was extremely widespread in Japan and that still is, even though to a lesser extent.[62]

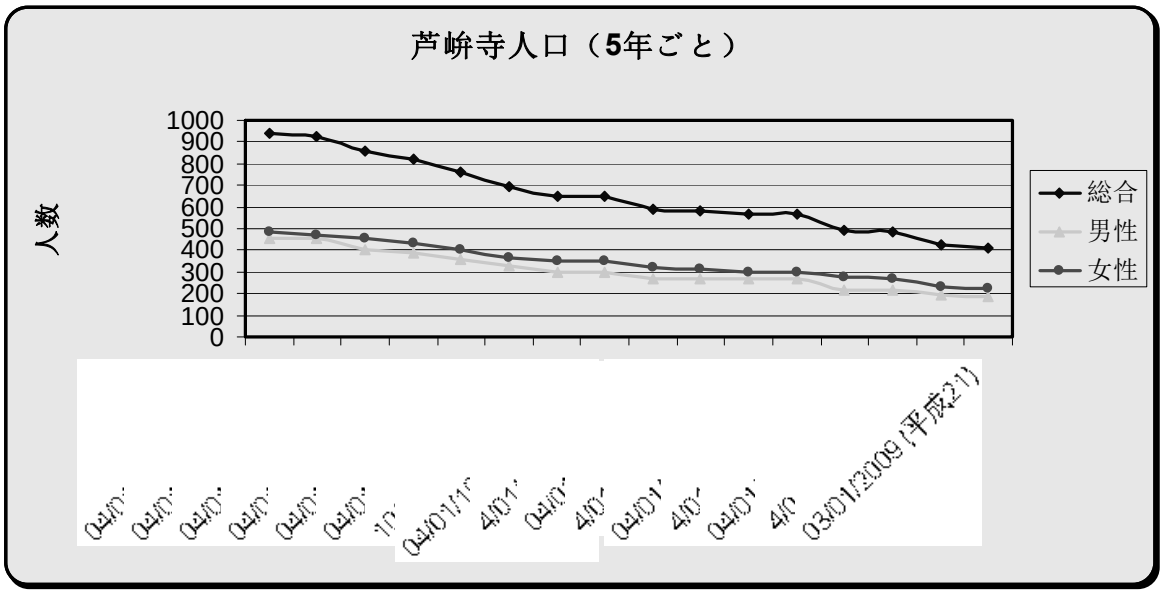
In 2009 the praxis of marring outside the village and to have people enter Ashikuraji was not only considered normal, but it was thought to be necessary for the survival of the village, as most of the people pointed out. I report here the words of the head of Ashikuraji I formally interviewed:

> People in Ashikuraji are quickly decreasing. There are nearly no more young people to help us with the winter job and we even have difficulties in carrying around the *omikoshi* at the *matsuri*. Once people used to stay in the village and to get married within the village. In fact, as you will see, people from Ashikura[63] are all Saeki or Shitaka. People with other surnames are not from Ashikura. Therefore, we actually welcome people who come from outside, also because, since we are all relatives here, we are also worried about genetic issues. (Man, 74)

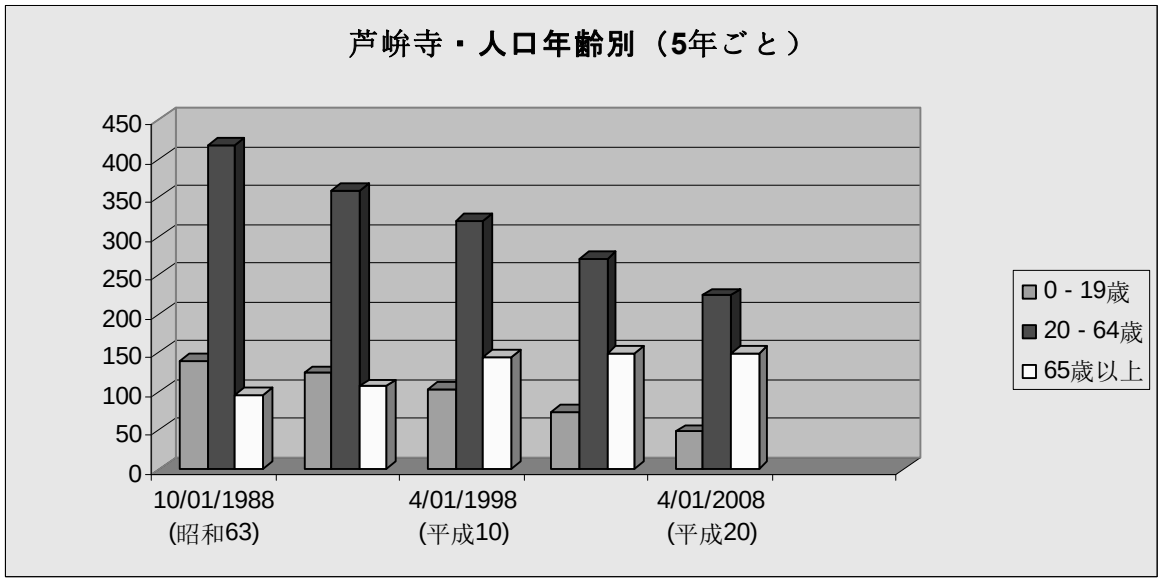
[61] Because of privacy issues, I could not have direct access to data on surnames distribution. Yet, both people in the City Hall and the Head of Ashikuraji approximately estimated an 80% of Saeki and a 20% of Shitaka. During my fieldwork, I met people from both of the groups, yet I could not find any differences in their occupation and census. This showed that, at least as far as I could understand, being a Saeki or a Shitaka had no practical consequences within the life in the village.

[62] On the marriage system in Japan, see HENDRY 1981. *Marriage in changing Japan : community and society*.

[63] Most of the people in Ashikuraji used to call the village with the shorter name “Ashikura”.



Tab. 5: Demographic changes in Ashikuraji. From TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA-CHŌ 2009



Tab. 6: Demographic changes in Ashikuraji, divided into age classes. From TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA-CHŌ 2009

Yet, in spite of what the Head of the village stated, people who were not born in the village, including not only the ones with different surnames, but also the people (mostly women) who married in the village, where called *yoso no mono* 他所の者 or, concisely, *yosomon* 他所もん (literally "outsiders", or "people from the outside") and denounced that they were submitted to people from the village, if not discriminated against by them.

> People who come here are called *yoso no mono* for years. I have been living here for twenty years, and they still call me a *yoso no mono*. There are plenty of things I do not know about the village, but I don't even ask anything. If someone wants to tell me something, then I'll be listening. (Woman, 58)

> When I arrived here, it was very difficult. I'm not only talking about the cold, the snow and the hardships of the Winter. I nearly couldn't speak. I was told so many times by my husband not to talk, because I was not from the village and the others wouldn't accept what I had to say. (Woman, 60)

> It was hard. For example, when I said something at a meeting, say, people pretended not to hear. Then, if someone from the village said the same things, everyone praised him or her, and said it was right. Now it is a little looser, but this still exists, even though I have lived here for nearly forty years. (Woman, 62)

From a formal point of view, there was no actual difference between people who were born in Ashikuraji and the *yoso no mono*, since they had the same rights and duties within the village and there was no discriminative practice against outsiders, including the families with different surnames. They were buried in the village's graveyard, beyond the *nunobashi* and they could take part both in ritual practices and in village meetings.

Yet, most of the "newcomers" used a particular expression, when they were talking about their role in Ashikuraji: "following the way of thinking of the people of the village" (*mura no hito no kangaekata ni shitagau* 村の人の考え方に従う). In other words, they claimed that they had to conform to a homogenising model of "people of Ashikuraji", that was imposed by others. If they did so, most of the problems would be solved.[64]

[64] This situation was so renown in the village that even the researchers of the museum were aware of it. I had long conversations with them not only on their own experiences, but also about "outsiders" living in Ashikuraji. Obviously, since none of the researchers of the museum was born in Ashikuraji, as highly-considered as they may have been by the people of the village, they claimed were treated as "outsiders" as well, like I will analyze below. On the ideology of homogeneity in Japan, see BEFU 2001. *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*; BEFU 2008. "Foreword. Toward Zones of Hybridity in Japan." In *Transcultural Japan. At the Borderlands of Race, Gender and Identity*; BRUBAKER 2004. *Ethnicity Without Groups*; DALE 1986. *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*; HOSHII 1993. *"Minorities" in Japan's pseudo-democracy*; HOWELL 1996. "Ethnicity and Culture in Contemporary Japan."; LIE 2001. *Multiethnic Japan*; WEINER 1997. *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*. On the rhetoric of "insiders" and "outsiders" as "native" and "newcomers", though in urban societies, see ROBERTSON 1987. "A dialectic of native and newcomer: The Kodaira citizens' festival in suburban Tokyo."; ROBERTSON 1992. *Native and newcomer; Making and remaking a Japanese city*.

4.4.1 The Pride of Ashikuraji

> […] a "folk" model […] of community dynamics: […] is a set of assumptions and interpretive schemes that lie at base of mundane or common sense knowledge about communities. These are of great importance because they are the basic points of reference for "what we are" and "what we are to do" through which people's reality is constructed.[65]

In the case of Ashikuraji, inhabitants of the village legitimized themselves as a "community", by sharing some stereotypes, by which they identified themselves against "others". Stereotyped ideas like "Ashikuraji is a rich village", or "People of Ashikuraji speak straightforwardly" were not only recognized by people of the "community", but also by "newcomers", namely both by people living in neighbouring villages and by the *yosomon* living in Ashikuraji.

