Carmen SĂPUNARU-TĂMAŞ
(editor)

Beliefs, Ritual Practices, and Celebrations in Kansai

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Cover photo by **Keiichiro Matsuo** (The Ôtori and Tama Mikoshi in front of Osaka Tenmangu Main Hall, before the beginning of the land procession. Tenjin Matsuri 2019)

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About the authors

Carmen Săpunaru Tămaş (editor) is a Romanian anthropologist, currently in charge of the Japanese language and culture program at the University of Hyogo. After obtaining her PhD from Osaka University in 2009, she has been teaching Japanese mythology and anthropology at Osaka University, Kobe University, and Doshisha University. Her most recent publications are a volume on Japanese rituals and their ties with the local communities, "Ritual Practices and Daily Rituals. Glimpses into the World of Matsuri" (Pro Universitaria 2018), and an edited volume on the body in Japanese culture, "Forms of the Body in Contemporary Japanese Society, Literature, and Culture" (Lexington Books 2020). She is also the author of a textbook of Japanese mythology (Osaka University 2012) and of several academic papers in Japanese and English, on topics related to the mythology and ethnology of Japan.

Hironori Arakawa is a Japanese anthropologist and folklorist. He currently teaches history, global studies, and international sociology at the National Institute of Technology, Akashi College. He has been interested in Japanese and Asian culture since he was an undergraduate student, and has been doing research on festivals at Kathmandu Valley in Nepal (1998), Shikoku Pilgrimage (1997-2005), and urban areas festivals in Japan (1997-present). He is currently conducting an anthropological survey on the happiness of Bhutan with sociologists and psychologists (The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science bilateral joint seminar 2018-2020). In 1997, he started a survey on the Tōka-Ebisu "Opening of the Gate" Ceremony, his research methods including active

participation: he took part in the ritual race for the "lucky man" eight times. He received his doctoral degree from Osaka University in 2015, and continues to discuss the validity of cultural anthropological methodologies in Education for international understanding (EIU).

Saranya Choochotkaew is a full-time lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. She obtained her PhD in Japanese Studies from Osaka University in 2017, and was appointed lecturer 2018. She has been teaching about Japanese traditional culture and Edo-period culture. During graduate school, she researched about Japanese perception of plants in Noh plays, and Buddhism in Japanese games and other entertainment in Edo period. After graduation, she has been working on topics related to the relationship between Buddhism and entertainment, and also plants in Japanese culture.

Andrea De Antoni is an Italian anthropologist based at Ritsumeikan University, where he teaches socio-cultural anthropology and religious studies. His research interests include perceptions of space, identity and discrimination, religion and religious healing, experiences with spirits, spirit possession and exorcism. He is currently studying spirit/ demonic possession and exorcism in contemporary Japan, Italy, and Austria from a comparative perspective. He published extensively on such topics both in English and in Japanese, and his main works include "Death and Desire in Modern Japan: Representing, Practicing, Performing" (coedited with Massimo Raveri, 2017), "The Practices of Feeling with the World: Towards an Anthropology of Affect, the Senses and Materiality" (with Paul Dumouchel, special issue of the Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology, 2017), and "Feeling (with) Japan: Affective, Sensory and Material Entanglements in the Field" (with Emma Cook, special issue of Asian Anthropology, 2019). He is presently working on the book "Going to Hell in Contemporary Japan: Feeling Landscapes of the Afterlife, Othering, Memory and Materiality" (Routledge, forthcoming 2020).

Junko Nagahara is a Japanese religious folklore researcher. She obtained her PhD from Kyoto University in 2008. After participating in the creation of a *Youkai* database at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, she taught Japanese language at National Institute of Technology, Kochi College. Currently, she is in charge of the program of Japanese culture at Osaka University (Graduate School of Language and Culture / School of Foreign Studies).

Recent major research themes: a comparative study of myths about water (characteristics of water thoughts in Southeast Asian countries), problems related to the body view of AI (aim to elucidate the relationship between AI and humans, using a viewpoint that discusses the relationship between the "spirits world" and humans from the perspective of traditional performing arts).

Her latest publications: "Relationship between the flood accident in the Philippines and the tradition of mystery" (2018). *Uitemate.* Volume 13, No. 2, "About the Origin of Personification; Seeing the Invisible". Co-author “Evolving *Youkai* Cultural Studies" (2017) Serika Shobo.

Introduction

The present volume is an eclectic collection of papers written by authors of various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds (Italy, Japan, Romania, Thailand) who have, however, similar academic histories and interests, the editor's intention being to create a series of books focused on beliefs, rituals and traditions in the Kansai area - a geographical zone that has often been defined as the "cultural heart" of Japan. As an anthropologist whose main research topic is Japanese *matsuri* (festivals), I am most definitely not implying that Kansai is the only area of high interest when it comes to the study of Japanese ritual practices and ceremonies; I have chosen it for practical purposes as well: it is the area where I am based and have conducted extensive research, whose results might be of use both as ethnographic records, as well as tools for a further analysis of contemporary Japanese society.

The papers in this volume refer to elements related to Shinto, Buddhism, or Oomoto-kyô (a fairly new religion), which might lead the readers to believe that they are mostly connected to religious studies. However, it is not religion and faith that fall under the focus of the present collection, but practices and beliefs of the 21st century that do have an

undeniable religious aspect, yet cannot be defined, analyzed and understood only from the perspective of religion. As Joy Hendry succinctly put it, "Japan has been influenced by a great number of religious traditions", and "religion pervades many spheres that others might call secular [… so] it is sometimes difficult to draw a line between the 'religious' and the 'secular'." (*Understanding Japanese Society*, Routledge 2019: 157) On a similar note, but referring to a more restricted ideological zone, Mr. Tanenori Terai, former *gûji* (high priest) of Osaka Tenmangu Shrine, stated in a lecture from October 20, 2019, that "Shinto is not a religion, but a way of life." It becomes thus obvious that both the anthropologist and the religious practitioner look beyond the doctrine when analyzing phenomena in Japanese society, and emphasize the fact that certain practices may be rooted in faith and a belief in the supernatural, but are not restricted by belonging to a certain cult, and have become widespread in the lay world.

The present volume refers to ***beliefs***, ***ritual practices***, and ***celebrations***, all terms that require precise definitions, but it is not within the scope of this project to provide a unitary description of these concepts. Each author has defined their operating terms according to their direction of research, the most important common element being the fact that all of them wrote their respective chapters based on direct interaction with, and participant observation of the phenomenon discussed. In the chapter "*Neri-kuyō*: Ascending to the Paradise with Bodhisattvas," Saranya Choochotkaew

analyzes a ritual practice unequivocally related to Buddhism, a ceremony more than one thousand years old which represents a reenactment of an old legend (that of a princess who is taken to paradise during her lifetime due to her piety and good deeds), as well as a way for the believers to catch a glimpse of the Pure Land Paradise during their lifetime by becoming, for a brief hour, vessels for the spirits of Bodhisattvas and other heavenly beings. The ceremony takes place at a temple and is declaredly Buddhist, yet, as the author herself notices, elements pertaining to Japanese indigenous beliefs, such as the idea that the souls of the ancestors dwell on top of mountains, or the presence of the sacred palanquin that carries the spirit of the deity celebrated during the ceremony, define it as an integral part of Japanese culture rather than a mere manifestation of a specific religion.

A similar line of thought appears in Junko Nagahara's chapter, "Reconsideration of the Relationship between Rituals and Noh: the Case of Noh *Seiōbo* in *Oomoto*" - again, the analysis is focused on a specific cult, one stemming from Shinto this time, yet religious syncretism is markedly there. Just like *Neri-kuyō*, the Noh play *Seiōbo* offers the practitioner the possibility of transcending the human world and catching a glimpse of divinity. Both rituals are, at the same time, the promise of salvation on both realms, and a re-interpretation of the universal belief that by putting on a mask, the performer allows his or her body to become a medium, a way for the divine to descend and express itself in human form.

Andrea De Antoni's paper "Ghost in Translation. Non-Human Actors, Relationality, and Haunted Places in Contemporary Kyoto" is less closely related to a certain doctrine, and more of an ethnographic analysis supported by a comprehensive theoretical framework on the evolution of new beliefs in ghosts and haunted places in contemporary Kyoto. It is a paper based not only a two-year long field work experience, but also on historical research on the origin and development of such beliefs in Japanese culture. The analysis focuses on the concept of "translation", a process through which human and non-human agents are involved in complex networks of events and phenomena, eventually leading to the establishment of haunted places. The author discusses two specific cases, but his conclusions are relevant at a much larger scale, one that can help understand the belief in ghosts in Japan, a cultural characteristic that has ancient roots and which continues to evolve in and adapt to contemporary society.

The remaining two chapters, "The Invention of the Tōka-Ebisu "Opening of the Gate" Ceremony and the "Lucky Man" at Nishinomiya Shinto Shrine", and "Uchimashô - Fieldnotes on Tenjin Matsuri" are bona fide ethnographies focused on two of the most important *matsuri* in present-day Kansai: Tôka Ebisu (the Tenth-Day Ebisu, a festival for the God Ebisu, protector of fishermen and merchants and one of the most celebrated deities in the area), and Tenjin Matsuri, one of the three great festivals of Japan. Hironori Arakawa offers a detailed history of what has already become a tradition in Kansai now, one associated with the religious

practice of worshipping the god Ebisu as a protector of commerce and businessmen: the *ichiban-fuku* race at Nishinomiya Shrine. This chapter offers an insight into the process of turning social practices, heavily influenced by economic developments such as the establishment of new transportation routes, into ritual ones. More than an analysis of a religious phenomenon, this chapter emphasizes the highly important role played by such ritual practices in Japanese society, being at the same time an accurate reflection on the changes undergone by seemingly immutable rituals over the span of a mere century.

While my own period of research has not been as long as Dr. Arakawa's, the "Fieldnotes on Tenjin Matsuri" are based on extensive fieldwork, and represent one the few (if not the only one) such papers written in a European language. Since this particular topic is still a work in progress for me, I have only provided a description of the *matsuri*, with a few details regarding its origins and history, and hope to complete a more in-depth analysis in the near future.

As I mentioned in the beginning, this is not a comprehensive work on ritual practices in Kansai, but a collection of papers that, through the efforts of the authors, who have all had direct contact with the subject of their research, most of them having conducted extensive fieldwork, aim to offer some new insights into the culture of Japan. A culture whose quintessence, as Professor Shunsuke Okunishi stated, is defined by its foundation of beliefs, rituals, and ritual practices.

The Invention of the Tōka-Ebisu "Opening of the Gate" Ceremony and the "Lucky Man" at Nishinomiya Shinto Shrine

Hironori ARAKAWA

Introduction

Every year on January 10th, the main gate (commonly called the "Great Red Gate") at Nishinomiya Shrine in Nishinomiya City, Hyogo Prefecture, is opened at 6 a.m. for visitors to proceed to the main shrine. This event is known as the Tōka-Ebisu "Opening of the Gate" Ceremony. The first three people to arrive at the main shrine are designated as *fuku-otoko* (lucky men).

More than 5,000 people participated in this ceremony in 2020[1]. Media coverage of the event has increased from year to year, with not just local Kansai-area media, but also the national television networks and, in 2008, even the international news organization filing reports globally.

[1] *Asahi shinbun*, evening Hanshin edition, January 10, 2020 (https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASN197QK6N19PIHB037.html accessed 2020/03/01).

Where did this ceremony originate? How has it changed over the years and due to what factors? The present paper seeks to answer these questions through an examination of historical records. Using such contemporary sources as newspapers and the shrine daily logs, I will focus in particular on developments in the modern period from later years of the Meiji period to 1940's. My goals are to show how this ceremony changed in parallel with the transformation of modern society, and to conduct an inquiry related to the meaning that this transformed ceremony came to have in the society of the time.

"Opening of the Gate" Ceremony in 2020

"Opening of the Gate" Ceremony in 2019

Methodology

Previous research relevant to the goals of the current study includes the work of YOSHII Yoshitaka (the former head priest of Nishinomiya Shrine) on the Ebisu cult and the Tōka-Ebisu ceremony (1990), and research by TANAKA Sen'ichi on the nationwide cult of Ebisu (2003). Research limited to the Tōka-Ebisu ceremony at Nishinomiya has been conducted using an exclusively anthropological approach, primarily participant observation, interviews, and distributing questionnaires to participants. I employed the current methodology of using newspaper sources to trace historical transitions to a limited extent in a previous article, "Tōka-Ebisu kaimon shinji kō."(Yoneyama 2001: 35~70) In the present article, I also use documents from the shrine itself -

Nishinomiya jinja shamu nikki (Nishinomiya shrine's daily logs) - in hopes of arriving at a more precise depiction of the transformation the ceremony went through in the modern period.

I have used YOSHII's work and shrine records to reconstruct the changes of the Tōka-Ebisu ceremony, where the "Opening of the Gate" ceremony is believed to have originated. To trace the changes in the ceremony that unfolded in the modern period, I used newspapers and *Nishinomiya nikki*. The newspaper sources include primarily microfilm copies of the *Osaka Asahi Shinbun* (hereafter *Asahi Shinbun*) and the Hanshin and Kobe editions of the *Kobe Shinbun*[2]. Entries from the *Nishinomiya jinja shamu nikki* were reviewed from the Meiji through Shōwa periods. Unfortunately, the shrine's daily logs from 1941 to 1945 were lost to fire due to the Nishinomiya air raid of August 1945; consequently, any future inquiries into that period of important historical changes will have to rely solely on newspaper sources[3].