One more stereotyped identifying element was based on surnames, as most of my informants pointed out:

> Ashikuraji is a difficult village: there are a lot of kinship-based relations (*shinseki ga ōi* 親戚が多い) and very strong relationships among neighbours (*kinjo tukiai ga tsuyoi* 近所付き合いが強い). (Man, 57)

The direct and indirect kinship, based on surnames, provided a first stereotype for the folk model. Yet, social mobility and delocalization of the original local population, that followed the urbanization processes, caused a change in the construction of this concept. In fact, whereas up to the fifty, people who were born in Ashikuraji, used to live, get married and work within the village, the situation gradually changed and people who where born in the village left it, or, in later times, people who were not born in Ashikuraji moved in and where identified as "outsiders". The identification of "person of Ashikuraji" was, thus based on a coincidence of birthplace, family name and place of residence. Lineage, descent

[65] BEN-ARI 1995. "Contested Identities and Models of Action in Japanese Discourses of Place-Making." Since I am borrowing the concept of "folk" model" by this article, I decide to maintain the term as well, although I am aware of the fact that the word "folk" is an extremely problematic one. The author himself proposes alternative terms, borrowed by other studies, such as "key scenario" (see ORTNER 1973. "On Key Symbols."), or "schema" (See D'ANDRADE 1992. "Schema and Motivation." In *Human Motives and Cultural Models*).

and bloodline – subsumed by surnames – were taken as representative of this coincidence and, consequently, of the definition of "person of Ashikuraji".[66]

This could work until the people who came from "outside" did not have children. In fact, on the one hand, children of women married with a man from Ashikuraji, inherit his surname and, how one of my informant told me, the "blood of Ashikuraji". The only two men who married into the village, were married with women from particularly wealthy families and they were "adopted" by the women's families, thus changing their surnames into Saeki (in both of the cases).[67] Therefore, also their children inherited the surname.

The presence of couples of outsiders who lived in the village for a long time used to confirm this model: since their were neither a Saeki, nor a Shitaka family, they were doubtlessly *yosomon*. Yet when they had children, the model was definitely questioned: they were born in Ashikuraji and actually lived there, but their surnames were not local ones.

I was surprised when I found out that those children were not considered *yoso no mono*, since they were born in the village. In other words, although the shared model took bloodline as identity-constructing element, the situation of these children showed that affiliation to the village was actually decided by birthplace and place of stay.

This theory was confirmed by the liminal case of a woman born in Ashikuraji got married with a man from Chigaki 千垣, the neighbouring village, changing her surname and entering his family, living in Chigaki, but keeping a small business activity in Ashikuraji. That woman claimed she had lost her rights to take part in the life of Ashikuraji, especially in rituals.

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[66] Idenitification of people and affiliation to a particular group according to their bloodline is still widespread in Japan. This is based on a ideological discourse (called *nihonjinron* 日本人論, literally "theory on the Japanese") that started during the Edo period and had a major boom after the Meiji restoration, when a "ideology of homogeneity" and theories on Japaneseness were highly promoted as a means of creating a new identity for the nation-state (See BEFU 2001. *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*). On ideological discourses about blood, construction of national identity and Japaneseness, see YOSHINO 1997. "The Discourse on Blood and Racial Identity in Contemporary Japan." In *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*.

[67] In Japan there is the possibility that the man takes the surname of the woman he marries. In order to do so, he has to enter her family, being literally adopted by it. For more information, see HENDRY 1981. *Marriage in changing Japan : community and society*.

The legitimization for people from Ashikuraji was provided by their history and religious "tradition", on which another stereotype was based: the pride of Ashikuraji.

> Ashikuraji has a long history. People in Ashikuraji are very proud to be part of this village, that once was so important for the cult of Tateyama. (Man, 54)

> A person is from Ashikuraji when he/she inherits the important blood of Ashikuraji, that means that he/she's got the blood of our ancestors, who where the people who managed the cult of Tateyama. (Woman, 62)

Like in the cases I analyzed in chapters 2 and 3, the concept of "tradition" was, again, the legitimizing element of construction of identity. Yet, in this case, this concept was assumed as particularly representative when the "community" had to oppose decisions taken by outsiders, but that could have direct consequences in the socio-economic life of the village. This showed not only that they accorded to the cult of Tateyama a positive value as a "traditional" identifying element for the community, but also a conservative trend in the policies of the village, that often led to conflict with surrounding entities that were felt as "outsiders".

4.5 Identity and Conflict

The history of Ashikuraji is scattered with episodes in which people of the village tried to defend their status against external influxes. Back to the Edo period, for instance, people of Ashikuraji had several disputes with people of the neighbouring villages – particularly Iwakuraji – in order to protect their relationship to and their power on and influence on the cult of Tateyama, with the consequent income.[68]

[68] During the second half of the Edo period, for instance, people of Iwakuraji even allied with people in Chigaki, in order to build a new alternative street that reached the Tateyama, bypassing Ashikuraji. People of Ashikuraji responded by sueing the other two villages and claiming that they were the holders of the cult of Tateyama, therefore they could not lose their rights. The case was won by Ashikuraji and the street was not build. On the history of conflict in Ashikuraji, see FUKUE 2006. *Tateyama shinkō to nunobashi daikanjōhōe* *立山信仰と布橋大潅頂法会*; TATEYAMACHŌ KYOIKU IINKAI (ed.) 2001a. *Tateyama-chōshi. Gekan* *立山町史・下巻*; TOYAMA-KEN TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN 1991a. *Jōsetsu tenji sōgō kaisetsu* *常設展示総合解説*

Also in more recent times Ashikuraji opposed the Province every time it started to do anything that could involved the village. When this happened, internal differences were not taken into consideration and people presented themselves as a homogeneous "community", directly descending from the important cult of Tateyama. As Cohen states:

> Just as the "common form" of the symbol aggregates the various meanings assigned to it, so the symbolic repertoire of a community aggregates the individualities and other differences found within the community and provides the means for their expression, interpretation and containment. It provides the range within which individuality is recognizable […]. It continuously transforms the reality of difference into the appearance of similarity with such efficacy that people can still invest the "community" with such ideological integrity. It unites them in their opposition, both to each other, and to those "outside". It thereby constitutes, and gives reality to the community's boundaries.[69]

> […] the greater the pressure on communities to modify their structural forms to comply more with those elsewhere, the more are they inclined to reassert their boundaries *symbolically* by imbuing these modified forms with meaning and significance which belies their appearance.[70]

thus not only using their "folk" model as a legitimization for their own conservation, but also utilizing their identity as a resource itself, in order to negotiate conditions. As Ben Ari points out, in fact:

> Talk about a locality's identity […] involves not only abstract niceties of rights and entitlements, but perhaps no less importantly, entails analyses of the practicalities of politics.[71]

Religious symbolism is not an exception, when it is signified as an identity element of a particular group. In the case of Ashikuraji, this was extremely evident. In fact, between 1936 and 1937, people of the village organized a movement in order to oppose the works for the extension of the railway and the installation of a station in their lands, stating that it would "provoke the decline of the cult of Tateyama, along with enormous changes in the

[69] COHEN 1989. *The Symbolic Construction of Community (Key Ideas)*, 21.
[70] Ibid., 44.
[71] See BEN-ARI 1995. "Contested Identities and Models of Action in Japanese Discourses of Place-Making.", 209.

life of the village".[72] They managed not to have the station built and to have special economic concessions in order to permit the extension of the railway.

One more episode occurred in 1968 and lasted ten years. Since in Ashikuraji Elementary School there were extremely few children, the Board for Education in Tateyama City Hall decided to merge the school together with two other neighbouring villages' schools. The whole community of Ashikuraji opposed the decision and they sued the City Hall. They eventually won the case in 1978[73] and the school was still extant, working and nearly empty in 2009. I asked an employee of the Board for Education at Tateyama City Hall about what happened:

> Since people of Ashikuraji wanted to protect the cult of Tateyama, they claimed they did not want to lose the school. Therefore they sued the City Hall and they won, so we also had to pay them money. […] Actually, pupils in the school are very few nowadays as well and we are still thinking about merging the school with the one of other villages, but, since there's that past story… (Man, 44)

The last conflict between Ashikuraji and what was perceived as an "outsider" happened in 1989 and, considering the fact that the cult of Tateyama was always put forward as the identifying element of Ashikuraji community, was probably the most delicate case. In fact, it regarded the building of the Prefectural Museum of Tateyama.

4.5.1 Ashikuraji and the Museum

According to my informants, both researchers and staff from the museum and people living in the village, there were some issues when Toyama Prefecture decided to build it. Yet, it was very difficult to access information about those problems, since people working in the museum were employed after its construction, therefore they nearly did not know anything precise about it, whereas the locals seemed not to be willing to talk about it.