The Origins of the Tōka-Ebisu

YOSHII Yoshitaka notes in his study that the Tōka-Ebisu:

[2] The old editions of the newspapers were accessed through the archives of Nishinomiya Central Library and National Diet library in Tokyo.
[3] The newspaper quotes have been translated from Japanese into English by Jessica Starling.

"is performed mainly at Ebisu shrines in and west of the Kansai region just after the New Year's season, for three days from January 9th to 11th. The hustle and bustle in the area before the shrine in particular is said to outdo that of the Tokyo Otori-san [*tori no ichi*] festivals. The festival follows a pattern that has long been deeply connected to older folk beliefs in a way that is different from the [ancient] state-sponsored festivals (*kansai*). Here, the *kami* is aroused and a world in which the *kami* and humans are united is created in the ritual area (*yuniwa*)[4]." (1990: 40)

It can be seen from many documents that the characteristic of Nishinomiya Shrine Tōka-Ebisu from ancient times was *"igomori*". I will show an *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Furoku* (supplement) article dated February 19, 1899 (Meiji 32); the excerpt below originally appeared in a 1994 paper titled "*Yebisu shinbun*" [Ebisu newspapers] by ŌE Tokio (1994), who has conducted research on deities of fortune:

"The *kami*(deity) celebrated at Nishinomiya Shrine, in Nishinomiya City, Muko District, Settsu Province, is known to the world as Ebisu Ōkami. From ancient times he has been deeply respected in folk belief as a deity who provides happiness and fortune. There is not a region throughout Japan where he is not celebrated and

[4] *Tori-no-ichi* festivals are events that take place at *otori* (rooster or cock) shrines held on the day of the cock.

worshipped. Today I beg the readers' patience as I inquire into the reasons why he is worthy of a great festival. There are those who have said that the Tōka-Ebisu festival has long been an *igomori* festival. This is because every year on the eve of the grand festival on January 10, all of the parishioners [*ujiko*] of the shrine take the pine decoration that had been used to celebrate the New Year hung at the entrance of their homes and turn it upside down. They close the gate, lay down a straw mat, and stay inside their home from sundown to sunrise, refraining from making any sounds or echoes in their quiet seclusion. The next day at daybreak, they open their doors is opened and race to the shrine. This is commonly known as "Tōka-Ebisu." [...] Thus, even now on the 9th day [of the first month], there are houses that turn their New Year's pine decorations upside down. This practice has been seen in ancient times based on such records as the [Muromachi-period work] *Jūhen ōninki*." Supplement Page1

The article does specifically use the word *igomori* (meaning "seclusion", and often referring to seclusion rituals related to religious practices). Certain elements such as the upside-down pine decorations do appear unique to Nishinomiya, but we can deduce from the general form of the rituals that this indeed is a variety of the *monoimi* (rites of austerities and purification, a category that includes *igomori*) that are performed in many regions in Japan.

YANAGITA Kunio (1989: 222) wrote in his 1942 article "Nihon no Matsuri" that *"Mikari* and *mikawari* were performed in a region stretching from the two Jōsō districts to the Bōshū region in southern Chiba Prefecture for seven to ten days in the latter part of the 11th lunar month. People would sit in silence. There was no laughter or spirited talk, they did not tie up their hair, nor did they weave at the loom or sew. They would not go out to work or let anyone inside. Prior to the event, they would particularly not like to be visited by a warrior."

In other regions, this rite is called *igomori* - purificatory abstinence rites that entail going into seclusion - but here it was known as *mikari* and *mikawari*. YANAGITA argues that the rite originally was called *mikawari* ("changing of the body"), and that it provided a preparatory period during which persons would renew their everyday, mundane flesh so they could become participants in a purification festival. YANAGITA also notes that the ritual lasted around seven days in ancient times, but was shortened in some areas to only two or three days the closer we get to modern times due to work-related demands. (1989: 221)

YOSHII reached the following conclusion based on YANAGITA's *mikawari* thesis: "The strict seclusion rite would change the body (*mikawari*) into a purified form closer to that of a deity, whose state was different from that of an ordinary human. This was a Shinto rite for making the spiritual preparations to begin creating a space where deities and humans could commune that would be appropriate for

visiting the next day for the Tōka-Ebisu ceremony. I believe this is the fundamental significance of the *mikawari* - that is to say, the *mikari* - rite." (1990: 61)

I shall take a moment here to explain my own interpretation concerning the evolution of the Tōka-Ebisu. In ancient times, there was a rite called *imi* or *imoi* [the word is related to *monoimi*- avoiding uncleanness.] that was a local custom in the Nishinomiya area. It was performed in the first month of the lunar calendar - that is to say, during the interim between the winter and spring in the agricultural calendar. The intermingling of this rite with belief in the deity Hiruko (leech child) that had begun along the coast south of Nishinomiya marked the starting point for the *igomori* rite unique to Nishinomiya.

Subsequently, thanks in part to tales spread by puppeteers (*kugutsushi*) from Middle Ages, the deity Hiruko, who had possessed strong connotations of being a deity of fishing, took on the characteristics of the deity of fortune Ebisu, who was also associated with such concerns as business and agriculture. As this transition unfolded, the rite attracted the belief of commoners in increasing numbers and it became established as one of the most important in the Kansai region. YOSHII writes: "It was during the Edo Period that the deity of luck attracted the belief of many as a deity of commerce and became integrated into the lives of the common folk. The appointed day, coming as it did immediately after the annual New Years' rites, was best suited for praying anew for good fortune in the year to come."

(1990: 63) One can imagine how people came to take advantage of this rite as a special event at a time when the region was becoming the most commercialized one in Japan.

Modern Transformations

The Meiji Restoration brought along great changes for Nishinomiya. The establishment of State Shintō saw the nearby Hirota Shrine designated as one of the 22 Major Shrines (*kanpei taisha*) due to its association with the Empress Jingū; Nishinomiya Shrine, for its part, received the rank of prefectural shrine (*kensha*). Of greater significance to the discussion here was the adoption of the solar calendar in 1873 (Meiji 6), which had a major impact on the scheduling of annual festivals and ceremonies throughout Japan. All public and many private institutions switched to the new calendar at the same time. While many local rites and festivals continued to be held based on the old lunar calendar (*kyūreki*), the rhythm of the lives of city dwellers had changed to match the new Western (Gregorian) calendar (*shinreki*) and as a consequence the scheduling of local festivals changed to accommodate.

Some evidence of this is provided by the following passage from an article in the *Osaka Asahi* of January 10, 1883 (Meiji 16):

> Police from Nanba Police Station were kept busy yesterday and today as always by the Tōka- Ebisu festival. Patrolmen blocked rickshaw traffic from the

south side of Ebisu Bridge and stood along both return roads from Imamiya one by one at intervals of five or six to watch over the returning participants.

Thus, we see that the festival had taken root in the new calendar in Osaka within a decade of its adoption. The *Osaka Asahi* of January 10, 1891 (Meiji 24), noted that the police planned to construct temporary substations at the performance stage in Minami Shinchi and near the Hankai train station, given "the prospect of people thronging the area for this annual event should the weather be fine," which suggests that an extremely large turnout was expected.

The appearance of these articles on those dates demonstrates that the Tōka-Ebisu was being held in accordance with the new calendar in Osaka as the industrial area. The question then arises as to what the situation was at the main shrine in Nishinomiya. Unfortunately, I could not find any mention of the event in either the *Osaka Asahi* or its Kobe supplement for the 1880s. For the next mention we must turn to the February 26, 1893 (Meiji 26) *Osaka Asahi*:

Today will be the 10th day of the first month under the old calendar; accordingly, special trains will be dispatched today between Umeda and Kobe for the large number of people expected to visit Ebisu Shrine in Nishinomiya. Sellers of good luck charms (*hōe-tate shōnin*), peep box theater showmen (*nozoki karakuri*), and other side show operators have been setting up

shop since yesterday, along with the vendors of used items. The result is quite the bustling scene.

The foregoing articles suggest that a split had emerged regarding the scheduling of the Tōka-Ebisu, with the shrines in Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe (Yanagihara) going by the new calendar, and Nishinomiya Shrine using the old lunar one, as pilgrims use the National Railways (*kantetsu*).

However, the opening of the Hanshin Electric Railway in 1905 (Meiji 38) changed this general rule. The plan for the railway called for laying tracks through every town that had traditionally existed between Osaka and Kobe. Nishinomiya had been one of the most prominent shrine towns between Osaka and Kobe since medieval times, and thus was graced with the Ebisu station (currently the site of Nishinomiya Station on the Hanshin Main Line). This made it easier for people from Osaka and Kobe to visit the shrine, a development noted in the *Osaka Asahi*'s Kobe supplement for January 11, 1908:

The Tōka-Ebisu at Nishinomiya has been held every year since the opening of the Hanshin Electric Railway in accordance with both the old and new calendars. Though there were not as many revelers as at the old calendar Tōka-Ebisu, many people from Osaka and Kobe and surrounding areas came to the shrine thanks to the lovely weather and still winds yesterday. Two to three times as many people came the day before the festival,

and the trains were full of passengers all day long. All of the patrolmen from Nishinomiya police station were dispatched to manage the crowds. Patrolmen were also dispatched from police stations along the route to every area train station to control the traffic. No accidents of note had occurred by 3 p.m., and accordingly the roads around the shrine grounds and naturally those around the city were lively in general.

It can be surmised from these news reports that the new calendar Ebisu had become a vibrant affair. Still, the old calendar Ebisu also remained a lively occasion, based an article from the paper's Kobe supplement for February 12, 1908:

Regardless of whether or not the National Railway's new Ebisu station loses in the popularity contest with [that of] the Hanshin Electric Railway, the fact remains it became easier this year to get to the Ebisu festival. The number of visitors has grown, with people coming not only from Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe, but also from Shiga, Gifu, and Aichi to the east, and the various locations around Bantan [the ancient Harima and Tajima provinces; present-day western Hyōgo Prefecture] and Okayama to the west. More than a few visitors also came from Awa (Tokushima) and Awaji via special services operated by the [now-defunct merchant-ship operator] Osaka Shōsen. Some visitors stayed all night on the 9th and pushed their way through when the gates opened at

> 1 a.m. in an effort to be *dai-ichi no fuku* ["the first of the fortunate"]. The Ebisu Eve on the 10th (perhaps a mistake for the 9th) attracted a crowd rarely seen these days. A dreadful scene ensued when the crowd pushed inside the gates, creating a human avalanche. The ceremony ended just past 4 a.m. When the gate was opened, the area before the shrine - lit gorgeously with beacon fires - filled with people in an instant and for a moment no one could move at all.

The article tells us there was competition for passengers on Osaka-Kobe routes, mentioning as it does the National Railway (*Kantetsu*, the present-day JR) building new stations to attract passengers in order to compete with Hanshin Electric Railway. The competition would subsequently expand to include Hankyū Railway, which began service on its Kobe line in 1920 (Taishō 10)[5].

Also of particular note for our discussion here is the line that describes the rush to be first in the shrine to obtain fortune (*fuku*), which since the Muromachi period has been at the center of the Ebisu cult. We get the sense that the writer thought it exceptional for people to have lined up at the gate since the night before in such numbers that by early in the morning they had spilled over onto the grounds of the shrine. Furthermore, we see that the gate had taken on another role. The main gate (referred to as *akamon*, or "Great Red gate") is closely associated with the "Opening of the Gate" ceremony.

[5] Hanshin-kan Summit Executive Committee *"Hanshin-kan Modernism"* 1993.

Shrine lore from the Azuchi Momoyama period to the early Edo period had held that the gate was donated by TOYOTOMI Hideyori. Naturally, the gate was opened and closed for the Tōka-Ebisu during the Edo period, but the shrine's daily log attaches no special significance to that beyond it being opened and closed for business purposes. The shrine gate is hardly brought up in the newspapers prior to the article quoted above, though there are numerous instances that mention how people around town opened the gates to their homes after the period of seclusion. Accordingly, we should note well that this is the first instance in which the shrine gate itself was the object of special attention in any newspaper.

The Tōka-Ebisu in the Hanshin (Osaka-Kobe) Area

The January 1908 article from the *Osaka Asahi* 's Kobe supplement quoted above noted that "The Tōka-Ebisu at Nishinomiya has been held every year since the opening of the Hanshin Electric Railway in accordance with both the old and new calendars. Though there were not as many revelers as at the old calendar Tōka-Ebisu, many people from Osaka and Kobe and surrounding areas came to the shrine..." The January 11, 1909 (Meiji 42), edition of the *Osaka Asahi*'s Kobe supplement remarks that "Nishinomiya's Tōka-Ebisu [festival] is celebrated according to the lunar calendar." According to Nishinomiya's vice head priest (*gongūji*) YOSHII Yoshihide, although the rite at present takes place in keeping with both the new and old calendars, the Tōka-Ebisu was held

as an event open to the general public under both calendars only until 1945 (Shōwa 20).

Based on this, I hypothesize that (1) the number of people who became attuned to the rite being held in accordance with the new calendar rose as Osaka and Kobe suburbanized, and (2) the "main" and "secondary" festivals became reversed in a substantial term, based on the numbers of pilgrims and officiants. I shall now examine our source materials to explore the two hypotheses. I shall begin by crosschecking newspaper sources with shrine documents to determine when the change in stature of the festivals under the old and new calendars occurred. First, the January 9, 1911 (Meiji 45) *Osaka Asahi*'s Kobe supplement contains the following:

> The Nishinomiya Tōka-Ebisu slated for the 9th, 10th and 11th has been held every year based on both the old and the new calendars. Since the old calendar was eliminated, the same festival has been repeated three times - the first festival on January 10, the "Main Ebisu [festival]" on February 10, and the "Hatsuka [20th] Ebisu [festival]" on February 20. Festival participants apparently can receive good fortune during any of these events.

The article mentions that "the old calendar was eliminated", referring to the official calendar change in the government office in 1873. However, even in official

documents, the lunar calendar is written along with the new calendar until 1910 (Meiji 43). In this context, I guess “the elimination of the lunar calendar” means “the elimination of the lunar calendar in official documents in 1910 (Meiji 43)”. This article also states that "January 10 is the first festival, February 10 is the main festival, February 20 is the 20th Ebisu.” However, these new festival names rarely appear in the newspaper articles of the time, which leads to the conclusion that they did not become mainstream. The Tōka-Ebisu based on the old calendar, though, appears more often, as it can be seen in the following item from the February 3, 1924 (Taishō 14) *Osaka Asahi* Kobe supplement:

> (February 1924) The 2nd of this month is the date for the old calendar Tōka-Ebisu. Those who could not attend the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu as well as pilgrims from the countryside accordingly helped make “Ebisu Eve” events on the 1st quite the lively affair. Given that *setsubun* [the last day of winter under the old calendar] also falls on the 3rd, the date for *nokorifuku* (the last day of a three-day festival, local people called as “leftover fortune [day]”), so there should be even more people on hand.

Based on the shortness of the treatment and a comparison of the composition and size of this and other articles regarding the new calendar Ebisu with those from other years, one can surmise that the importance of the old and

new calendar's festivals changed places for pilgrims during the Taishō period. Since the newspapers do not note how many people participated in the old calendar Ebisu, we cannot make a numerical comparison. However, even though the turnout for the 1924 new calendar Ebisu was low "due to a little rain," local police data shows that the festival still had 190,000 participants over the three days. The Hanshin Electric Railway "was expected to cancel express service on all their lines for the Main Ebisu event on the 10th and run local trains stopping at every station to connect with [other trains]" (January 12, 1924 (Taishō 14) *Osaka Asahi* Kobe supplement) which for the time constituted a landmark response. That the size of the turnout depended on the weather, the nature of the deity being celebrated, and economic conditions remains true for the Tōka-Ebisu of today. Some articles as late as the early Shōwa Period mention that certain years saw more visitors come from the direction of Osaka and other years favored the Kobe direction due to concerns related to *ehō* (the most auspicious geomantic direction for a given year).

The newspapers show that the means of transit between Osaka and Kobe - the Hanshin, Hankyū, and national railways - fell into place between the first and third decades of the 20th century (from late Meiji through the Taishō period). It is conceivable that this is why a festivity that had once been primarily for Nishinomiya became an event for the entire Hanshin area.

Turning to the shrine's daily log for corroboration of these various developments, we find first a 1907 (Meiji 40)

entry noting that Hanshin Electric Railway (referred to as "rail company" in the log) held a special event on the day of the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu. The log further notes that the railway constructed two new waiting rooms at the Ebisu stop in connection with Osaka laying in an auspicious direction in 1907. The company also erected dozens of streetlights along the approach road to the shrine, along with six gas lanterns erected for aesthetic purposes.

I compared the old and new calendar Ebisu events using the shrine's daily log entries during in 1927 (Shōwa 2). The shrine did not count the actual number of people who participated in the old calendar event, but the log reports that for the new calendar event 95,435 people disembarked from Hanshin Electric Railway's Nishinomiya and Nishinomiya Higashi-guchi stations (82,787 at the former and 12,668 at the latter) over three days. The entry also notes how many images of Ebisu (*mie*) the shrine handed out. The data from the two events is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 : **New Calendar Tōka-Ebisu, 1927 (Shōwa 2)**

Type of Item	***Total***	***Remaining***	***Balance***
Good luck charms (*kai'un*)	11,000	1,250	9,750
Amulet coffer (*hakofuda*)	6,000	919	5,080
Daikoku image	10,000	6,100	3,900
Ebisu image (*mie*)	40,000	11,740	28,260

Figure 2 : **Old Calendar Tōka-Ebisu, 1927 (Shōwa 2)**

Type of Item	*Total*	*Remaining*	*Balance*
Good luck charms (*kai'un*)	1,000	66	934
Amulet coffer (*hakofuda*)	1,000	69	931
Daikoku image (*daikoku*)	3,500	2,192	3,852
Ebisu image (*mie*)	10,000	3,852	8,148

"Total" is the number of items the shrine office prepared and had on hand; "Remaining" is the number of those that went undistributed; and "Balance" is the number of items that the shrine actually bestowed. For example, let us attend to the number of images (*mie*, a painted image of the deity Ebisu), which was at both festivals the highest volume item. While it is difficult to make generalizations due to such variables as economic conditions, *ehō*, public holidays (the old calendar Tōka-Ebisu that year fell on February 11, which was *kigensetsu* and is now National Foundation Day), and the weather, we can nonetheless deduce from this statistic that the scale of the new calendar event was roughly four times that of the old calendar one.

Figure 3 : **Number of Rail Passengers around the New Calendar Ebisu**

Year	**1936**	**1937**	**1938**	**1939**
Hanshin	159,600	225,600	232,000	289,400
Han-Koku	50,400	53,700	52,800	60,300
Hankyū	17,156	12,955	not surveyed	not recorded

Next, the shrine's log records in detail the annual passenger volume data for the 10-year period beginning in

1935 (the second decade of the Sh ōwa period) for Hanshin Electric Railway's Main Line, Hanshin Electric Railway's Kokudō line, and the Hankyū Railway (see Figure 3).

Each figure represents the total number of passengers over the three-day festival period. The Hanshin Electric Railway Main Line data is the total for Ebisu (Nishinomiya) and Nishinomiya Higashi-guchi stations. The Hanshin Electric Railway Kokudō Line data covers passengers disembarking at its Ebisu and Fudabasuji stations. The Hankyū Railway data is for Nishinomiya Ebisu Rinji ("temporary") Station, which the company erected between its Kita-guchi and Shukugawa station for the duration of the festival. Unfortunately, no data is available either for the National Railway or for 1938 and 1939 for Hankyū Railway; however, it is evident that Hanshin Electric Railway (its Kokudō Line was a tram line between Osaka and Kobe that ran along the present-day National Route 2) was the primary source of transportation for this event by an overwhelming margin.

Prior to the Meiji Restoration, one would have been justified in thinking of Nishinomiya as a single farm village and its immediate vicinity, albeit one with a thriving *sake* brewing business. However, as the foregoing shows, the growth of the transportation infrastructure turned it into a residential community for Osaka and Kobe, and a site of cultural production. At the same time, the Osaka-Kobe industrial belt that was to be the trigger for Japan's second industrial revolution developed in the early years of the Shōwa period;

the town of Nishinomiya became a city in the process and the population influx intensified. The jumble of train lines made the area more accessible, bringing together large numbers of migrants from outside the area. These people now living in a city perhaps found it easy to adopt the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu as a festival that suited their urban lifestyle.

The documents introduced above allow us to infer that the development of the transportation infrastructure (the Hanshin Electric Railway in particular) led to the urbanization and suburbanization of Nishinomiya. This produced large numbers of pilgrims who lived their lives based on the new calendar. That development in turn verifies the hypothesis that the new calendar festival supplanted the old calendar event, leading to a reversal in the relative statures of the two events. One can also conclude that the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu festival was a by-product of the construction of the inter-Osaka-Kobe area, a process that unfolded hand-in-hand with the urbanization of Nishinomiya.

Thus, the growth of the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu festival and its transformation for all intents and purposes into the main festival can be attributed in part to the business efforts of the railway companies. But why were so many people gathering for this festival? I would like to explore this point in detail. In the next section, I review newspapers from 1937 (Shōwa 12) onward to investigate the development at the new calendar festival of the “Opening of the Gate” ceremony, an event that continues to attract much attention at Nishinomiya Shrine even today.

The Changes of the New Calendar Tōka-Ebisu Festival

The earliest newspaper article I have seen that refers to people rushing to get to the main shrine after the gate has been opened during the new calendar festival comes from the January 10, 1913 (Taishō 2) *Osaka Asahi* Kobe supplement:

> As is the case every year, everyone - including not just pilgrims but also even the street vendors - who had been on the grounds of the shrine was driven out between 8 and 9 p.m. This was done to hold the late-night ritual and perform the usual "opening of the gate" ceremony at 5 a.m. They say that the first person to pass through the gate and get to the sanctuary (*shinden*) to pull the cord of the bell will receive great good fortune, and so many people will brave the morning cold and push toward the gate, but what if it rains?

The word "usual" here suggests that the practice had become a routine state of affairs for some time. However, the task of gathering documents that demonstrate this remains ahead of us; currently this is the oldest record we have.

While the passage above does not tell us when the practice began, we do know that opening the gate had become an established Tōka-Ebisu ritual even under the new calendar, and that it was believed that the first person to reach the bell's rope would receive "great fortune." The February 12, 1908 (Meiji 41), *Osaka Asahi* Kobe supplement reported: "Some people who had arrived on the 9th to stay

overnight at the shrine pushed in when the gate opened at 1 a.m. to try to be the first to receive fortune," thus indicating the practice had completely become a part of the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu. The newspaper also tells us that the *igomori* festival the shrine held on January 10 followed the same pattern as the one held under the old calendar, and that during these rites pilgrims and street vendors left the grounds of the shrine to places outside the gate.

However, this is not to say that all of the parishioners of Nishinomiya Shrine went into seclusion as had been the case with the *igomori* festival during the Edo Period. The rite had changed. Now, the only site for *igomori* was the grounds of the shrine - the area "within the gate" (*mon no naka*). Opening the gate at 5 a.m. released the shrine grounds from their state of seclusion, at which point the pilgrims made their dash "in pursuit of fortune."

An article dated the January 11, 1913 (Taishō 2) *Osaka Asahi* Kobe supplement describes the scene from the previous day at 5 a.m.:

> The dawn "opening of the gate" took place as usual at 5 a.m. When the gate was opened, the mass of faithful that had clustered together shoved their way in all at once. It made one think of a race among the frontline elements of an army from the days of the Genpei War. The first person to arrive at the sanctuary (*shinden*) received a hearty welcome and was given a paper amulet (*shinpu*), after which he would depart with great happiness. This

was quite a wonderful sight. People continued to come without let up by train from both Kobe and Osaka, including the nearby areas and outskirts. The Hanshin Electric Railway company had erected electric streetlights the previous evening at Ebisu, Kōroen, and Higashi-guchi stations, so those who arrived in the evening would not have to worry about their footing. At 9 a.m. those merchants who had claimed spaces the night before along the roadside were earnestly calling out to the visitors.

Likening the scene to a battle from the 12th century Genpei War is perhaps an overstatement, but it does convey the feverish atmosphere. Note also from this article that the shrine gave the person who was first to arrive at the sanctuary a special amulet. On the whole, the article demonstrates that by around start of the Taishō Period (1912) everyone from the pilgrims to the priests shared in the understanding that the first person to reach the sanctuary had a special place in the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu.

The February 6 *Osaka Asahi*, 1913 (Taishō 2) *Osaka Asahi* Kobe supplement describes the old calendar Tōka-Ebisu as follows:

The shrine's venerable sanctuary was decorated and the grounds cleaned in preparation for the arrival of pilgrims for the Lunar Calendar Tōka-Ebisu on the 15th at Nishinomiya Ebisu Shrine, just as had been done for

> the Tōka-Ebisu festival in January. Pilgrims from country villages that still adhere to the lunar calendar set out from the early morning. Hanshin Electric Railway trains from both directions were filled to capacity by after 10 a.m. The travelers coming from afar by train laden with their shoes and *furoshiki*-wrapped bundles all tied up in red blankets(*akaketto*) would cram the roads with every arrival. As a result, the street stalls and vendors did excellent business.

The coverage for this event was relatively small compared to that for the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu. Also of interest is the fact that no mention is made of people rushing forward at the opening of the gate as had been the case in articles about the old calendar Tōka-Ebisu from as recently as five years before.

Given that the *Osaka Asahi* was a newspaper whose readers presumably lived in Osaka and the content of the Kobe supplement was directed toward readers in Kobe, we can presume that most pages of the paper dealt with matters connected with living in those respective cities. Thus, the *Osaka Asahi* focused its coverage on the new calendar Ebisu first at Imamiya Shrine and later at Horikawa Shrine (both located in the city of Osaka), while the Kobe supplement prioritized the event at Yanagihara Ebisu Shrine. This changed little in the 1910s. However, we see a dramatic increase during this decade - which marked the end of the Meiji Period and start of the Taishō - in the number of articles concerning the

new calendar Tōka-Ebisu at Nishinomiya. This increase began in 1913 (Taishō 2 , and by the Shōwa Period for the most part only the new calendar Ebisu is mentioned in the news.

I spoke of this change in the previous section. The invention of the Hanshin intercity area (*Hanshinkan*) turned Nishinomiya into an urban area, and visits by area residents now living their lives according to the new calendar increased. The newspaper coverage attests to the fact that the new rite had surpassed the original old-calendar one in scale and become the main festival.

Finally, while the idea that the first person through the gate to ring the sanctuary bell would be blessed with fortune was not the only reason for holding the old-calendar Tōka-Ebisu, the notion nonetheless was adopted in its entirety under the new- calendar rite and became a customary practice. The newspapers show that this development occurred during the Meiji-Taishō transition. Be that as it may, we are now faced with the question of why the "opening the gate" ceremony and the notion of receiving fortune became customary features of the new calendar event. In the next section, I will take up these questions along with those raised in the previous section.