Yet, I could understand that people of Ashikuraji felt the museum as an "outsider", forcedly placed inside the village. Most of them refused any direct relationship with the museum,

[72] See TATEYAMACHŌ KYOIKU IINKAI (ed.) 2001a. *Tateyama-chōshi. Gekan 立山町史・下巻*, 1085-1094.
[73] TATEYAMACHŌ KYŌIKU IINKAI, 5.

avoiding any kind of meetings and criticizing not only, on a symbolic level, the representations of the cult of Tateyama it provided, as I showed before, but also the attitude of its employees:

> They do whatever they want! (Woman, 60)
>
> They do just like salary men do: they come here, watch the rituals and go away (Woman, 62)
>
> They're just public employees… They should commit more, in order to draw customers! (Man, 45)

It took me some time to understand that the only person who was aware of the issues that arose at the time of the founding of the museum was the director. I asked for an interview and, eventually, I could meet him.[74] The information I report here are based on this interview. Subsequently, as I had understood the matter, I could talk about it with the locals and see their reactions.

Ashikuraji was chosen as location to build the museum because it was recognized to be the place that was mostly representative of the cult of Tateyama, since there are still rituals going on. Yet people of the village opposed this decision, since, according to the director, "they were worried that the cult of Tateyama could be ruined".

The museum, in fact, was not built anew. Before it, in 1972, the so-called Fudoki no oka 風土記の丘 was constructed. It consisted of an ex position hall, in which various sources regarding the cult of Tateyama were displayed, together with a small zoo, the Kamoshika-en カモシカ園, in which visitors could observe the Alpine chamois, characteristic of Tateyama and that is still extant.[75]

Yet, when the Fudoki no oka was built, prefectural researchers and ethnologists gathered in Ashikuraji, in order to find among the private collections of the villagers sources to display

[74] I interviewed the director of the museum on the 1st of May 2009 for the first time. I met him once again on the 4th.
[75] On the Fudoki no Oka, see SAEKI 1972. *Tateyama Fudoki no oka 立山風土記の丘.*

in the exposition. Villagers were not really aware of the value of those sources, so they lent them to the researchers. Yet, some of them disappeared and were never found back.[76] Moreover, the Fudoki no oka was not as successful as it was supposed to be and it attracted an extremely low number of visitors.

Therefore, as the Prefecture decided the building of the museum, people of Ashikuraji – who had understand the value of their objects – were worried not only for the cult of Tateyama, but also because they did not want to repeat the bad experience they had with Fudoki no oka.

Nevertheless, the director managed to convince the locals, by telling them that, differently from what they thought, the museum would be a very good way to promote the cult of Tateyama and to show its importance to other people. Moreover, he maintained that the museum would provide the funding to conserve the precious sources related to the cult of Tateyama that, otherwise, would not be available, thus exposing to corruption what people of the village mostly cared of.

People of the village accepted and, consequently, the museum was built and open in 1992. Yet, in front of an outstanding number of visitors in the first two years – about twenty-thousand people a month in the first two years – people visiting the museum constantly decreased, until eighteen-thousand visitors in the whole 2008. This was partly due to the fact that the museum did not receive anymore governmental funding after it was built, thus being forced to maintain the same exposition and films as it had at the time of its first opening.

This is only one of the elements that contribute to the problematic relationship between people of Ashikuraji and the museum. Besides this, the situation is complicated by the fact that the museum did not offer any proper job to the people of the village. Actually, eleven people from Ashikuraji were employed in the museum, but all with part-time job and with low-level duties, such as cleanings or staff at the ticket offices. Moreover, since the museum is prefectural, the village had no advantage from the incomes of the museum.

[76] See KITANIPPON SHINBUN 9/8/1984.

This was perceived by most of the locals as a serious problem, because of the fact that people could not find a job in the village and, therefore, they were forced to leave, contributing to depopulation. Furthermore, it conveyed a sensation of "being used", since, as one of my informants pointed out:

> We gave them our important sources and they did not give us anything back. (Woman, 73)

Yet, interestingly enough, the museum played a major role in the construction of the very "importance" of those sources.

4.6 Constructing the Cult of Tateyama

Three main actors contributed to the signification of the cult of Tateyama in Ashikuraji: the media, the museum and, obviously, people of the village. The role of these three actors merged in a continuous feedback that provided the cult of Tateyama, in particular those rituals that were still performed in the Enmadō, with a value of "tradition" and some sort of aura of "cultural heritage" that legitimized the conservative and essentially closed attitude of the people of Ashikuraji.

The construction of religious signification in the media has been already widely studied, especially in Japan[77] and I provided an analysis in chapter 2. Also in the case of Ashikuraji, as in the one of Osorezan, the mediatic narrative about the cult of Tateyama was connected to narratives about the *furusato* 故里, nostalgia and of "continuing tradition".[78]

[77] See, for instance, DORMAN 2007. "Editors Introduction: Projections and Representations of Religion in Japanese Media."; IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*; MARTINEZ 1990. "Tourism and the Ama: The search for a real Japan." In *Unwrapping Japan*; READER 2006. *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning And Practice in Shikoku*; READER 2007. "Positively Promoting Pilgrimage. Media Representations of Pilgrimage in Japan."

[78] On nostalgia and the *furusato*, see AMBROS 2009. "Researching Place, Emplacing the Researcher. Reflections on the Making of a Documentary on a Pilgrimage Confraternity."; BEN-ARI 1995. "Contested Identities and Models of Action in Japanese Discourses of Place-Making."; IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*; MARTINEZ 1990. "Tourism and the Ama: The search for a real Japan." In *Unwrapping Japan*; READER 1987a. "Back to the future: Images of nostalgia and renewal in a Japanese religious context."; ROBERTSON 1987. "A dialectic of native and newcomer: The Kodaira citizens' festival in suburban Tokyo." The idea of analyzing religious symbolism and practices in rural Japan as they were still continuing and unchanging is also linked to narratives of *furusato*, as well as of construction of national identity and *nihonjinron*. This attitude in analyzing religious practices as they were the relics of an "original" Japan is still common in ethnological studies carried out by Japanese scholars, in Journalism and the media. In the case of Ashikuraji, see for instance HIRONO 1995. *Tateyama shinkō no sato* 立山信仰の里;

On the 13th of March 2009 I was in the Enmadō in early morning, assisting the *Onbasama no onmeshigae*. The women of the village had already gathered and divided into four groups, while a woman – whose name was Saeki T.-san – organized them and distributed the pieces of white cloth, to have them sued together by the groups and prepare the new robes for the statues of Onbasama on the altar, right before the huge statues of Enma and his two attendants.

Among the cheerful chattering, I could recognize three researchers of the museum, but there were also several other people I did not know, some of them were carrying a television camera and were filming the ritual. Later, I understood they were a part of the crews of two local one cable televisions. There were also two reporters from two local newspapers. During the whole ritual, people from the media kept on walking around the room, filming here and there, placing their cameras in front of the altar and interviewing the women, while researchers of the museum grew visibly nervous.[79]

Before substituting the *kimono* of the statues, the women gathered all the robes in a box and took it to the Oyamajinja, in order to have them purified. A procession started from the Enmadō and went through the main road to the sanctuary. I was walking in the back of the procession, talking to two women of the village and gathering information about the rite, when I realized I could not see either the people of the museum, or the people from the media. Suddenly, I saw a girl of one of the television crews hiding, leaning on a wall, crouched. I wondered what was happening and I finally understood that people with cameras were running through an alternative street, filming the whole procession, or they had run in order to anticipate the procession and to film it while it was arriving at the sanctuary. All the other people of the crews had scattered around, in order not to interfere

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HIROSE 1970. *Tateyama shinkō* 立山信仰; SAEKI 1972. *Tateyama Fudoki no oka* 立山風土記の丘; TAKAZAWA 2001. *Ashikuraji monogatari. Kindai tozan wo koeta Tateyama gaidotachi* 芦峅寺ものがたり—近代登山を支えた立山ガイドたち. An analysis of the constructions of narratives about "continuing tradition" in ethnological studies, journalism and the media, especially regarding religious symbolism and practices, see FIGAL 1999. *Civilization and Monsters. Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan*; ISOMAE 2005. "Deconstructing "Japanese Religion": A historical survey."; IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*.

[79] Some days later I understood that, after the *omeshigae*, one of the researchers argued with Saeki T.-san, because he maintained that the media "modified" and "disturbed" the rite, whereas she thought that the media would provide the ritual with the visibility and the fame it deserved.

with the ritual, thus (re-)producing an image of the *omeshigae* as "untouched" from "old times", that was exactly what they proposed on the titles of the newspapers the day after:

> In Ashikuraji, the *Onbasama no omeshigae*, a traditional ritual that is continuing from the Edo period.[80]

> The *Onbasama no omeshigae*, a traditional ritual linked to the cult of Tateyama.[81]

Fig. 41: A moment during the *Onbasama no omeshigae* at the Enmadō

What happened on the day of the *Onbasama no omeshigae* was extremely indicative of processes of construction of signification of the cult of Tateyama and, as Geertz showed in the case of the Balinese cockfight, it can be interpreted as a text, as a means of understanding of socio-cultural dynamics.[82]

On the one hand, the influx on the media contributed to construct the value of the ritual. As Saeki T.-san told me:

[80] CHŪRIPPU TEREBI NYŪSU 03/14/2009
[81] KITANIPPON SHINBUN 03/14/2009
[82] See GEERTZ 1975a. "Deep Play. Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 448.