The Birth of "*Ichiban-fuku*" (first among the fortunate)

The first time we see the phrase *Ichiban-fuku,* which remains in use today, is in the following excerpt from the January 11, 1914 (Taishō 3) *Osaka Asahi*'s Kobe supplement.

> On the 10th of the month, in Nishinomiya, at the main (Hon) Ebisu [festival], the pilgrims waited for the gates to open at 5 a.m. to try to obtain the *Ichiban-fuku*. As they kept pushing forward, by around 8 or 9 a.m., the shrine grounds were entirely filled with people.

The time of the gate opening, 5 a.m., was the same as in 1913 (Taishō 2), one hour earlier than it is today. January 11, 1917 (Taishō 6) *Osaka Asahi*'s Kobe supplement article from the same newspaper reports:

> The rite was performed at 4 a.m. while the sky was still dark, under the light of the blaze of a bonfire. After it finished, at around 6 a.m., the East and West gates were opened.

The time for opening the gates had become exactly 6 a.m. by 1920. In 1918, the newspapers were full of stories about the war's *nouveaux-riches*; nothing was written that touched on the topic of when the gates were opened. I could not find any data on this in articles from 1919, either. The following was written on January 11, 1920 (Taishō 9) *Osaka Asahi*'s Kobe supplement:

> Today, the *igomori* ritual was held in the early hours of the morning at the so-called main Ebisu festival. Pilgrims formed a single line when the gates were opened at 6 a.m. and surged forward, racing like in a marathon to the front of the shrine to claim the prize of

being the *ichiban-fuku*. Fortunately, as always there were no injuries - a miracle indeed.

The above passage and the use of the word “marathon” in particular make it clear that the site was crowded with people in a state of excitement. The gate-opening ceremony does not come up again in the newspapers of that period until the following mention in the *Osaka Asahi*’s Hanshin edition for January 11, 1935 (Shōwa 10):

> The people who were vying to be the first to reach the bell crowded in tightly at 6 a.m., and as the gates opened the race to the hall of worship to claim good fortune ensued.

The oldest name of the person who became *ichiban - fuku* appeared for the first time in the *Osaka Asahi’s* Hanshin edition for January 10, 1937 (Shōwa 12). The article, accompanied by a photograph, is titled “Incredible dash! First Race for good luck will be held on Nishinomiya Shrine at 6 a.m. this morning.” (Newspaper 1)

> For the past several years, TANAKA Taichi, an employee at Kubocho Chiashi Lumber Store, got the first place. But last year, he was absent due to family issues, and KIYATA Saburo got the first place. This year, both pilgrims will join this race.


大阪朝日新聞
もの凄いダッシュ！
鈴を目がけて
一番乗り競走
けふ西宮戎神社の十日戎
朝六時に開門す
雨にめげぬ
東邦、合同の合併
特に反對せず
他都市で
紹介
Newspaper 1: *Osaka Asahi* January 10th, 1937

The next day, the *Osaka Asahi*'s Hanshin edition for January 11, 1937 (Shōwa 12), published an article, accompanied by a photograph, titled "A storm of people aiming for good fortune."

> Some 3,000 people - young and old, men and women - had descended on the great gate in the hopes that they would be the first in fortune, chanting *wassho*, *wassho*! ("heave-ho, heave-ho!") as they waited impatiently for the gate to open. At the signal of the drum, they surged forward in a great burst, rushing straight for the bell of

the main shrine building in the freshly cleansed ritual area (*yuniwa*). The grounds were already buried under a crowd of pilgrims the instant after TANAKA Taichi of the Chiashi Lumber Store in Kubo Town leapt forward.

The townspeople's interest had been absorbed for the past few days by the question of who would arrive first at this year's Ebisu festival, and as expected it was Taichi TANAKA . . . "I won! I'm number one! I'm number one!" the winner shouted loudly. TANAKA, now 37, has won the race at Nishinomiya a record 16 times since he first participated at the age of 21, having lost only in last year's festival. His philosophy about coming in first consists solely of doing his thing in a solemn manner: "It was not out of desire. I am happy just to be healthy and able to make the visit. I'm going to take the good fortune back to my boss. I would have felt bad somehow if I did not come in first."

The *Osaka Asahi*'s Hanshin evening edition for January 11, 1938 (Shōwa 13), also contains an article about TANAKA,

The 3,000 virtuous men and women who had been waiting for the chance to become the *ichiban-fuku* surged forward when the gate was opened at the drum signal at 6 a.m. Illuminated by bonfires burning at several places on the grounds, they stampeded forward in their quest to reach the bell in the sanctuary. The

karamon [the Chinese-style gate], which is usually closed, was thrown wide open to welcome in the first to arrive. TANAKA Taichi, the *ichiban-fuku* for 16 years, from Chiashi Lumber Store in Kubo Town, Nishinomiya [City], and Omatsu Shinnosuke from Kasukabe Village, Tanba Hikami District, leapt into the purified ritual area at the same time, raising a joyous celebratory song.

From this we can assume 17 is the correct figure for the number of consecutive years that TANAKA became *ichiban-fuku*. The shrine's daily log for 1938 for the first time also records the name of the person who came in first: "The first arrival was as usual TANAKA Taichi from Chiashi Lumber Store." An article from *Osaka Asahi*'s Hanshin edition from 1939 (Shōwa 14), reports that TANAKA was an eighteen-year record holder. However, taking into account the 1937 (Shōwa 12) article, it is possible that this means it was the 18th time for TANAKA to have run the race (including 17 times in which he was the *ichiban-fuku*). The "Opening of the Gate" ceremony of that time cannot be easily compared with today's event, but regardless this is an incredible record considering the difficulty of becoming the *ichiban-fuku*.

Tōka-Ebisu during the Sino-Japanese War

Once it was determined that seventeen-time winner TANAKA had shared first place with Omatsu from Tanba in 1938, it would seem that speed - an element that has nothing

to do with faith - was regarded with greater importance when it came to the dash to be first among the fortunate. Articles about the speed of the participants became more prevalent thereafter. At the same time, the shadow of war dogged those reports. The following excerpts from newspapers and the shrine's daily logs for 1939-1940 (Shōwa 14-15) confirm these developments. First, an article from the *Osaka Asahi*'s Hanshin edition for January 11, 1939:

> TANAKA Taichi, the manager of the Chiashi Lumber Store in Kubo Town, Nishinomiya City, has finally relinquished his throne after a record 18 wins in the Ebisu race that has everyone in town absorbed with the question of "who will be first?"
>
> A victory song was raised instead to TASHIBA Kuichi, 25, an employee of Taguchi Store in Ishizai Town, Nishinomiya City. Kuichi's older brother, Ennosuke, 29, an employee of Chiashi Lumber Store, took second place. TANAKA came in third.
> TANAKA had not been feeling well in recent days and was apprehensive about taking part, but he showed up garbed in the dashing costume of the young men's group and accompanied by the aforementioned TASHIBA brothers as his seconds. They began their wait around 1 a.m., joined by a crowd of people jostling one another in front of the main gate.
> At a signal from the drum at 6 a.m., 20 or 30 men from the fire brigade opened the heavy doors from the inside.

The crowd raised a cheer and in a twinkling surged forward like a flood. TANAKA, as expected, was among the dozen or so front runners. He broke through to the front, but became labored as he ran across the two-block-length of the shrine grounds. Seeing this, the TASHIBA brothers - perhaps thinking that the time had come for someone else to reign supreme - gave it one last spurt. Kuichi was the first to reach the bell and sing out in victory, claiming the prize of *kagamimochi* [mirror-shaped rice cakes, usually presented as an offering to the *kami*].

"TANAKA was physically ill, so I went so far as to take part to help him out. When he ran into trouble, though, I just had to push everyone else aside. I have no intention of breaking TANAKA's record," said Kuichi. Both TASHIBA brothers are hardy types who ran track as athletes when they were at Yōgai Elementary School. First-place finisher Kuichi works at Taguchi Sake Barrel Maker in Ishizai Town, Nishinomiya City. His older brother, second-place finisher Ennosuke, is a serious young man who works with TANAKA at the Chiashi Lumber store. Ennosuke is a private first class in the engineers. He served at the Battle of Shanghai and currently serves on the board of the central branch of the reservists' association in Nishinomiya. TANAKA expressed his satisfaction despite having surrendered his reign in his 19th race due to being fatigued from illness." I thought it would be difficult to come in first

with my body weak from having been sick. At the very least, since I held that status for so long I wanted to bestow the position of first among the fortunate to someone among my friends. For the TASHIBA brothers, with whom I am generally well-acquainted, to have stepped up to claim that status is no small thing." (Newspaper 2)

山室光子さん
を囲んで

福男に新人現はる……
—連続十八年の田中さんは三番—

Newspaper 2(above) : *Osaka Asahi* January 11th, 1939


福の神へ波うつ人出
弗返つた西宮本戎
一番乗は健脚兄弟
病後で王座を譲つた田中さん
名誉の戦死
営門で老父

Newspaper 3(right): *Osaka Mainichi* January 11th, 1939


の飜譯
正義日本の紹介に
ヒルバーン教授
深夜の一番福爭ひ
兄の激勵と友情に答へて
巨石に水鳥偲ぶ
名譽の戰傷者

Newspaper 4: *Osaka Asahi* January 11th, 1940

The same year, Osaka Mainichi used the word "fukuotoko" as a race winner in 1939. This article is the first one where I could find the word "fukutoko". (Newspaper 3) The top three people in the vignettes below are *fukuotoko* (Lucky Men). From above, TASHIBA Kuichi, TASHIBA Ennosuke, TANAKA Taichi.

Next is an article dated January 11, 1940 (Shōwa 15), from the *Osaka Asahi*:

> TASHIBA Kuichi of Taguchi Sake Tarumaru store in Ishizai Town for a second year in a row has established his supremacy in the race to be number one at the Tōka-Ebisu in Nishinomiya, where the question of "who will be first among the fortunate this year" has been the talk of the town. Concealed behind Kuichi's outstanding performance were the passionate emotions of his brave older brother [Ennosuke] and the deep friendship of his [school] seniors, all encouraging him from the frontlines. Ennosuke received his glorious call-up notice last August and shipped out to the front in China. He is active as a private first class, but even at the frontlines he is always thinking about the Tōka-Ebisu race. He sent by air mail a photograph taken on the 10th of last month of himself with his comrades before enemy-occupied territory along with a letter saying, "Do your best when it comes to being the first to the bell in the New Year of a radiant Greater East Asia."Kuichi received this encouraging correspondence from the front on the 9th,

the eve of the festival, and decided that he would “go at it with the spirit my brother had when capturing enemy territory.”

TANAKA Taichi (40), manager of Chiashi Lumber Store in Kubo Town, Nishinomiya, and a close friend of Pvt. Ennosuke, was deeply moved by these brothers of a nation at war [*gunkoku kyōdai*]. The winner of the race a record-setting 18 times, TANAKA decided to enter this year’s event as Kuichi’s second.

This morning at 4 a.m., Kuichi put on his running shirt and a headband emblazoned with the *hinomaru* flag of Japan, and tucked his brave brother’s photograph and letter into his pocket. When the gate opened at 6 a.m., he threw himself forward filled with a fierce determination to win. Several people formed into a pack in the opening stretch and ran together through the darkness. As they closed in on Nangū Shrine, Kuichi shot out in front with TANAKA continuing to urge him on, shouting, “TASHIBA, do it!”

Finally, TASHIBA shouted out his triumph. Grabbing the bell’s string, he exclaimed emotionally and without conscious thought, “My brother, I did it!” He
received from the shrine’s chief priest YOSHII a rice offering, chopsticks, and a protective amulet for his brave older brother as a prize for coming in first.

“It was extremely cold this year, but the cold is nothing when I think of my brother on the frontlines so I did my

very best. I want to send the amulet and the news on to my brother right away to put his mind to rest."

Articles on the opening of the gate ceremony generally continued to appear until 1945, even though the volume of newspapers shrank as wartime conditions worsened. The years that received the most prominent coverage in the *Osaka Asahi* were 1939 and 1940. Those years corresponded with the development of the Hanshin industrial zone, with Nishinomiya at its heart thanks to the presence of factories like the Kawanishi aircraft plant. This was also a period when Japan had greater economic surpluses than ever before. Most of all, the Sino-Japanese War that had been going full tilt since July 1937 held great meaning.

The longest articles yet on the Tōka-Ebisu event were to be found on the pages of the newspaper during these years. The speed of the participants received emphasis alongside the aspect of "gaining personal fortune" that had been central to the event previously. Most noticeable of all are the added connotations of the race as an event to lift wartime morale. These are modalities that differ from those of "first among the fortunate" that came before. In the final section, I would like to consider the particular features of the Tōka-Ebisu rite that caused these changes to occur, or made it possible for them to take place.

Conclusion

In this paper I have traced the history of this rite from the late Meiji until 1940 (Shōwa 15), based primarily using the shrine's daily logs, newspaper materials, and interviews. I have verified that Nishinomiya was suburbanized and urbanized through the development of transportation infrastructure (the Hanshin Electric Railway in particular). This brought together a large population of shrine visitors who lived according to the new calendar; this in turn led the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu to become the main event even at Nishinomiya Shrine. Thus, the Tōka-Ebisu that is currently performed is not the ancient festival, but rather a new event that is a product of the new calendar. In this final section, I would like to consider several questions. Why did worshippers gather in large numbers for the new event performed under the new calendar? Has the level of attention focused on the gate increased under the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu? And why is so much meaning assigned to the first people to arrive at the shrine? That is perhaps to say, how has it been possible to assign such meaning to it?

One of the features of this festival, also apparent in the old calendar Tōka-Ebisu, is that it was not closely bound to the shrine parishioner system (*ujiko soshiki*) amid the changes that occurred after the Edo Period. The concept of *fuku* was one that came to be associated specifically with individual, worldly benefits (*genze riyaku*), and both festivals were such that they allowed for new events to be introduced.

For those reasons, it was even possible for the ideas that worshippers had under the old calendar festival regarding being the first person to get in to come into play under the new calendar festival as well.

During the Meiji Period, large numbers of people moved to Nishinomiya from various places and the district urbanized. These developments made it impossible to continue holding the *igomori* rite throughout the entire parishioner district. Simultaneously, I believe, a new role for the gate became firmly established; it now began to function as an apparatus that separated the sacred from the profane to create an extraordinary space, thus replacing the *mikari* rite that the entire neighborhood had once performed. Recall the 1908 article that mentions how people "pushed their way through when the gates opened at 1 a.m. in an effort to be *dai-ichi no fuku*." The very extraordinariness of these people converging in the middle of the night or early in the morning itself represents the mental state of "a union between deity and man" (*shinjin wagō*) described by YANAGITA.

The Tōka-Ebisu was able to grow while still retaining its meaning as a festival precisely because it was able preserve elements of the original old calendar event despite social changes and the festival's evolution into a different sort of event under the new calendar. The unique "Opening of the Gate" ceremony took on a life of its own as these changes unfolded.

The deeply devout TANAKA made his appearance as "first among the fortunate" as the focus shifted to the

“Opening of the Gate” ceremony. This may have been linked to an increase in shrine visitors who participated in the race to be first because the practice was so simple. Originally, the *igomori* (*mikari*) was something that only parishioners performed; it was a festival that did not allow for the prying of outsiders. The increasing freedom to participate in the festival that came about as it evolved over the course of the Edo and Meiji periods is what caused the scale of the festival itself to expand. The original subtext of the festival was preserved by the existence of the gate.

I really wanted to ask TANAKA for his impression of the race in his heyday and what it was like to take part, but that did not come to pass. However, he said it all in a newspaper interview: “It was not out of desire. I am happy just to be healthy and able to make the visit. I’m going to take the good fortune back to my boss. I would have felt bad somehow if I did not come in first” (January 11, 1937). He appears to have been stirred to run in the race to be *ichiban-fuku* by something other than something that would benefit himself, an impression that becomes even stronger if we think about how he lived the rest of his life.

The nature of the new calendar Tōka-Ebisu festival permits us to imagine how susceptible it was to being influenced by the trends of the times. The intensification of the Sino-Japanese War led the newspapers that covered the festival to take on an increasingly wartime feel, and that in turn bled into how they reported on the *ichiban-fuku* race. An article in the *Osaka Asahi* Hanshin edition for January 11,

1940, observed that the people waiting for the gate to open included "many people of serious appearance, including in particular those young women who had sent their husbands or fathers off to the frontlines and were petitioning the *kami* for continued fortune at war. In this, too, the great strength of the East Asian Empire is inscribed." The very fact that this concept of *fuku* was involved is what made such a scene possible. The Tōka-Ebisu contained such elements, yet also functioned to provide this-worldly benefits for people while still retaining its original ritual elements as an abstinence (*monoimi*) rite.

The Tōka-Ebisu began as a hunting rite (*mikari shinji*) that had been performed since ancient times. It experienced changes to the patterns of Ebisu belief during the Muromachi Period. Further shifts occurred during the Meiji Period, including the time of year during which it was held as well as further changes in the form of the rite itself. I assert that nonetheless the functions of the original festival remain in the race to be first at the opening of the gate.

I reach two conclusions based on the ideas presented above, regarding the significance that this festival - a product of many changes that took place before modern times - has for society. First, it provides a venue for obtaining the worldly benefit of *fuku* (good luck), and second, it provides an opportunity to arrive at that mental state of "a union between deity and man" that the festival originally had.

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Neri-kuyō: Ascending to Paradise with the Bodhisattvas

Saranya CHOOCHOTKAEW

Introduction

Where do we go after we die? This is a long-lasting question that religion has been trying to give an answer to for centuries. Some religions, such as Buddhism and Christianity, promise their believers that they will go to 'a good place', which leads to the next question: what does a good place look like? And how does one get there?

This paper offers some potential answers to these questions from the perspective of Japanese Jōdo Buddhism, through an analysis of a Buddhist ritual called *Neri-kuyō. Neri-kuyō* is a ritual parade showing the scene of devotees ascending to the Pure Land [*Gokuraku Jōdo*] or Amida Buddha [*Amitābha*]'s paradise. This ritual parade has been held every year since the Heian period (794-1185). It started in the Kansai area and spread to all over Japan.

First, I will provide a brief overview of the history of *Neri-kuyō* and its relevant philosophy using information from academic sources. Second, I will focus on the actual parade

using information from fieldwork conducted on May 14th, 2017 at Taima-dera Temple in Nara Prefecture. Taima-dera Temple is the place where this ritual began in the Heian period, and the ceremony currently conducted there is considered to be the archetype of *Neri-kuyō*. In addition, I will discuss the preparation of *Neri-kuyō* based on videos made by the local television and the temple members. Finally, I will analyze the functions of this ritual.

Neri-kuyō and its history

The word *Neri-kuyō* came from the combination of '*Neri-aruku*' (to parade) and '*Kuyō*' (a Buddhist memorial service). Usually, the word '*Kuyō*' is used to indicate making merit for the dead. The Iwanami Buddhist Dictionary [*Iwanami Bukkyō Jiten*] (2nd Edition) explains this word as a memorial service that dramatizes the scene of *Raigō* (p.809)[1]. *Raigō* is the descendant of Amida Buddha, who comes along with his followers from the Pure Land to welcome the dying devotees' souls on their death bed.

The fundamental philosophy of *Neri-kuyō* is based on Pure Land Buddhism [*Jōdo-shū*]. The name of this Buddhist sect, *Jōdo* means 'the way to the Pure Land', the goal of the believers being to be reborn into the Pure Land, i.e., Amida Buddha's most elevated paradise located in the west, also known as the western paradise. Pure Land Buddhism was introduced to Japan from China in the 6th century. It became

[1] Translated from Japanese into English by the author.

popular among the Japanese noble class in the middle of Heian period (794-1185). During this time, the depiction of the Pure Land was mentioned in many literary works, and expressed in various art forms. Mostly sponsored by the aristocrats, numerous painted scrolls and wall paintings were created to depict the scenery of the Pure Land. Likewise, many gardens and buildings were symbolically designed and built to bring the Pure Land into the human world.

To fulfill the Pure Land Buddhism believers' fantasy, not only the replicas of Pure Land but also the scene of the ascension to paradise was mentioned and turned into art. At the ascension, Amida Buddha himself and his followers will descend from the Pure Land to welcome the devotees. This descent of Amida Buddha and his followers is called '*Raigō*'.

The scene of '*Raigō*' was portrayed in many art forms such as Buddha statues (*Raigō Butsu*), or paintings (*Raigō-zu*). Some of the art pieces depicting *Raigō* were also used in the death bed ritual (Murase 1975: 57), one such example being the Japanese National Treasure *Yamagoshi Amida Zu Byōbu* [a screen depicting Amida Buddha coming over mountains] at Konkaikōmyō-ji Temple in Kyoto prefecture. There is a real thread coming out of the hand of Amida Buddha in the picture. It is believed that the dying devotees will hold the other end of this thread in order to be physically connected to Amida Buddha on their death bed.

Apart from the art pieces, the scene of '*Raigō*' was also enacted in a ritual called '*Raigō-e*' (the welcoming rite).

According to the *Iwanami Buddhist Dictionary (2nd Edition)*, *Raigō-e* was called by many names such as *Gōshō-e*, *Mukae-kō*, *Gōkō*, *Ōjō-kō*, but its common name is *Neri-kuyō*, or *O-neri*[2].

Neri-kuyō was initiated by the famous Japanese Buddhist monk Genshin (known posthumously as Eshin, 942-1017) in the 11th century. Genshin was a monk in the Tendai sect. He wrote a book called *Ōjōyōshū* [Essentials of Salvation] which exerted a significant influence on the concept of visionary Buddhist Paradise (Pure Land) and Hell in medieval Japan. During the late Heian period, along with the popularity of Pure Land Buddhism, *Neri-kuyō* also turned into a ritual ceremony performed all over Japan.

Nowadays, *Neri-kuyō* is still held in many places such as Taima-dera temple in Nara prefecture, Sennyū-ji temple in Kyoto prefecture, and Kōbō-ji temple in Okayama prefecture[3]. Among this, *Neri-kuyō* at Taima-dera temple is the oldest, and considered to be the original model for such ceremonies. In addition, Taima town in Nara prefecture is also known as the birth place of Genshin, the founder of this ritual.

The beginning of *Neri-kuyō* at Taima-dera temple and the legend of Chūjō-hime

Neri-kuyō at Taima-dera temple is officially called *Shōju-neri-kuyō-eshiki.* In Buddhist terms, '*Shōju*' indicates Buddhist

[2] I decided to use the term '*Neri-kuyō*' because it is the common name used in books and research papers such as Fushimi (2010).
[3] See Fushimi (2010) for more information about this ceremony in different areas.

saints including Bodhisattvas, and other heavenly beings. This ritual is certified as an important intangible cultural property of Japan[4], and until 2018 it had been held annually on the 14th of May. Since last year (2019) it has been held earlier, on the 14th of April.

According to the official website[5] of the Taima-dera temple, this ritual started during Emperor Ichijō's reign, in the second year of the Kankō era (1005). It started when Genshin came back to his hometown, Taima, and saw the Taima Mandala, a mandala made with lotus threads woven by Chūjō-hime, which was completed in 763. He was impressed by the beauty of this Mandala and its cosmography of the Pure Land. Consequently, he donated Bodhisattva masks and garments to Taima-dera for conducting the *Neri-kuyō* ritual, in order to remember and make an offering for the soul of Chūjō-hime.

The legend about Chūjō-hime has been told in many literary works, noh and kabuki plays. Since the medieval age, the Pure Land Buddhism monks used Taima Mandala to explain the cosmography of the Pure Land to the people. When they did so, they also explained the origin of Taima Mandala by telling the story of Chūjō-hime.

According to Dictionary of Japanese Fictional and Legendary Characters (New Edition) [*Shinpan Nihon Kakūdenshō Jinmei Jiten*], in '*Taima-mandara-sho*' [The

[4] According to the National-designated Cultural Properties Database by the Agency for Cultural Affairs https://kunishitei.bunka.go.jp/heritage/detail/312/441
[5] http://taimadera-gonenin.or.jp/renzo/nerikuyou/

explanation of Taima Mandala] written in 1436 by a monk named 'Seiyo', Chūjō-hime was the daughter of the noble Fujiwara no Toyonari. Her mother prayed to Kannon Bodhisattva (*Avalokiteśvara*) at Hase-dera temple in Kamakura, for a child (who became Chūjō-hime). Not long after Chūjō-hime was born, her mother died, and her father remarried. Her stepmother hated Chūjō-hime so much that she hired someone to kill her stepdaughter. The hired man took Chūjō-hime to Hibari mountain, but his kind heart would not allow him to end her life. He and his wife decided to save Chūjō-hime and secretly raise her. As time went by, she met her father again when her father went hunting in the mountain. Her father decided to bring her back home, but before the departure, she realized the uncertainty of life, so she decided to become a nun at Taima-dera. After that, in just one night she wove lotus threads into a huge Mandala (four square meters) with the help of Bodhisattvas. She also ascended to the Pure Land while she was still alive, an event which would be later enacted in *Neri-kuyō*.

Her story is similar to the tale of Snow White, but actually this motif can be found in many Buddhist legends, especially the stories of monks and nuns who built famous temples or created Buddha statues. The tales always start with the protagonist getting into trouble, after which he or she is miraculously saved by Buddha or his followers, which leads to their becoming aware of the uncertainty of life, the essence of Buddhism. Finally, they become Buddhist devotees.

The scenery of the parade in *Neri-kuyō*

As a graduate student at Osaka University, I had the chance to go see *Neri-kuyō* at Taima-dera temple in Nara prefecture in 2017. The ritual took place on the 14th of May, which is the anniversary of Chūjō-hime's death. According to the temple schedule, the ritual started at four in the afternoon, but I arrived there right after lunchtime, in order to attend the traditional *Taima-Mandala-Etoki* [a class about Taima Mandala] conducted by a professional monk at Naka-no-bō hall inside Taima-dera temple area. The monk used Taima Mandala to explain the cosmography of Pure Land Buddhism, the nine types of ascension to the Pure Land, and the legend of Chūjō-hime. Rather than a lecture, it was more of a traditional story-telling experience, with the monk using rhymed sentences and the cadence specific to chanting a mantra.

On the day of the ritual, there was one more event at Gonen-in hall, where all the sacred objects, the masks, the Chūjō-hime statues (the nun statue and the miniature Bodhisattva statue) are kept. The preparation for the ritual started at two pm, and all the objects had been on public display until then. The attending monks provided explanations for the visitors related to the sacred objects and the performance of the ritual. According to one of them, the masks currently in use are fairly new, having been made in 2005; they were also displayed in 2013, during the exhibition of the 1250th anniversary of *Neri-kuyō* at Nara National Museum. Once the class ended, the monk ritually placed the

Bodhisattva mask on the heads of attendees (which are Buddhist devotees) in order to help them form a good relationship with Buddha. Before placing the mask, the monk chanted the Nembutsu[6], *Namu-amida-butsu*, and the devotees put their palms together and prayed.