Fig. 42: Onbasama statues at the Enmadō

> The cult of Tateyama is extremely important. You know, every year the media come from all over the Prefecture, to document the uniqueness of our rituals. I think we really have to keep on performing them, because they are part of Ashikuraji, but I want the whole Japan to know them, just like it was a long time ago. (Saeki T.-san, 62)

Yet, on the other, within the village, this value was constructed for the most part by the researchers from the museum and from the Fudoki no oka before it:

> Before researchers from the museum of Tateyama studied local history, I didn't think Ashikuraji was so great. (Woman, 55)
> Rituals of the cult of Tateyama were performed also before the museum. However, they were a part of our normal daily life, I didn't know they had such a wonderful history. (Woman, 45)

> Women of the village used to perform the rituals also before the museum was built. However, doubtlessly, researchers of the museum taught us how important they are and how long their history is. (Man, 65)

> Look! (While showing me a large blue and white ceramic plate) This comes from Ise. We've got loads of them in our storehouse. We just piled up some of them on that cupboard, because we didn't know what they actually are. When researchers of the museum saw them were amazed, they told us these plates came from Ise. I mean, a long time ago people came to Ashikuraji from all over the country and they took here precious things like these as a souvenir. How great Ashikuraji must have been! […] Some twenty years ago, my father found even a Tateyama *mandara* in the storehouse. It's really a unique one, there is none like that. Sometimes the museum even borrows it, to do some researches, because they have nothing similar. I think that a lot of people here own things like this. Ashikuraji is this kind of village, you know… (Woman, 33)

The museum not only contributed to create the value of crafts and local products, as well as of the cult of Tateyama as a whole. It actually constructed information and knowledge that researchers taught the locals. In other words, the museum taught the locals what they were doing. This occurred in different ways: on the one hand the books published by Fukue-san were very popular, because of his extremely clear writing style and because he was highly-considered by people in Ashikuraji. Moreover, Fukue was awarded several prices as an academic, thus giving a major visibility both to his researches and to the whole

village. People learnt information about the cult from television, magazines and newspaper interviews to Fukue-san, thus becoming more and more aware of their identity. As Fukue-san himself told me, when I stated I would have liked to interview people of the village about what their relationship to the cult of Tateyama:

> As many people as you can interview, you won't get one single piece of information that has not come from the museum.

In fact, starting from the time of its foundation, the museum organized study meetings (*Tateyama shinkō wo shinobu kai* 立山信仰を偲ぶ会, literally "The Cult of Tateyama Recalling Association" and, subsequently, *Tateyama hakubutsukan yū no kai* 立山博物館友の会, "Association of Friends of the Museum of Tateyama), symposiums and yearly actual reconstructions of the *nunobashi kanjōe*.[83]

Nevertheless, most of the locals did not take part in the meetings, for the reasons I stated above. Yet there were some exceptions: first of all most of the people who were linked to the extant *shukubō*, who had a personal interest in understanding their history. In second instance, there was a person to whom nearly everyone in the village addressed me, a woman who was even (half-joking) called "the goddess of the cult of Tateyama" (*Tateyama shinkō no kamisama* 立山信仰の神様) by the locals. This woman was Saeki T.-san.

Saeki T.-san was the third actor – or, better, actress – in the processes of signification of the cult of Tateyama within the village, and, possibly, the main one. She attended nearly all of the meetings organized by the museum, thus becoming a specialist of the history of the cult of Tateyama. Yet this was not her main investiture as a "Goddess".

She was born in Ashikuraji, in a family who was particularly devoted to the cult of Tateyama, especially her mother was renowned to be particularly into the rituals. Moreover, both of Saeki T.-san's parents were from Ashikuraji. Unfortunately, T.-san lost her mother when she was only a child, therefore she decided to commit herself in the cult of Tateyama, just as her mother did. As she grew up, she got married to another Saeki, who was born in

[83] See TATEYAMA HAKUBUTSUKAN.

Ashikuraji. In 2009, when I met her, she was the Head of the Women Association, as she had been for more than fifteen years. She took care of organizing everything for the rituals, being the referring point for every woman in the village.

Fig. 43: Reconstruction of the nunobashi kanjōe in 2005. Published in FUKUE 2006, 1.

The legitimization of Saeki T.-san's authority was provided by her personal history: she basically incarnated the "folk" model of Ashikuraji. According to her status, she played the fundamental role of a mediator between the "community" and the museum. Moreover she involved most of the Ashikuraji women in ritual practices and she used to inform the people about the history of the village and of the cult of Tateyama, thus (re-)producing the signification of the cult among people of Ashikuraji.

Yet Saeki T.-san was also generally criticized for being stubborn and too insistent about the importance of the cult of Tateyama. This showed an element of further complexity in the negotiation of signification of the cult of the mountain.

4.7 Protect Ashikuraji!

As I have shown, the cult of the mountain was considered a strong identifying element of the "community" of Ashikuraji. Yet, when I asked about personal experiences regarding to the cult, people did not seem to be particularly involved and, in some cases, they were even bothered by the high number of rituals that engaged them during the year. Actually, more than half of the people I interviewed in the village, stated that they were not interested, or personally involved in the cult. Most of the people stated they were Sōtō zen practitioners, followed by affiliated to Shingon, Pure Land sects and Sōka gakkai. Nearly all of the people I interviewed, including Saeki T.-san, stated that they did not consider the cult of Tateyama as their own religion. They considered it as their own "tradition", namely as an element that configured their affiliation to the "community" and that identified the village.

Since women were the actual performers of the rituals, they tended to give the cult a higher value than what men did and there were no substantial differences between women born in Ashikuraji and women who married into the village, who were normally involved in the rituals. As one of my informants stated:

> In the beginning it was difficult: there are a lot of rituals and I had to understand what to do. Firstly, I just copied what other women did, but, then, I wanted to understand, so I started to study a little bit. I found the cult of Tateyama somehow interesting, so I decided to commit to it and now I have no problems. (Woman, 53)

This process was very similar for most of the women I interviewed: they were involved in the beginning and, subsequently, they developed an interest in the cult and in the ritual they actually had to perform, thus giving them a positive value and starting to recognize themselves as a part of the "community" and to be recognized as such by other people.

Interestingly enough, women who were born in Ashikuraji at the *omeshigae* were far less numerous than "*yoso no mono*". On the one hand, this could be explained by the fact that, generally speaking, a woman who gets married tends to enter her husband's family, thus abandoning the village.[84] Yet, on the other, I noticed women from their twenties to their forties (and I knew that, at least some of them were born in Ashikuraji) at the *dango-maki*

[84] See HENDRY 1981. *Marriage in changing Japan : community and society*.

団子撒き(literally the "Dumpling throwing"), a *zen* ritual that was performed two days after the *omeshigae* (see Tab.1) and that is not connected to the cult of Tateyama. Those women had not shown up at the *omeshigae*.

Actually, the general number of people who attended the *dangomaki* was higher than people at the Enmadō during the *omeshigae*. This showed a generalized lack of interest in the cult of Tateyama, particularly among men in general and among women under their forties, showing a probable future decline of the cult of Tateyama.

This was also shown by the decaying status of the religious structures that were somehow connected to the cult of Tateyama, but were not managed by the museum: the stairway that took to the altar of Konpirasama, the deity of the mountain, and the altar itself. Moreover, the very fact that only few *shukubō* were extant in 2009, showed that, despite the cult was taken as an identifying element of the "community" in order to oppose outsider's actions much before the foundation of the museum, there was a lack of interest of the community in protecting and preserve the cult, as well as the structures linked to it.

Nevertheless, nearly all of my informants, independently from their gender, claimed that the cult of Tateyama was to be protected, since it was "representative" of Ashikuraji and that the village itself had to be protected, again, because of its history and tradition.

This continuous reference to the past legitimated the conservatory policies of the village, that displayed itself even in the attitudes towards housing and trade of land: in fact "outsiders", namely the five families whose surname was neither Saeki, nor Shitaka, were required by contract not to demolish the houses in which they entered. They had to restore them. Moreover, they could not buy the land for at least ten years, because, as they stated, people of Ashikuraji wanted to understand what kind of persons they were.

This policy constituted one more elements of conflict with the museum, since, in order to build the Tenjikan, not only the square of the village was occupied, thus depriving the locals of a socialization space, but also a house was demolished.

As I showed above, affiliation to the "community" was based on the place. In other words, *yosomon* could buy the land only when they were recognized as an integral part of the community. Moreover, every family had to pay a 6000 Yen[85] yearly fee to the village, in order to obtain full rights.

One of the rights of the "community" was enjoying the income that came from the mountain. In fact, since the Edo period, the whole Tateyama have belonged to the village. Therefore the Prefecture, the State and Tateyama City had to pay a rent to the village, in order to use the streams for hydroelectric power plants, or to establish huts.

4.8 Conclusions

The case of Ashikuraji and the Museum of Tateyama showed the complexity of the dynamics of negotiation of meaning of religious symbolic narratives in a mountain village.

People of Ashikuraji configured their "community" as homogeneous towards what they feel as "outsider", constructing its identity and "folk" model by basing it on the "traditional" cult of Tateyama and their own history, in spite of internal differences. This caused the (re-)production and signification of an ideoscape[86] linked to religious symbolic narratives, charged with a positive value as "traditional" and based on previous local socio-economic dynamics. Consequently, it provoked basically conservative policies that tended to (re-)produce a community model, felt as "traditional", whose origin was placed in the Edo period, namely at the time of major success of Ashikuraji and diffusion of the cult of Tateyama, but that was not capable to adapt to the new socio-economic context.