After attending the classes, I went to find a place to see the parade. The parade started at four pm. Many people gathered around the temporary bridge called *Raigō-bashi* – the bridge for the welcoming rite. This bridge was temporary built the day before the ritual, being approximately 120 meters long, 1.5 meters wide, and 1.8 meters tall. It was tall enough that people could find shelter under it (the middle of May tends to be quite hot in Japan). It was laid between two buildings, Mandala-dō [Mandala hall] and Shaba-dō [Shaba hall]. Mandala hall is the main hall of Taima-dera temple, where the Amida Buddha statue and Taima Mandala (a replica made in Edo period) are enshrined. When *Neri-kuyō* is held, the Mandala hall is temporarily called Gokuraku-dō, the Pure Land hall. Considering the special name and the enshrined Buddha statues, it can be said that this hall is a representation of the Pure Land in this world. On the other side of the bridge, there is Shaba hall which represents the human world. Normally, there is nothing inside this hall but during the ceremony, the Amida Buddha Statue in *Raigō* pose,

[6] The Nembutsu is the invocation Namu Amida Butsu (I take my refuge in the Amida Buddha), uttered in the hope of rebirth into Amida's Pure Land. It was popularized by Hōnen in the 12th century, and is described as one form of Pure Land Buddhism practice.

and a temporary altar for Chūjō-hime are placed there. So, symbolically, the *Raigō* bridge connects the Pure Land (Gokuraku hall) to the human world (Shaba hall).

Amida Buddha Statue in Raigō Pose at Shaba hall

The procession is divided into two parts. The first is from Gokuraku hall to Shaba hall, depicting the scene where the Bodhisattvas and their companions depart from the Pure Land, heading for the human world to guide Chūjō-hime's soul. The second one is from Shaba hall back to Gokuraku hall, depicting the scene where the Bodhisattvas successfully get Chūjō-hime's soul and guide her back to Pure Land.

The first half of the procession started as scheduled at four in the afternoon, with one of the monks chanting a sutra in

the Gokuraku Hall. Another monk came out of the Gokuraku hall, and started walking on the bridge, towards the Shaba Hall, followed by a palanquin carried by four men. Inside the palanquin, there was enshrined an antique statue of Chūjō-hime, dressed as a Buddhist nun, her head covered with a white nun veil called *mōsu*. Upon arrival, the palanquin was placed inside the Shaba hall, waiting for the others to come.

Chūjō-hime palanquin marching from Gokuraku hall toward Shaba hall

Not long after the palanquin arrived at Shaba hall, there came the second group, also led by a monk, and consisting of *chigo*, *gagaku* musicians, and high priests. Originally, *chigo* means a page or a child working in temples or shrines. Nowadays, *chigo* indicates the children of the members of temples or shrines who taking part in the festivals.

Sometimes, *chigo* is used as a medium to make contact with the gods, as in Gion Matsuri in Kyoto. In *Neri-kuyō*, small children, both boys and girls, dressed in the same colorful (purple and green) *chigo* dresses, take part in the *chigo* parade. The boys wore court hats called *e-boshi*, and the girls wore golden flower crowns called *ten-kan*. Each of them held a pink plastic lotus flower in one hand, and with the other held their guardian's hand. Some of them were carried by their guardians. Contrasting with the children's attire, all of the guardians were dressed in ceremonial black kimonos or black *hakama*. Right after *chigo parade*, the *gagaku* musician group followed. '*Gagaku*' is an ancient Japanese court music usually played in Shinto rituals. All the musicians were wearing the traditional Japanese green court dress, and played their instruments solemnly. After the musicians, a group of high priests followed. The high priests were dressed elegantly in formal robes indicating their ranks.

The groups of *chigo*, *gagaku* musicians, and high priests were followed by the group of Pure Land beings (also led by a monk), consisting of two *tennin* (heavenly beings) and twenty-six Bodhisattvas. Each of them wore a mask indicating their roles and walked with the aid of an assistant dressed in black *hakama*. The performers and their assistants walked arm in arm, the assistants supporting the performers all the way and carefully guiding them on the narrow bridge (as mentioned above, the bridge is only 1.5 meters wide). Some assistants even waved bamboo fans repeatedly to keep the

performers cool, and prevent them from suffering a stroke in the heat of the early summer. The scene described so far might suggest that the parade is a paradox compared to the definition of *Raigō*. In the other *Raigō* arts, Bodhisattvas guide people all the way to the Pure Land, but in this parade, it was the other way around, with the people guiding the Bodhisattvas. However, the support offered by the humans to the performed Bodhisattvas had only a practical, and not a symbolical meaning: some of them were elderly, and they were wearing the heavy Bodhisattva masks with very small eye holes so they could barely see through.

The *chigo* parade

After the leading monk, two *tennin* appeared. Each of them wore a white *tennin* mask and held a golden flower plate, followed by the Bodhisattvas. The official website of the Taima-dera temple [7] said that there were twenty-five Bodhisattvas, but I counted them repeatedly and, at least in 2017, there were twenty-six, not twenty-five. According to Ito (2013: 32), there is no evidence in the relevant sutras (*Kanmuryōju-kyo sutra* and *Amida-kyō sutra*) related to the exact number of Bodhisattvas coming for *Raigō*. However, in *Ōjōyōshū* written by Genshin, the founder of *Neri-kuyō*, it is written that twenty-five Bodhisattvas will protect the devotees from evil spirits while they ascend to the Pure Land (Ito 2013: 34). Moreover, according to Shimizu's research (1979) on the *Raigō* paintings, the number of Bodhisattvas is not fixed. Sometimes it can be more or less than twenty-five.

By comparing the names of these twenty-six Bodhisattvas who appeared in this ritual to the typical twenty-five Bodhisattvas written in *Ōjōyōshū*, I found that a Bodhisattva named *Jizō* is not included in the typical twenty-five Bodhisattva list, which consists *of Kanzeon, Daiseishi, Yakuō, Yakujō, Fugen, Hōjizai, Shishiku, Darani, Kokūzō, Tokuzō, Hōzō, Konzō, Kongōzō, Sankaie, Kōmyō-ō, Kegon, Jūhō-ō, Gakkō-ō, Nisshō-ō, Zanmai-ō, Jōjizai-ō, Daijizai-ō, Byakuzō, Daitoku-ō*, and *Muhenshin*. The reason why *Jizō* is added to the list is probably that *Jizō* was popular at the time, and considered to be the Bodhisattva who helps the lost souls in the hell.

[7] http://www.taimadera.or.jp/event/nerikuyo/

Tennin and *Jizō*

Jizō and *Muhenshin* were the first two Bodhisattvas in the procession. Their masks and robes are different from the others, the masks being monk look-alike with golden halos tied to their backs. There is no golden crown, nor hair like with the other characters. The first Bodhisattva is *Jizō*, wearing a simple red Buddhist monk robe, holding a jewel and a staff. The second one is *Muhenshin*, wearing a simple green Buddhist monk robe, his palms together in a prayer gesture.

Bodhisattvas with musical instruments

The next third to twenty-third Bodhisattvas (which are *Yakuō, Yakujō, Hōjizai, Shishiku, Darani, Kokūzō, Tokuzō, Hōzō, Konzō, Kongōzō, Sankaie, Kōmyō-ō, Kegon, Jūhō-ō, Gakkō-ō, Nisshō-ō, Zanmai-ō, Jōjizai-ō, Daijizai-ō, Byakuzō, Daitoku-ō*) walked together, followed by the main Bodhisattvas, *Kanzeon, Daiseishi*, and *Fugen*.

With the exception of *Jizō* and *Muhenshin*, all the Bodhisattvas wore the same style of mask: golden faces with blue hair, wearing golden crowns. The garments were similar to the robes worn by high priests. Although their masks and garments are quite identical, we can still identify the Bodhisattvas according to the objects they hold. Most of them hold the *gagaku* musical instruments, but not playing any of them. Even so, the viewers can still imagine the sound due to the live performance offered by the *gagaku* musicians.

【Table 1】List of the twenty-six Bodhisattvas and their equipment or posture[8]

No.	Name	Equipment or Posture
1	Jizō	Jewel, staff
2	Muhenshin	Prayer pose
3	Yakuō	*Dōban* [flag]
4	Yakujō	*Gyokuban* [flag]
5	Hōjizai	*Keman* [flower decoration]
6	Shishiku	*Hakuban* [clapper]
7	Darani	Dancing and holding sleeves in both hands.
8	Kokūzō	Drum
9	Tokuzō	*Shō* [wind music instrument]
10	Hōzō	Flute
11	Konzō	*Sō* [small harp]
12	Kongōzō	*Koto* [big harp]
13	Sankai-e	*Kugo* [harp]
14	Kōmyō-ō	*Biwa*
15	Kegon	*Kei* [chime]
16	Shūhō-ō	*Nyō* [cymbals]
17	Gakkō-ō	*Furi-tsuzumi* [small drum]
18	Nisshō-ō	Mirror

[8] *see the illustrations of bodhisattvas in *Shoshū-butsuzō-zu-i.*

19	Zanmai-ō	Lotus flower
20	Jōjizai-ō	Drum
21	Daijizai-ō	Small drum
22	Byakuzō	Pipe
23	Daitoku-ō	*Manju* [flower]
24	Kanseon	Lotus-shaped pedestal
25	Daiseishi	Prayer pose
26	Fugen	*Tengai* [umbrella]

After the third to the twenty-third Bodhisattvas walked by, the monk rang the temple bell and started chanting the sutra, and then the last three Bodhisattvas (*Kanseon, Daiseishi, Fugen*), the main characters of this ritual, started walking from Gokuraku hall. *Kaseon* held a lotus-shaped pedestal with both hands. Slowly and repeatedly, he walked two steps, squatted and lowered the pedestal as if he was trying to scoop one's soul from the floor, and then raised the pedestal up. Because of this dance, *Kanseon* is also called *Sukui-botoke*, the savior Buddha.

Behind *Kanseon*, *Daiseishi* followed. He held nothing but put his palms together in a prayer gesture, walked slowly and squatted up and down like *Kaseon*. Because of his pose, *Daiseishi* is also called *Ogamu-botoke*, the praying Buddha. At the end of the first trip, the last Bodhisattva, *Fugen* appeared. He held a *tengai*, the Buddhist umbrella used to protect a monk from sunlight.

Kanseon, Daiseishi and *Fugen*

After all the Bodhisattvas arrived at Saba hall, the small statue of Chūjō-hime (a Bodhisattva statue) was taken out of the big statue of Chūjō-hime (a nun statue) in the palanquin. It was placed on top of the lotus-shaped pedestal held by *Kanseon*. Then, *Daiseishi* moved his hands in a circular motion around the statue to purify it. Once the statue was placed successfully on the pedestal, the second trip started, heading back to the Gokuraku hall, the Pure Land on earth. Unlike the first trip, the order of appearance had changed. It started with *Kanseon* walking with Chūjō-hime in his hands, dancing in the same way as during the first trip, squatting up and down. After *Kanseon, Daiseishi* followed, praying and dancing in the

same way as before, and then it was *Fugen*'s turn. After the main three Bodhisattvas, *Jizō*, *Muhenshin*, the other Bodhisattvas, *tenin*, *chigo* and the *gagaku* musicians followed.

Kanseon holding the statue of Chūjō-hime

At last, with modern music and announcement from the temple that the ritual had ended in the background, the

palanquin with the statue of Chūjō-hime in nun form was carried back to the Gokuraku hall. The one-hour long parade came to an end at the same time as the sun set behind the mountain.

Daiseishi with sunset towards the mountain

Ritual preparations and the people behind the Bodhisattva masks

Before the *Neri-kuyō* day, lots of effort was poured into the preparation by the community in the area of Taima-dera temple. The community is called *Bosatsu-kō*, meaning the Bodhisattva group. According to Gazō Kuzumoto, the chief

priest of the Gonen-in, Taima-dera Temple, *Bosatsu-kō* is a large group consisting of more than twenty subgroups. This community has supported this ritual since the Edo period[9].

According to *Close up Katsuragi*, a documentary made by Katsuragi Terebi, a local television, the *Neri-kuyō* preparation starts one month before the event. The two performers who play the main characters, *Kanseon* and *Daiseishi*, start practicing the traditional dance. The dance was taught by the seniors in the communities. Usually, *Kanseon* and *Daiseishi* are performed by the same person every year. After the performers had mastered the dance, the performers will try on the robes and masks, and then perform in costume to get used to the circumstances and all the equipment. The first rehearsal is called *Nerizome* [first parade], and it opens to the public usually at the end of April.

Two weeks before the ritual, the other performers who will embody Bodhisattvas are selected from each household in the *Bosatsu-kō* community by a lottery system. The lottery system bestows on the ritual a more sacred atmosphere because it makes the performers feel that they are chosen by fate and the Bodhisattvas' desire. Moreover, the lottery system also prevents conflicts inside the community. After the role selection is settled, the orientation for the Bodhisattvas is held. All of the performers are told to prepare

[9] From an interview with the chief priest of the Gonen-in, Taima-dera Temple in Close up Katsuragi: Taimadera Shōju-neri-kuyō-eshiki, a documentary program made by Katsuragi Terebi [Katsuragi TV] with a cooperation of Taimadera-bosatsu-kō. This is a doctumentary about *Shōju-neri-kuyō-eshiki* from 2016.

themselves for the ritual. In order to prepare both their bodies and their minds for the day, they must do *shōjin-kessai*, ritual purification, which means they must refrain from eating meat and drinking alcohol until the *Neri-kuyō* day. The purification shows that this parade is not just entertainment. On the contrary, on the ritual day the performers will be mediums or temporary residences for the Bodhisattva spirits as well. Therefore, to make the descent of the spirits successful, they must make sure that they are clean enough. Then, ten days before the ritual, the performers and their assistants will be taught how to wear their Bodhisattvas robes and masks properly.

On the *Neri-kuyō* day, *Kanseon* and *Daiseishi* performers will practice the dance on the real *Raigō* bridge for the last time in the early morning. At two pm, all the performers start to get dressed at Gonen-in hall located next to the Gokuraku hall. The assistants help the performers get dressed and guide them on the way. At four pm, all of them are ready to walk on the *Raigō* bridge. At around five pm, the parade ends.

The functions of *Neri-kuyō*

I shall now discuss the function and symbolism of *Neri-kuyō*: making merit for Chūjō-hime and the ancestors; demonstrating the possibilities of Buddhist life; and embellishing the transition to death.

1. Making merit for Chūjō-hime and the ancestors

As I mentioned before in the first part, the word '*Neri-kuyō*' came from the combination of '*Neri-aruku*' (to parade) and '*Kuyō*' (a Buddhist memorial service). The word '*Kuyō*' is used in term of making merit for the dead. In the case of *Neri-kuyō* case, the persons who receive merit are not just the Taima Mandala weaver, Chūjō-hime, but the ancestor spirits as well.

According to Plutschow (1996) and Toyoshima (2016), *Neri-kuyō* appears as one of the Shinto-Buddhist festivals. Toyoshima (2016) suggested that *Mukae-kō* or *Neri-kuyō* originally came from ancestor and mountain worship in indigenous Shinto. As a result of observing the ritual myself, I agree with his argument because many Shinto elements were present in *Neri-kuyō,* such as the palanquin which used for carrying the god and *gagaku* music characteristic to Shinto rituals. Moreover, the ritual is held in the evening and finishes at end of the day while the sun sets behind the mountain. This images overlaps with the Shinto concept of the ancestors residing in the mountains. Seeing the sunlight disappearing behind the mountain, the viewers associate the sunset with Chūjō-hime, a fragment of the ancestor spirit going back to her place.

2. Demonstrating the possibilities of Buddhist life

Neri-kuyō demonstrated to the attendee's three possibilities for salvation according to the Buddhist doctrine. The first possibility is about the best way of ascending to

paradise; the second possibility is the enlightenment of women; the third possibility is the enlightenment of everyone while still alive.

Firstly, *Neri-kuyō* shows the Jōdo Buddhism believers what is the best ascension they could attain if they wholeheartedly devote themselves to Buddhism. The fact is that *Raigō*, the Bodhisattvas welcome parade, is not for everyone but only for special individuals. According to the *Kanmuryōju-kyo sutra*, there are nine types of ascension [*Kuhon-Raigō*] depending on the amount of good deeds, practices, and beliefs. Usually, the welcome parade will be sent from Pure Land to lead the dying devotees' souls. The better deeds one has done, the more gorgeous one's welcome parade will be (Nakamura et al. 2002: 257)

In *Jōbon-jōshō* or the best ascension case, Amida Buddha with Bodhisattvas, other Pure Land beings, and the music band, will elegantly come to collect the devotee's soul. On the other hand, in *Gebon-geshō* or the worst ascension, which is for someone who did not do any good deeds, there will be no welcome parade but just the light (Ito 2013: 29-31).

In the case of Chūjō-hime, according to the legend mentioned before, it is easy to be convinced that she deserved *Jōbon-jōshō* or the best ascension. First, according to her miraculous birth, some may consider Chūjō-hime as a child of Kannon Bodhisattva or a *keshin* (an avatar) of Kannon Bodhisattva itself. Moreover, she herself become a nun and devoted herself to promoting Buddhism to the people by

weaving the famous Taima Mandala, which become one of the most important objects for Buddhist education. These reasons bestow upon her the privilege of being welcomed back to Pure Land where she may originally belong.

Second, *Neri-kuyō* shows the believers that even women can be enlightened and reborn into the Pure Land gracefully. In ancient Buddhism in India, women were not seen as equal to men. They were so sinful that they could not go to heaven or be enlightened. But in the Pure Land Buddhism, there is a concept that everything in this world is imbued with Buddhahood so everyone is equally qualified to become a Buddha. Many ways for acquiring merit were invented, such as copying sutras, or erecting Buddha statues and temples. For women, there is a concept called *Nyonin-jōbutsu*, women becoming Buddha, established in the *Kanmuryōju-kyo Sutra*, and the Lotus Sutra (Nakamura et al. 2002: 799), related to the fundamental philosophy underlying the legend of Chūjō-hime. The story of Chūjō- hime encouraged women to believe in Pure Land Buddhism so that one day they may be reborn into the Pure Land like her.

In *Neri-kuyō*, the demonstration of Chūjō-hime becoming Buddha occurred between the first and the second trip. During the first part of the procession, the statue of Chūjō-hime was dressed as a nun. After that, the monk changed the nun statue to the miniature Bodhisattva statue, placing it on the lotus-shaped pedestal to signify that Chūjō-hime attained *Jōbon-jōshō* ascension exactly as written in the sutra. By being able to actually witness the change during the

procession the viewers will be convinced that women can attain enlightenment too. In addition, both men and women can perform as the Bodhisattvas.

Last, *Neri-kuyō* explicates the philosophy of the Pure Land Buddhism, according to which everyone has the potential to become Buddha. This idea of Pure Land Buddhism is very different from Theravada Buddhism, where only the monks who practice for a long time can become Buddha.

Moreover, according to the older percepts, in order to become a Buddha, one had to leave the regular life behind and become a priest, or die first. But through performing in *Neri-kuyō*, everyone can temporarily become Buddha while he or she is still alive, on the condition that they are selected by the lottery. The selection by the lottery makes the performers think that they are qualified by Buddha's intention. Furthermore, the fact that they must purify themselves, refraining from eating meat and drinking alcohol temporarily transforms the performers into monks, Bodhisattvas, or Buddha apprentices.

3. Beautifying the transition to the death

The fear of death is a universal, biological fact. In Thai or western culture, when death approaches, the god of death, soul reapers, devils or monsters take charge of the soul, guiding it to heaven or dragging it to hell. *Neri-kuyō*, however, completely changes something unpleasant such as death into a delightful parade. *Neri-kuyō* shows that the transition to death is just a joyful move towards a beautiful destination,

helping viewers feel that death in not necessarily a frightening moment. In addition, it eases not only the dying person's mind but also the minds of those left behind. The remaining relatives may breathe a sigh of relief knowing their loved one is going to a good place in a pleasant way.

Conclusion

To return to the questions raised in the introduction, regarding the place where souls go after death, we may say that *Neri-kuyō* offers a potential answer, one meant to provide the believers with hope.

In an aspect of Pure Land Buddhism, the place that its believers will go after they died is the land of Amida Buddha, where everything is beautiful. Moreover, there will be a wonderful parade descending to guide their soul. To attain all of this, they must believe in Amida Buddha, do a lot of good deeds and help promote Pure Land Buddhism.

At a first glance, I thought that *Neri-kuyō* is just a ritual for entertaining. However, after I did a research about how it was made, my perception about this ritual had changed. The performers do not just wear the masks, get dressed, and pretend to be Bodhisattvas like in a drama, but they become the real ones at that time. In order to do so, they must complete purification practices. Considering the entire process and the ideology behind it, it becomes obvious that *Neri-kuyō* has a function that is more important that that of merely offering entertainment for the participants. Its core

meaning is that of merit making for Chūjō-hime and the ancestors, demonstrating the possibilities of Buddhist life, and beautifying the transition to death.

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Ghost in Translation
Non-Human Actors, Relationality, and Haunted Places in Contemporary Kyoto

Andrea De Antoni

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Occult beliefs and practices have long been the subject of anthropological investigations that have produced different sets and trends of analysis.[1] EVANS PRITCHARD (1937), for instance, in his account of witchcraft and magic among the Azande, stressed the elements of intellect and moral imagination, arguing that occult beliefs and practices were

[1] In this article I will provide only a brief overview of anthropological theories on the occult. For a more complete and in-depth analysis, see SANDERS (2008), and STEWART and STRATHERN (2004): 1–28.

rational and meaningful to people when contextualized, and that they did not constitute evidence of a *méntalité primitive* or irrationality. In spite of implicit functionalistic characteristics in his argument, as DOUGLAS (1970: xiv) pointed out, the focus of analysis in EVANS PRITCHARD's work was on how ambiguities and discrepancies in meaning could be addressed and dealt with in practice, in particular conditions.

A different analytic was proposed by TAUSSIG (1977, 1980), who linked occult beliefs and practices to changes in the economic systems. He argued that peasants in the Cauca Valley lived in a natural and moral world characterized by pre-capitalistic values that was deeply shattered by the introduction of capitalism, with its consequent exploitative and immoral exchange value system. These changes fed on the beliefs that plantation workers who suddenly increased their output and, consequently, their incomes, managed to do so because of contracts with the devil. He also suggested that talking about the devil would provide peasants in the Cauca Valley with a way to explain the rapidly changing features of their world, as well as a way to critique the unnaturalness of the new system.

Similarly, other important anthropological works proposed analyses that interpreted indigenous ideas and beliefs related to the devil, witchcraft, and spirits and possession, as providing a symbolic framework for critiques of colonialism, capitalism, and related immoralities (e.g. COMAROFF and COMAROFF 1993, 2002; LIMÓN 1994; SANDERS 2001). SANDERS (2008: 198) pointed out in his analysis and

critique of anthropological analytics related to the investigations of the occult that "while Taussig's and kindred arguments have been thoroughly criticized on methodological, empirical, and theoretical grounds, the suggestion that varied devil iconographies, witchcraft, spirits, zombies and other spectralities can be read as locally-inflected critiques of capitalism, modernity, neoliberalism, and globalization has remained popular." Consequently, anthropological studies continue to maintain that spirit possession provides an "embodied critique of colonial, national, or global, hegemonies" (BODDY 1994: 419); that images of the devil in Ghana "diabolize negative aspects of the capitalist world economy" (MEYER 1995: 250); or that stories of spirits in Kenya make "the implicit vampirism of capitalist accumulation and consumption horrifically literal" (SMITH 2004: 274). SANDERS (2008: 109) also argues that "in recent years, such explanations have come to form a deep-seated and seductive anthropological analytic" and that "while this analytic has proved productive, the explanations it invites often hinge more on theoretical expectations than empirical demonstrations." I would also add that, although these anthropological analytic definitely provide an interesting framework for interpretation, their conclusions tend to be overly-generalized, and do not sufficiently take into consideration people's experiences or how narratives and beliefs are constructed and negotiated among indigenous people. Furthermore, since even studies that analyze relational processes of construction of paranormal phenomena (e.g. ISHII 2007) are mostly based on fieldwork carried out in pre-

capitalistic or modern societies, they tend to provide a theoretical perspective on theories of modernity. Consequently, a focus on post-capitalistic societies, where narratives and practices linked to the occult are related to fluid beliefs connected to processes of commoditization and consumption, is completely missing.

More recent studies have tried to propose different approaches to the occult, starting from people's experiences and trying to interpret paranormal phenomena, such as sleep paralysis (ADLER 2011; SCHEGOLEVA 2001) or near-death experiences (CORAZZA 2008), from an inter-cultural perspective. Yet this new trend, that focuses on individual experiences, linking the occult to the mind-body connection through instruments of medical anthropology, does not provide a sufficient account of the relational features of experiences, nor does it take into consideration the variety of actors that contribute to their construction and negotiations. The only exceptions to these trends in anthropological explanations and analyses of the occult are the works of FAVRET-SAADA (1977), who highlighted how unusual behaviour in social relationships, such as speaking or touching, were taken as signs of witchcraft in the Bocage area of Western France, and the new approach to witchcraft proposed by STEWART and STRATHERN (2004), who pointed out the fundamental role played by rumors and gossip in the processes of belief construction in magic and sorcery.

Following this focus on rumors and relationality, in this article I will propose a still different approach to develop an

anthropology of the occult, that tries to fill the lack in consideration of the complex social interactions that underlie beliefs in the occult. In order to do this, I will draw on ethnographic data I gathered through the fieldwork on haunting and haunted places that I carried out in Kyoto, Japan, during 2010 and 2011. I will start from the assumption that beliefs and practices related to paranormal phenomena should be considered in relationship to their "causal milieu" (GELL 1998). I will also focus on the agency of a series of actors that constitute "associations" (LATOUR 2005) or "communities of performativity" (TANAKA 2005). Specifically, I will argue that haunted places can be analyzed as "indexes" (GELL 1998) through which people abduct the agency of ghosts.[2] Two similar tentative studies were carried out by KUWABARA (2005) and OCHOA (2010). KUWABARA analyzed the performativity of "things" (*mono*) in the network of agencies among the living and "things that do not belong to this world" (*ko no yo naranu mono*) that takes place through rituals and practice, whereas OCHOA investigated the influence of the dead in Cuban-Kongo material culture. However, the respective objects of their study in these two cases were Japanese memorial stones and films in Southern India, and the "complex agglomerations of the dead that take the shapes

[2] According to GELL's definition, an index is "an entity from which the observer can make a causal inference of some kind, or an inference about the intentions or capabilities of another person," namely "a visible, physical 'thing'" that permits an "abduction of agency" (GELL 1998: 13). Moreover, he defines "abduction" as "a case of synthetic inference where we find some very curious circumstances, which would be explained by the supposition that it was a case of some general rule, and thereupon adopt that supposition" (GELL 1998: 14).

of urns and iron cauldrons stuffed with healing and harming substances … known in Palo's Spanish as *prendas*, *ngangas*, and *enquisos*" (OCHOA 2010: 387). Namely, both of the studies investigated specific material and manufactured objects. In fact, KUWABARA's study focused on the "technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology" (GELL 1992) as related to the agency of the making process and of the maker who, in GELL's terms, can be identified as the "artist" (GELL 1998). OCHOA (2010: 398) proposes an analysis that "values prendas-ngangas-enquisos not as 'objects,' … but, rather … as 'agents' or 'influences' in a paratactic series of nonlinear, unequal equivalences we might call an 'association' (or a 'network')."