The authority of this model was legitimized not only by its "long history"; but also by the narratives (re-)produced by media and by the museum, that had an enormous influence on the re-construction of the narratives about the cult of Tateyama.

[85] About 45 Euros in December 2009.
[86] See APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*; APPADURAI 2003 (or. 1996). *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

Yet, in the Yōbōkan and in the Mandara Yūen, the museum itself proposed displaced and re-placed narratives and landscapes of the afterlife and of the Tateyama *mandara*. Since these narratives referred to basically urban and post-industrial representations, could not be accepted by people in Ashikuraji, because they were in contrast with the "folk" model that not only most of the people of the village shared and, to a certain extent, accepted, but also that, as Cohen points out, provided them something "to think with".[87]

The processes of displacement and "re-placement" of meaning of narratives connected to the cult of Tateyama, thus, produced "disjuncture and difference"[88] and, consequently, they were denied or only partly accepted by the locals. They recognized as "true" only the narratives provided by the Exposition Hall, namely the historically-based ones, that people of the village felt as their own.

As much as the construction and signification of these ideoscapes could be negotiated between the two parts, they were legitimized by economic interests, on the one hand, and by the lack of interaction between them, caused by the contrasting and reciprocally excluding policies. Moreover they were hierarchical, since the museum told the locals their own history, in a up-to-bottom process, but people in Ashikuraji had no way to negotiate them with the museum, with the consequent restlessness and irritation toward it, that most of them kept on feeling like an outsider's institution.

However, both the "community" of village and the museum legitimized their own position by basing it on their link with the cult of Tateyama and thus negotiating not only its signification, but also the "production of locality"[89] of Ashikuraji. This showed how, paraphrasing Ben-Ari's words,[90] talking about signification of religious symbolism in locality involves not only abstract niceties of notions of identity, but perhaps no less importantly, entails analyses of the practicalities of politics and economics.

[87] COHEN 1989. *The Symbolic Construction of Community (Key Ideas)*, 19.
[88] APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.
[89] APPADURAI 1996a. "The Production of Locality." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.
[90] See BEN-ARI 1995. "Contested Identities and Models of Action in Japanese Discourses of Place-Making.", 209.

Chapter 5 – Hell Lost – Hirano-*ku* and Hakone

In this brief concluding chapter, I will present two different places related to representations of hell: Hirano-*ku* 平野区 in Osaka and a particular area in Hakone, called Motohakone 元箱根. Although this places are quite distant from each other, they presented common features, that were extremely interesting to understand processes of construction and signification of religious symbolism in contemporary Japan.

In the previous chapters, I showed how representations of the afterlife and narratives related to death can be linked to signification of areas and people connected to them. The case of Osorezan and Mutsu-*shi* showed how those narratives were linked to processes of signification of places and (re-)production of memory. Rokuhara displayed processes of construction of identity and construction of "community" imposed by "outsiders" on the area by association with complex ideoscapes[1] that involved both representations of poverty, and historical narratives on death and pollution. The conflict between the locals and the museum in Ashikuraji showed how political and economic dynamics, as well as conceptions of identity and "community" contributed to (re-)production and signification of religious symbolic narratives.

In this chapter I will take into consideration two cases related to oblivion and forgetfulness. Namely, I will show two cases in which symbolic narratives about hell were re-elaborated and (re-)produced, without causing any kind of conflict and/or discrimination against people, because they either had an extremely marginal role in the construction of identity of a "community", or they were not linked to any kind of "community" at all.

The brevity of this chapter is due to the lack of sources about these two places. As I will show below, the lack of historical narratives and/or the fact that their knowledge was limited to specialists, was a integral part of the process. Therefore this chapter will be based on data I gathered during my fieldwork, rather than on historical sources.

[1] See APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*

5.1 A Small Hell for Children

Senkōji 全興寺 was a small temple, on the side of a shopping arcade in Hirano-*ku*, on the outskirts of Osaka, towards Nara.[2] Visitors who went to the temple, were welcomed by a big vertical sign at the entrance, with the picture of a three eyed red *oni* 鬼 (demon) and the warning "If you lie, I'll pull out your tongue!" (*uso wo tsuku to shita wo nuku zo* ウソをつくと舌をぬくぞ), and an indication: "Senkōji Pagoda of Hell" (Senkōji *jigokudō* 全興寺地獄堂), burning in flames. The demon's expression was between a cheered smile and a fierce grin and it was holding big tongs, with which it was clenching a tongue, that was the upper stroke of the *kanji* of "tongue" 舌, the only Chinese character in the warning.

Fig. 44: Sign at the main entrance of Senkōji

[2] I carried out my fieldwork in Hirano-*ku* in December 2008 and February 2009. I visited the temple and interviewed the Abbot, as well as visitors and religious practitioners. I also took contacts with the management of the near "Centre for the Culture on Human Rights" (*jinken bunka sentā* 人権文化センター), in order to understand whether there was any connection between the temple, its relationship to hell, and an extremely small registered *buraku* area that is present in the Ward. I am not going to refer the name of the *buraku* area, as well as none of the sources related to it, because of ethical issues.

In fact, Senkōji, a temple of the Shingon sect, was renown in the area for the representations of hell it provided. The complex was formed by a series of small buildings with the exception of *hondō* 本道, that was larger, though hardly comparable to the ones I described in the other chapters. The whole open space within the precincts was scattered with references to hell, like the "mysterious stone from which the sound of the hell cauldron can be heard" (*jigoku no kama no oto ga kikoeru fushigina ishi* 地獄の釜の音が聞こえる不思議な石), a small stone with a hole in which visitors can insert their head and hear a low sound, or to the *jigokudō*, a small pagoda on the right side of the entrance.

The Jigokudō consisted in a small dark room, in which three adults could hardly enter. In front of the entrance, a terrifying statue of Enma 閻魔, with red skin, was enshrined on a red wooden support. On it, there were a small incense burner, a cup of *sake*, some poor food offerings and a candlestick. On the right of Enma's statue, there was the mirror of *karma*, made in plaster. The frame represented red burning flames, whereas the centre part looked black because of the darkness, but it was somehow glossy.

On the left side, statues representing the Ten Kings (*Jūō* 十王) in sitting position were disposed on three different levels, each one of them wearing colourful Chinese-style robes.

On the right side of the hall, two threatening plaster casts: a standing three-eyed red *oni*, about real-human sized, held enormous thongs, with which it menaced a small man, wearing white robes, who looked like he was begging for mercy. The second model represented a human-sized hag, with long, white, frizzy hair and a fierce expression. In both of her hands, there was a small statue representing human beings crying in pain and, in front of her, another spirit kneeled down, naked. She was the terrible, Datsueba. The part of her chest and of her belly were completely missing, leaving a hole with something at the bottom. Because of the darkness inside the room, it was pretty difficult to understand what it was, but one could get a glimpse of a small statue, very similar to the ones of the Onbasama in Tateyama.

Horrific hell paintings populated the walls of the hall: people scorched by demons, huge monstrous beasts, dark-red flames and demon-like spirits screaming in pain, or falling into boiling cauldrons, naked. Also Jizō was represented in a corner, standing on a golden cloud.

Fig. 45: Plaster Models of a Oni and Datsueba at the Jigokudō. On the left, the Mirror of Karma

On the lower part of the wooden altar, right in front of the entrance, from which Enma's fiery eyes looked at the visitors, there was a gong, with a diameter of about fifty centimetres, and a warning: "if you ring the gong, hell will appear" (*tora wo tatakuto, jigoku ga arawaremasu* トラをたたくと地獄があらわれます). On the other side of the gong, another indication recited: "When hell does not appear, even though you ring the gong, please push the switch above" (*tora wo tataitemo jigoku ga arawarenai toki ha, kono ue no suicchi wo oshite kudasai* トラをたたいても地獄があらわれないときはこの上のスイッチを押してください). Actually, there was a big red button in the centre of a metal box, right on the altar, near the offerings.

As I rang the gong with the small wooden mace hanging on its right side, I heard the recorded sound of a gong that must have been at least ten times bigger than the one in the hall, then a small screen lightened up, right at the centre of the mirror of *karma*, showing images of hell, while a low voice started to tell a story:

> A long time ago, when I wondered through life and death, I saw horrible things. Yes, hell. From now on, I'm going to show you what awful place hell is. In the very moment humans die, they fall in a world of darkness. In the darkness that never ends, they must walk through the obscure "straight path of darkness" (*yami no ipponmichi* 闇の一本道) all alone.[3]

The narrating voice doubtlessly belonged to an old man,[4] who was telling his story. He described all the hardships the spirits of the dead had to undergo through all the landscape of hell, from the Sai no kawara, to Enma's and the Ten Kings' judgement, then he reviewed all the hells. Everything was described in a very plain and colloquial way, without naming the hells, but associating a particular punishment to a particular fault. Eventually, the voice concluded:

> Children, life is only one. If you lose it, you won't come back! Because of several faults, a lot of people suffer in hell like these. However, people who do good deeds are saved by Jizō. Among you guys,[5] isn't there anyone who's going to hell? If you don't want to fall into such a place, you guys must not do evil deeds! You must not make other people suffer! And, above all, you must take extreme care of your own life![6]

The story had a clear didactic purpose and aimed o teach children moral precepts. Indeed, both signs and warnings, were mostly written in *hiragana*, in order to be as easy to read as possible and, in cases in which *kanji* were used, like in the word "*jigoku*" 地獄 ("hell"), the reading was always indicated, by the use of *furigana*.

Outside the *jigokudō*, on one of the walls, there was another teaching-entertainment device: the "Judgement of King Enma" (Enma *daiō no sabaki* エンマ大王のおさばき). This consisted of a box with two vertical rows of ten flashing buttons. The row on the left was named "Path of Heaven" (*gokuraku no michi* 極楽の道), the one on the right was the

[3] The story and the images that were screened in the *jigokudō* can be found in *Jigoku*, a small booklet that can be bought at the temple, see SENKŌJI 1997. *Jigoku 地獄.*
[4] The vice used "*washi*" ("I" or "me") and ended most of the sentences by "*no ja*", intead of "*no da*" (an explanatory form that is used at the end of a sentence. It indicates that what was just said is important background info or is significant to the current situation). This is a sort of stereotyped old-men way of speaking, that is often used in *manga*, or in television drama.
[5] The voice used terms like "*omaetachi*" お前達, an unpolite and/or very confidential way to mean "you" (plural), as well as "*yatsu*" 奴, an unpolite and/or very confidential expression for "he" or "guy, pal, fellow".
[6] see SENKŌJI 1997. *Jigoku 地獄.*

"Path of Hell" (*jigoku no michi* 地獄の道). The first consisted in a list of good deeds, each one of them was associated to the opposing evil deed, on the right. Therefore, for instance, if on the left there was "Being grateful and earnestly collaborative" (*kansha shite, shinken ni doryoku suru* 感謝して真剣に努力する), on the right there was "A lot of continuous complaints and grumbles" (*taezu fuhei fuman ga ooi* 絶えず不平不満が多い), or to "Going through duties and responsibilities accomplishing them" (*gimu mo sekinin mo susunde hatasu* 義務も責任も進んで果たす) was opposed "irresponsible and not feeling like doing anything" (*yaru ki ga naku musekinin* やる気がなく無責任).

The game consisted in choosing one of the two sentences and pushing the respective button. Once one had made his path through heaven and hell, the judgement came and one of the six lights on the bottom of the box lightened, giving Enma's response. The lights were associated to a point-range, that was calculated by the machine. Therefore, from -8 to -10 points, the judgement was "The horrible tortures of hell are waiting [for you]" (*osoroshii jigoku no semeku ga matteimasu* 恐ろしい地獄の責め苦が待っています), from -4 to -7 "If you repent the way you have lived so far, you are still in time" (*ima made no ikikata wo kuiaratamereba mada maniaimasu* 今までの行き方を悔い改めればまだ間にあいます) and so on up to the highest score, from 10 to 8 points: "You are like a Buddha" (*anata ha hotoke no yōna kata desu* 貴方はほとけさまのような方です).

The aim of the temple to teach moral precepts to children was also stated by a notice, that invited parents to teach children the "importance of life" (*inochi no taisetsusa* 命の大切さ):

> To fathers and mothers, a desire of the temple.
> This *jigokudō* was opened to teach children not to do evil deeds and to take care of their own lives. Mothers, fathers, please, don't make it something to indiscriminately frighten your children, to make them listen to what you say. The form of this Enma, is actually the manifestation of the kind and merciful heart of Jizō.
> Use this as an opportunity to talk once again with your children about the importance of life.[7]

[7] Sign at the entrance of the *jigokudō*.

Fig. 46: The "Judgement of Enma" device

Everything, from the statues to the models and the device looked fairly new and well conserved, so much that, at first, I thought that the whole *jigokudō* had been recently built. Yet, it turned out to date back to the Edo period at latest, as the Abbot of the temple told me:

> As far as we understand, the *jigokudō* already existed in the Edo period. I had the statues dated back and they told me that they were probably made during the beginning of the Edo period, maybe a little earlier. Yet, both the statues and the pagoda were extremely shabby

> and badly conserved up to fifteen years ago, so I talked to the people in the area and we decided to restore them and to renew the *jigokudō*. I wanted the temple to become a place for the people of the neighbourhood, both children and old people, so we decided to make it like this.

Actually, there were always some children coming and going, or playing around within the precincts, as well as elderly people sitting on the benches in the garden.

No reference to rituals connected to hell or the afterlife was made in the pamphlet of the temple, or in its website, although a brief part of the film of *jigokudō* and the "Judgement of Enma" were re-proposed in it.[8] Doubtlessly, Senkōji's hell was signified exclusively as children entertainment.

5.1.1 Lack of History and Entertainment

The history of Hirano goes back to the late Heian period. The name of the area came from a modification of "Hirono" 広野, namely "large field". The area was inhabited and prospered well before 1583, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi established his base in Osaka, thus starting the process of development of the city.[9]

Senkōji was found during the Asuka period (538-710 or 592-645), when, according to the foundation legend, a *yakushidō* 薬師堂 was built by Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子.[10] During the Heian period, it was renown as "Takoyakushi" 蛸薬師 and was related to the close Kumatajinja 杭全神社. Sources about the temple continue by explaining the history of the statues of Yakushi to which it is dedicated, yet they do not mention its relationship to hell, nor sources about the area do.[11] Even local legends and stories, although fairly numerous

[8] See SENKŌJI.
[9] See HIRANO-KUSHI HENSHŪ IINKAI (ed.) 2005. *Hiranokushi 平野区誌*.
[10] Shōtoku Taishi is one of the most popular legitimizing figures of religious discourses in Japan. Yet, narratives about Prince Shōtoku were re-invented and ideologized during the Meiji period, as a means to construct national identity. See ISOMAE 2002. "Kindai ni okeru "shūkyō" gainen no keisei katei 近代における「宗教」概念の形成過程." ; VLASTOS 1998. *Mirror of modernity. Invented traditions of modern Japan*.
[11] See HIRANOKUSHI HENSHŪ IINKAI (ed.) 2005. *Hiranokushi 平野区誌* ; ŌSAKASHI DŌWA JIGYŌ HIRANO CHIKU KYŌGIKAI (ed.) 1978. *Hirano buraku no rekishi 平野部落の歴史* and YAKUSHIDŌ SENKŌJI, pamphlet of the temple.

and referring to a variety of different historical periods,[12] did not provide any clue about the origin of hell in Hirano Ward.

I tried to investigate Hirano Ward and I found a registered *buraku* area not too far from the temple. I contacted the director of the "Hirano Centre for the Culture on Human Rights" (Hirano *jinken bunka sentā* 平野人権文化センター), but he did not trace any relationship between the *buraku* and the temple, or with practices linked to death in the past.

In fact, the *buraku* area was mainly populated by *eta*. There are no historical evidence to definitely prove the works in which they were engaged. Yet, as a study on the history of the area tries to reconstruct:

> It's just a deduction but. if we had to say, our ancestors were people who lived close to the riverbank of the Hirano river that flows right at the North of the *buraku* and they were engaged in water transportation, "riverbank workmanship"[13] (especially leatherwork) and services at the Kumatajinja.[14]

This study linked the former *eta* to the Kumatajinja, that, in turn, was related to Senkōji since the Heian period.[15] This could suggest a link between the group of discriminated people and the temple, that could be interpreted by Komatsu's paradigm,[16] that links representations of hell to social liminality, as happened, for instance, in the case of Rokuhara.[17] Other factors that could support this idea, are the vicinity of Kyoto and Osaka and the fact that the *buraku* issue is still strong especially in Kansai. Yet there were no historical evidences to prove this, thus this theory remains only a supposition.

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[12] A collection of local legends can be found in HIRANO NO MACHI ZUKURI WO KANGAERU KAI (ed.) 1996. *Hirano no omoroi hanashi ひらののオモロイはなし*; ŌSAKA SHIRITSU HIRANO SHOGAKKŌ SŌRITSU HYAKUSHŪNEN KINEN JIGYŌ IINKAI (ed.) 1972. *Hirano fudoki 平野風土記.*

[13] *Kawara saikunin* 河原細工人.

[14] ŌSAKASHI DŌWA JIGYŌ HIRANO CHIKU KYŌGIKAI (ed.) 1978. *Hirano buraku no rekishi 平野部落の歴史.* This book was published by people of the *buraku*. Please, note the ideological discourse about ancestors that liked *burakumin* at the time of publication of the book to previous *eta*. For an analysis of this discourse, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

[15] YAKUSHIDŌ SENKŌJI, pamphlet of the temple.

[16] See KOMATSU 2002 (or. 1985). *Oni ga tsukutta kuni. Nihon. Rekishi wo ugokashitekita "kurayami" no chikara to ha 鬼がつくった国・日本・歴史を動かしてきた「暗闇」の力とは.*

[17] See Chapter 3.

Moreover, in 2009 everybody in Hirano-*ku* denied any relationships between Senkōji and the *buraku*. Most of the people I interviewed, in fact, defined the *jigokudō* in the temple "simply entertainment for children" (*tada no kodomo no asobi* ただの子供の遊び). This meant that, even if there actually was any relationship between the temple and discriminated people, it was not felt any longer, since the representations and narratives of hell in Senkōji had nearly lost any kind of their religious signification and were exclusively (re-)produced as didactic entertainment.

However, even though the case of Senkōji was not related to processes of construction of identity, it provided an interesting view on the negotiation and (re-)production of signification of religious symbolic narratives. In fact, differently, for instance, from Tateyama, the renewal and re-elaboration of these narratives did not create any kind of conflict. This was because, as the Abbot pointed out, the significance of representations of hell in that particular place were unknown, thus they had no particular signification to the locals. This was also confirmed by the fact that, before 1984, the *jigokudō* was "shabby and badly conserved".[18] Consequently, since no particular signification, or ritual practice were connected to them, there was nothing that could have been signified as an identifying element for the local "community"[19] and that could have suggested conservatory policies, like in the case of Ashikuraji. Moreover, processes of renewal and re-elaboration of symbolic narratives and of their signification did not undergo any "displacement"[20] and/or "re-placement" and they were not even hierarchical, since the management of the temple decided how to restore the *jigokudō* together with affiliates of the temple and people living in the area. Therefore the *jigokudō* was (re-)produced exclusively by negotiation of social values and priorities at the time of its restoration, without any emphasis on legitimizing and ideologized narratives about "tradition", history and identity.

[18] Words of the Abbott of Senkōji, see above.
[19] I always use the term "community" keeping in mind Cohen's works, as I showed in Chapter 4. See COHEN (ed.) 1986. *Symbolizing Boundaries*; COHEN 1989. *The Symbolic Construction of Community (Key Ideas)*; COHEN (ed.) 2000. *Signifying Identities. Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*.
[20] See IVY 1995a. *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*.

In fact, narratives about "tradition" and history did not appear in Senkōji's website, or in pamphlet indicating its activities and describing its structure also in 2009.[21] In fact, every explanation of the buildings and structures in the temple was extremely children-oriented, easy to read and deprived of any history-related information, by focusing on present activities and playing with children and families:

> Once upon a time the space in the temples was a place to play. Grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, children, let's play altogether![22]

The case of Senkōji showed how religious symbolic narratives could be renewed and re-signified by people in localities, when they are not linked and legitimized by narratives about history and tradition. The next and last place I will take into consideration, Hakone, will show that, conversely, an emphasis on those narratives alone could not be sufficient to (re-)produce and signify religious symbolism and place.

5.2 Old Stones and Broken Lasers

"Once Hakone was hell" (*katsute Hakone ha jigoku datta* かつて箱根は地獄だった). This notice welcomed tourists in the Kinenkan 記念館 (literally "Memory Hall") at Motohakone *sekibutsu sekitōgun* 元箱根石仏・石塔群, the "Group of Stone Buddhas and Stone Pagodas in Motohakone", in the Hakone Area (Hakonegun 箱根群), Kanagawa Prefecture.[23]

The hall was built in 1996, when the Hakone City Hall disposed restoration works of the outnumbered statues of Jizō that are present in the area around the Shōjinga Lake (Shōjingaike 精進池). The whole landscape of hell was rebuilt in its small central room, by using fluorescent dye, lights and lasers. Visitors could walk through this electronically reproduced hell and experience its darkness and its sounds.

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[21] See SENKŌJI and the pamphlet *Omoroi tera Senkōji goshōkai gaido* おもろいてら全興寺ご紹介ガイド. The only exception was YAKUSHIDŌ SENKŌJI, the pamphlet I mentioned above, that explained in a brief and schematic way the origins of the temple and of the area.

[22] *Omoroi tera Senkōji goshōkai gaido* おもろいてら全興寺ご紹介ガイド.

[23] The Hakone Area 箱根群 comprises a wide surface, including mountain, valleys and a number of small urban areas. Among these, there is the city of Hakone (Hakone-*chō* 箱根町) and the village of Motohakone (Motohakone-*mura* 元箱根村). I carried out my fieldwork in the area in November 2008.

This was true until the end of 2007, namely until less than one year before my arrival. In fact, as I visited the Kinenkan, there were only fluorescent paintings on the walls, covered by signs that illustrated the processes and the hardships of restoring the statues in the surrounding area.

As the member of the Hakone City Board for Education (*Hakonechō kyōiku iinkai* 箱根町教育委員会) told me:

> The idea when we had the Kinenkan built, was to show what hell was, according to Buddhism, since "hell" (*jigoku* 地獄) is a Buddhist concept. We had it built by a company, that followed our instructions about what to do and where to put it. Yet the device started to have problems two or three years ago and it got definitely broken last year. Everything is on a laser-disk, but we can't read it, because we can't find any device for it. Because of lack of funding, we are going to keep the exposition about the restoring of the statues and update it, when we have new information. (Man, 34)[24]

Although the device did not work, I could reconstruct the path through hell that was created in the Kinenekan from the extant paintings. The hall was still scattered with plastic stones and a river was painted at the entrance: the Sanzu no kawa. On the right wall, right after the river, Datsueba was grinning in front of a tree, from which white robes were hanging. In front of her human spirits were crying in pain.

On the wall in front of the entrance, the terrifying Enma was depicted as grey as a statue, with his mouth wide open and surrounded by the Buddhist hells, explicitly copied from the medieval *jigoku-e* 地獄絵.[25]

[24] Hakone City Board for Education, person in charge for the Motohakone *sekibutsu sekitōgun*, recorded interview. 13th November 2008.
[25] On *jigoku-e* see Chapter 1.

Fig. 47: Enma surrounded by the Buddhist hells and by explanatory signs in Kinenkan.

Yet hell paintings were partly covered by the explanatory signs that had nothing to do with them and did not even mention hell in their narratives, exclusively giving technical information about the statues and their restoring.

On the right side, on a board just before the exit, the Buddha Amida was depicted, sitting on a lotus flower and in front of it, on the floor, a golden light character of "heart" (*kokoro* 心) was projected, thus tracing the parallel with the *Kumano jikkai mandara* 熊野十界曼荼羅.[26]

[26] See Chapter 1.

Fig. 48: Datsueba painted in the Kinenkan

However, people who entered seemed not to pay attention to the representations of hell on the background, focusing on the signs. They generally walked around the hall, quickly reading the information about the restoring of the statues, then they went out in two or three minutes. About one hundred visitors a day entered the Kinenkan,[27] but no one among

[27] Since the entrance to Kinenkan was free, there was no way to obtain exact data about the number of visitors. Yet, both the person in charge at the Board of Education and the watchman at the Kinenkan provided me with these figures. I carried out a brief survey as well and I found an average of 112 people a day during November 2008.

the people I interviewed perceived the place as connected to hell. As one of the visitors told me:

> It was interesting to see how they restored these statues, but I don't think this place is hell… Maybe it was a long time ago, but now it just feels like a place full of old stones. (Man, 63)

The case of Motohakone showed that the relationship between the place and hell had faded away in 2008. As this man pointed out and as the sign at the entrance of Kinenkan stated, though, the place was connected to hell in the past. Therefore the causes of this signification have to be found in the history of the area.

5.2.1 Once Hakone was Hell, Now It is No More

The area of Motohakone *sekibutsu sekitōgun* developed as a religious site during the Kamakura period, centred on an enormous statue of Jizō, also called Magaibutsu 磨崖仏.[28] It was on the steepest cliff of the *yusakamichi* (literally the "street of the hot spring cliff"), renown for the thaumaturgical powers of its hot springs. The desolated volcanic landscape and its harsh climatic conditions, thus, provided the setting for the construction of the link to hell.[29]

Yet this was not the only reason why this area was associated to the afterlife. In fact, many travellers who ventured to this area died because of the harshness of the landscape and of the weather, falling from the steep rocks. Moreover, the area was an obliged passage on the *tōkaidō* 東海道, the street that connected Edo to Kyoto during the Tokugawa period. This desolated place constituted the perfect environment for ambushes to travellers and religious practitioners, who were killed in the area. This contributed to create the link between the area and the afterlife, since that liminal space was considered to be the borderline between the world of the living and the one of the dead.[30]

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[28] The word "*magaibutsu*" that, in this case indicated the name of the Jizō statue, refers to "statues of Buddha carved in rock walls of natural hills". See *Kōjien* "*magaibutsu*".

[29] Information on the history of the area can be found in HAKONECHŌ KYŌIKU IINKAI 1993. *Motohakone sekibutsu. Sekitōgun no chōsa 元箱根石仏・石塔群の調査*; IWASAKI 1980. *Hakone no shichiyu. Rekishi to sono bunka 箱根の七湯・歴史とその文化*; IWASAKI 1998. *Chūsei no Hakonezan 中世の箱根山*; SAWAJI 1989. *Hakone no sekibutsu 箱根の石仏*; YAMAGUCHI 2008. *Hakonejin no Hakone annai 箱根人の箱根案内*

[30] See YAMAGUCHI 2008. *Hakonejin no Hakone annai 箱根人の箱根案内*, 110-112.

Indeed, the valley in which Motohakone *sekibutsu sekitōgun* lies was renown as "Hell Valley" (Jigokudani 地獄谷) through the whole medieval and premodern periods, when the statues of Jizō were the object of ritual and memorializing practices, that reached a peak during the first half of the Edo period.[31]

Until then, the area was a liminal place, hostile, dangerous and inhabited, in which only rare religious practices were performed. Yet, during the end of the premodern period, according to a progressive touristization of the whole Hakone area, that became renown as a thermal locality, as it is today, also the areas surrounding the Motohakone *sekibutsu sekitōgun* started to be exploited as a touristic places and the first *ryokan* 旅館 were built.[32]

The colonization of the area, as well as the change of signification and practices connected to the hot springs, from healing to tourism, caused a decrease of the number of practitioners of the Jizō cult, as well as a change of the signification of the Hell Valley. This was explicit when, according to an order of the Meiji Emperor, who visited the area in 1871, the name was changed from Jigokudani to Kowakudani 小涌谷 (literally "Small Spring Valley").[33] This constituted the end of the signification of the valley as hell, that remained a touristic area, renown for its hot springs and for its history, until the Board of Educaton started to re-construct the link by restoring the statues and building the Kinenkan.

5.3 Conclusions

The case of Motohakone *sekibutsu sekitōgun*, thus, showed that religious symbolic narratives can undergo processes of re-construction and renewal without causing any kind of conflict. Differently from the case of Ashikuraji and also from the case of Hirano, this area was not connected to any kind of "community", both village "communities" and

[31] See SAWAJI 1989. *Hakone no sekibutsu 箱根の石仏*, 46-58.
[32] On tourism in premodern Japan, see BLACKER 1984. "The Religious Traveler of the Edo Period."; GRABURN 1983. *To Pray, Pay and Play. The Cultural Structure of Japanese Domestic Tourism*; READER 1987b. "From Ascetism to the Package Tour. The Pilgrim's Progress in Japan."; VAPORIS 1995. "Breaking Barriers. Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan." In *Japanese Civilization in the Modern World IX. Tourism*. An analysis of the change of the area, according to its touristic develpment can be found in IWASAKI 1980. *Hakone no shichiyu. Rekishi to sono bunka 箱根の七湯・歴史とその文化*; YAMAGUCHI 2008. *Hakonejin no Hakone annai 箱根人の箱根案内*.
[33] See IWASAKI 1980. *Hakone no shichiyu. Rekishi to sono bunka 箱根の七湯・歴史とその文化*, 160.

religious ones, at least since the Meiji period. Therefore, the place and its representations of the afterlife lost their religious signification, leaving the possibility to be (re-)produced with new meanings and values.

Moreover, as I pointed out above, although there was a strong emphasis on the history of the place and of its representations of the afterlife, these were not enough to legitimize its signification as a religious site. These was because of the lack of connection with any group of people, as well as to processes of construction of identity in 2008. This confirmed that narratives about "history" and "tradition" are constantly negotiated among actors at various levels and (re-)produced according to present needs. If there is nothing that relates actors and places, and/or there are no particular need, then their significations, if not history and "tradition" themselves, are forgotten.[34]

The study of representations of hell in Hirano and Motohakone, shed light on forgetfulness and oblivion of meaning of religious symbolic narratives. Yet, thinking that they actually lost their meaning, would be a mistake. Their meaning was negotiated among people in the case of Hirano, by creating a kind of entertainment that aimed to teach children social values. In the case of Motohakone, representations of hell were signified as entertainment and as a touristic attraction, that is only one of the possibilities of signification of religious symbolism.

From a methodological perspective, this displayed, by contrast, that signification of religious symbolic narratives involve a number of complex processes, that deal with memory, construction of identity, social values, economic and political dynamics. Furthermore, these dynamics are, in turn, negotiated among people at various levels: local, translocal, national, or global, according to their knowledge, the contexts in which they are placed and their personal history.

Yet, a focus on the meaning accorded to those narratives, rather than on representations and narratives *per se* can be useful to understand the negotiation between "tradition" and

[34] See APPADURAI 1981. "The past as a scarce resource."; ASSMANN 1995. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity."; BEN-ARI 1995. "Contested Identities and Models of Action in Japanese Discourses of Place-Making."; HOBSBAWM (ed.) 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*; HUI (ed.) 2005. *Perspectives on Social Memory in Japan*; RICOEUR 2004. *Memory, History, Forgetting*.

innovation, processes of construction of identity, belief, knowledge and behaviour. By doing so, it can be possible to grasp not only the complex ideoscapes that lie behind religious symbolic narratives, but also the limits of the "fields of possibility"[35] by which those ideoscapes can be (re-)produced and, above all, make sense to people. And by which people make sense of them.

[35] APPADURAI 1996b. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." In *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

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Appendix: Survey in Schools in Mutsu-shi

ヴェネツィア　カ・フォスカリ大学・イタリア国立東方学研究所
デ・アントーニ　アンドレア

恐山・認識調査

学校名_____　　学年_____　　年齢_____

性別：男　　女
御出身：_____市_____町
現在住所：_____市_____町

１）恐山の事を聞いたことがありますか?

ある　　ない

２）(「ある」の方）どこから聞きましたか?

家族　　友達　　学校の先生　　お寺との関係者　　テレビ

本・雑誌・新聞など　　その他（　　）

３）恐山へ行ったことがありますか?

ある　　ない

４）(「ある」の方）今まで、何回ぐらい行きましたか?

_____年に_____回

５）恐山へ行く一番主要な動機は何でしたか?

観光　　自然・風景（紅葉を含めて）　　お祭り　　供養

その他（_____）

６）（行ったことがある方）恐山はどう思いますか?

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７）（行ったことがない方）恐山はどう思いますか?

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８）（行ったことがない方）どこからそんなことを聞きましたか?

家族　　友達　　学校の先生　　お寺との関係者　　テレビ

本・雑誌・新聞など　　その他（＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）

９）恐い・危ない場所というと、むつ市内にもあると思いますか?（子供の頃に家族より「あそこに遊びに行っちゃだめだよ！」などを言われた場所）

あると思う　　ないと思う

１０）その場所はどこですか?

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１１）どういう意味でそこが恐い・危ないと思いますか?（子供の時そこが危ないと言われていたのに、今はそうではないと思う場合、何が変ったか教えてくれませんか?）

_____

_____

_____

_____

１２）どこからそんなことを聞きましたか?

家族　　友達　　学校の先生　　お寺との関係者　　テレビ

本・雑誌・新聞など　　その他（_____）

１３）むつ市内での霊の話を聞いたことがありますか?

ある　　ない

１４）どこで霊が見えると思いますか?

_____

_____

_____

_____

１５）どこからそんなことを聞きましたか?

家族　　友達　　学校の先生　　お寺との関係者　　テレビ

本・雑誌・新聞など　　その他（_____）

１６）霊を見たことがありますか?

ある　　ない

１７）（見たことがある方）どこで見ましたか?

_____

_____

_____

_____

１８）（見たことがある方）どういう状況で、何を見ましたか?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

１９）（見たことがある方）あそこで他の人も霊が見えたかどうか分かりますか?

分かる　　分からない

２０）（見たことがある方）貴方が当時に、他の人が霊が見えたのを分かっていましたか?

分かる　　分からない

２１）（見たことがある方）どこからそんなことを聞きましたか?

家族　　友達　　学校の先生　　お寺との関係者　　テレビ

本・雑誌・新聞など　　その他（_____）

協力してくれて、本当にありがとうございました！

アンドレア

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nato/a a Mestre prov. VE il 20/07/1979
iscritto alla Scuola/corso di dottorato di ricerca in Lingue, Culture e Società.
Indirizzo Studi Orientali (Giappone)

Autore della tesi di dottorato dal titolo: **Hell is Round the Corner.** Religious Landscapes, People and Identity in Contemporary Japan

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Ciclo: 22°_____

Titolo della tesi[510] : **Hell is Round the Corner**. Religious Landscapes, People and Identity in Contemporary Japan _____

Abstract:

La mia tesi propone un'analisi antropologica di siti religiosi connessi a rappresentazioni dell'inferno e dell'aldilà nel Giappone contemporaneo. Ho condotto tre periodi di sei mesi di "fieldwork multi-situato" in cinque località caratterizzate da simbolismi religiosi e pratiche che li connotano come "inferni reali": Osorezan a Mutsu-*shi*, Rokuhara a Kyoto, Ashikuraji (Prefettura di Toyama), Hakone e HIrano-*ku* a Osaka, al fine di produrre un'analisi comparativa.
Propongo uno studio basato principalmente su un approccio euristico e su teorie della complessità culturale, dei discorsi simbolici e delle pratiche connesse a morte e aldilà, oltre che di come fosse costruito e (ri-)prodotto il loro significato, sia a livello locale che trans-locale. Successivamente, contestualizzo le narrative in una prospettiva storica e le connetto alle condizioni socio-economiche contemporanee nelle aree, con una particolare attenzione ai processi di costruzione di identità e di significato del simbolismo religioso nel posto.

My Ph.D. dissertation, proposes an anthropological analysis of religious sites related to representations of hell and the afterlife in contemporary Japan. I carried out three six-month periods of multi-sited fieldwork, distributed in five main localities characterized by religious symbolism and practices that connoted them as "actual hells": Osorezan in Mutsu-*shi*, Rokuhara in Kyoto, Ashikuraji (Tateyama-*chō*), Hakone and Hirano-*ku* in Osaka, in order to produce an analysis in a comparative perspective.
I propose a study, mainly based on a heuristic approach and on theories of cultural complexity, of the symbolic religious discourses and practices related to death and the afterlife, as well as of how their meaning was constructed and (re-)produced, both at a local and translocal level. Subsequently, I contextualize those narratives in a historical perspective and connected them to contemporary socio-economic conditions of the areas, with a main focus on processes of construction of identity and of meaning making of religious symbolism and place.

Firma dello studente

_____

[510] Il titolo deve essere quello definitivo, uguale a quello che risulta stampato sulla copertina dell'elaborato consegnato.