Differently from these studies, yet, I will take into account two places where ghosts are thought to appear and relate to people. I will focus on a natural place (i.e. a pond) and an artificially made one (a tunnel). In both of the cases, their origination process is not causally connected to the haunting, therefore the agent that produced them (nature and workers, respectively), cannot be identified with the "artist." In this article, therefore, I will show that haunted places are created as "indexes" not by a single artist, but by different actors and mediators,[3] that assemble networks by mobilizing,

[3] I draw my definition and use of "mediator" from LATOUR. He defines mediators in opposition to intermediaries: "An intermediary … is what transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs. … Mediators, on the other hand cannot be counted as just one … Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time. Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry" (LATOUR 2005: 39).

configuring, and enrolling human and non-human agents, through complex chains of translations (CALLON 1986; LAW 1999; LATOUR 1987, 2005). According to the associations of the actors, the "fact" (LATOUR 1987) that "the place is haunted" – and so the index – is created and circulates through rumors and inscriptions. Consequently, the agency of the ghost can be abducted by the people who relate to the place. In particular, I will argue that non-human actors, especially those connected to the morphology of the place, play a major role in the networks that create haunted places in contemporary Japan.

This approach implies some methodological issues: GELL's theory, that focuses on artefacts, is not directly applicable to my case, since, as I stated above, the "artist" that materially created the place is not directly relevant in the network. Consequently, I will rely on the concept of translation, namely "the mechanism by which the social and natural worlds progressively take form. The result is a situation in which certain entities control others. Understanding what sociologists generally call power relationships means describing the way in which actors are defined, associated and simultaneously obliged to remain faithful to their alliances. The repertoire of translation … permits an explanation of how a few obtain the right to express and to represent the many silent actors of the social and natural worlds they have mobilized." (CALLON 1986: 19)

However, this concept, as Actor-Network-Theory in general, is based on the principle of symmetry between human and non-human actors, which is problematic (e.g.

OPPENHEIM 2007; KAPTELININ and NARDI 2006). In this paper, therefore, I am proposing to integrate the concept of translation with the notion of "primary" and "secondary" agents proposed by GELL (1998),[4] considering "secondary agents" non-human actors in general, not exclusively artefacts. This theoretical position relies on the "activity theory," in which "material things are not inherently, essentially resistant (or empowering, or any other quality)" and should be described "as such during the enactment of a particular human activity. Both a subject and a material object can potentially manifest an infinite number of properties under varying conditions. The particular properties of interest come to light in the whole context of an activity – which is oriented by a human-defined object" (KAPTELININ and NARDI 2006: 240–1).

Ghosts in Japan

Since the 1970s, Japan has experienced a boom in narratives about the uncanny and the supernatural, also related to the popularity of American horror films, such as *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), and *The Exorcist* (1973). Narratives about ghosts (*kaidan*)[5] and the occult (*okaruto*) in general

[4] GELL (1998: 20) defines "primary" agents as "intentional beings who are categorically distinct from 'mere' things or artefacts," and "secondary agents, which are artefacts … through which primary agents distribute their agency in the causal milieu, and thus render their agency effective."

[5] *Kaidan* are tales of the strange and mysterious, but they are often associated with ghost stories. They do not appear in historical records until the Edo period (1603–1869), when they reached their peak, as they entered vernacular literature as collections of oral-derived narratives (REIDER 2000, 2001, 2002). In this period, it also became popular for people to gather together and narrate tales of the

have also been spread by the media on a national level, particularly by television programs and films, in constant feedback with a more and more flourishing market of horror books, magazines, comics, and *anime*. Moreover, since the use of the Internet became widespread, people interested in the occult, started to propose their own narratives in a number of websites, blogs, social media, and chat rooms. In cases in which ghost stories refer to a specific place – thus constructing it as a "haunted place" (*shinrei supotto*)[6] and informing people

supernatural (TAKADA 1989: 391–95). Ghost stories reached its peak during the middle of the eighteenth century, because of the adoption of print that made popular literature possible. REIDER (2000: 269) argues, "in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Japan, each Japanese would have reasons and expectations that would vary with their different socio-economic background and experience. Overall, however, the general appeal of *kaidan* appears to be fourfold: 1. fascination with the grotesque, 2. plausible explanations for unexplained common occurrences, 3. attraction to the exotic, and 4. social commentary." However, along with the progressive modernization, westernization, and secularization of the country, a strong ideological campaign carried out by intellectuals such as INOUE Enryō (1858–1619), depicted beliefs on the supernatural as unscientific, against the progressive "enlightenment" of the country (JOSEPHSON 2006) and categorized them as untrue "superstition" (FIGAL 1999; INOUE 2000). SANYŪTEI Enchō (1839–1900), an oral storyteller, complained about the fact that "the teachers of the Age of Enlightenment (i.e., the Meiji period) thought that the supernatural was the product of the mind, and *kaidan* an extension of that neuropathy" (quoted in SEKIYAMA 1973: 345).

[6] The Japanese "*shinrei supotto*" is a recent expression that literally means "spiritual spot," or "psychic spot." It indicates places haunted by a ghost (*yūrei*), a monster (*yōkai*), or places where paranormal phenomena occur. In Japanese folklore, the difference between monsters and ghosts is sometimes blurred, since both of them are classified as *bakemono* or *obake* (literally "changing things"), not to mention the obvious local and historical variations (see "*yōkai*" in *Nihon Minzokugaku Kyōkai* 2004). Generally speaking, ghosts are the spirits of people who died by sudden or violent death, who do not access the afterlife and cling to this world because of their continuing desire to live, or because they did not realize they died. For this reason, they tend to stick to human beings, sucking away their life and, thus, causing weakness, illness and, eventually, death. For references about Japanese ghosts and a broad classification of the spirits of the dead see, amongst others, IWASAKA and TOELKEN (1994); RAVERI (2006); and SMITH (1974).

about where they can have paranormal experiences – the place attracts visitors who perform different practices, that range from courage testing (*kimodameshi*) to sometimes – as I will show below – tourism.

Studies on Japanese folklore have analyzed narratives about ghosts mostly from a narratological perspective, namely analyzing the meaning and structure of the narrative. This approach – largely based on BRUNVAND's popular work *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* (1981), that takes into account a variety of American urban legends – starts from the theoretical assumption that "Folktales, legends, beliefs, and the like probably persist because as they develop, they bring together a recognizable constellation of related beliefs and cultural traditions phrased in vivid, concrete detail" and that "narratives performances of …legends are extremely accurate reflections of popular prejudices and assumptions about how things happen in an unpredictable world" (IWASAKA and TOELKEN 1994: 44). Although this approach proved to be an interesting framework for analysis, it provided general conclusions, such as the argument that the *kaidan* boom reflects people anxiety in a socially transitional period (NAKAMURA 1994), or that ghost stories are linked with nationalistic discourses of nostalgia for vanishing practices of

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Scholars of Japanese folklore have deeply investigated the "uncanny," particularly focusing on local and historical variations of monsters (e.g. YANAGITA 1956; KOMATSU 2000). Yet, since *shinrei supotto* renown for apparitions of ghosts outnumber other kind of places – also because in contemporary Japan beliefs in ghosts are much more widespread than the ones in monsters – in this article, I will focus on beliefs in ghosts and experiences in places haunted by ghosts.

the past and for a "homeland" (*furusato*) placed in a mythological pre-modern Japan (IVY 1995). Moreover, as much as the above-mentioned anthropological interpretations of the occult, it completely lacks an investigation of personal experiences, and an understanding of how haunted places are relationally created. This is another gap that I intend to fill with the present article. In order to do so, rather than providing an historical account of the changes in the narratives and in the relevant areas, I will focus on the relationality of haunted places as indexes and on the role of associations of human and non-human actors in their creation.

Haunted Places in Kyoto

Kyoto provides an extremely interesting field of investigation for haunted places, because narratives on the occult are not only spread by the media, but they are also embedded in a number of scholarly and non-scholarly studies about local history and folklore, that are easily accessible to people in normal libraries (e.g. IRIE 2007; KASHA and KIKUCHI 1999; KOMATSU 2002; KOMATSU and NAITO 2002; MIKI 2007; NAMIKI 2010). These works are particularly meaningful, if contextualized in the nationally widespread "mediascape" (APPADURAI 1996) that tends to identify Kyoto as the mythological cultural capital of Japan and the representative of "true" Japanese culture, through the use of historical narratives (MACDONALD 1995). The relevance of Kyoto for the study of haunted places was also acknowledged by my

informants. I report here the statement of one of the webmasters I interviewed by email, who commented on the fact that I chose to focus my research on Kyoto:

> If you want to limit your research to a particular area, I feel that [Kyoto] is somehow different from other places. There have been a number of stories regarding ghost apparitions and curses since the Heian period, and they continue even in the present. Therefore, I suppose that if you want to research Kyoto, you should probably look at what happened in the Heian period. (Okaruto Jōhōkan Webmaster, December 17, 2010)

All the places considered haunted by ghosts are linked to some death – particularly sudden or violent deaths – that happened in the past, even though not necessarily in the Heian period (794–1185). Indeed, historical narratives of Kyoto as the former capital, offer vast possibilities for associations about some area and the death of some *samurai*, or member of the imperial court, thus creating the first link at the basis of a series of associations that create the haunting.

Places that become popular as haunted are often geographically and economically liminal ones, such as the ruins of hospitals, hotels, or tunnels. Yet, although more rarely, narratives about haunting can also refer to some hotel room, mansion, hospital, park, or school. There are no historical accounts about when narratives on haunting in Kyoto originated, but most of my informants stated that rumours about ghosts appeared in the early Showa period

(1926–1989) and, particularly the director (*shachō*) of the travel agency which organized and managed the ghost tour I investigated (see below), told me that, since these narratives started to be spread by the media, there were around five hundred places that were considered haunted in 2010, whereas they were nearly one third of that number during the Shōwa era. Since there is no univocal definition of a "*shinrei supotto*," I based my study on the definitions that people related to the subject gave:

> "'*Shinrei supotto*' indicates a place where ghosts or monsters appear, or where paranormal phenomena occur. It is a common denomination that has started to be used only in recent years. The expressions 'fear spot' or 'strange spot' can also be used. … Many places such as graveyards, old battlefields, famous places for suicides … tunnels in the mountains, ridges, places where rumors of ghost appearances became widespread, so called "ruins" (*haikyo*), such as the remains of hospitals or schools, or places in which abominable incidents or accidents happened … start to be called '*shinrei supotto*'." ("*Shinrei supotto*," Wikipedia)

> "Places that are called "*shinrei supotto*" are in several locations: ruins, graveyards, the sea, tunnels, or even at the corner of a residential area. These places don't become haunted only because they are eerie. They start to be called haunted because there are several people

> who had experiences like feeling a presence, feeling or hearing something, seeing a ghost. … I think that the reason why a place becomes haunted is that two conditions: a place in which someone died, and an eerie place, are superimposed. Information about these places is spread by the media or the Internet and rapidly reaches a vast number of people. People who get to know that information, acknowledge the place as haunted and continue to spread the rumor." (Okaruto Jōhōkan Webmaster, December 17, 2010)

As these definitions show, there are three main elements that contribute to the processes of construction of the "fact" that a particular place is haunted: 1. a link to someone's death; 2. the creepiness of the place; and 3. people's experience of sensing some supernatural presence in the place, particularly evident in the second definition.

Generally speaking, rumours about ghosts originate locally and are spread through oral communication. As such, they can be classified as "soft facts" (LATOUR 1987: 206), constantly translated among actors, able to change or contest them. However, as the associations they create are inscribed in specialized books, media reportages, or websites, they are presented as "hard facts," and they start to circulate in the market, or in the Internet, thus involving people interested in them, who, in turn, could become active actors in the process of translation and empowering of the associations on which the rumours were based. In the following paragraphs,

therefore, I will show how the processes of enrolment and association of human and non-human actors, from which the creation of haunted places emerges.

Researching Haunted Places and Paranormal Experiences in Kyoto

This study is based on data I gathered through fieldwork in contemporary Kyoto in 2010 and 2011. Since most of my informants stated that, along with specialized books and magazines, their main source of information about haunted places was the Internet, in first instance, I carried out an Internet survey of specialized websites, blogs, forums, and chat rooms. I produced a visual representation of mutual links and quotations among these items (Figure 1) using Google Touchgraph.[7] According to the visualized network, I interviewed the webmasters of the most central (i.e. relevant in the network) websites. Some of them agreed to meet me, others agreed to answer some questions I sent them by email.

In second instance, I carried out participant observation during the "Kyoto bus of ghost stories" (Kyoto *kaidan-ya basu*), a guided bus tour to haunted places in Kyoto, investigating the experiences that people had while visiting.

[7] Google Touchgraph is a Java-based browser application, that "reveals the network of connectivity between websites, as reported by Google's database of related sites" (Google Touchgraph 2011). I produced the network by inserting in the Google bar the query "haunted places in Kyoto" (Kyoto *shinreisupotto*). I copied the address of the first website on the Google list – that is supposed to be the most relevant to the query, according to the Google algorithm – and pasted into the Google Touchgraph bar.

I carried out surveys in the area surrounding the haunted places, and, when possible, I interviewed the residents.

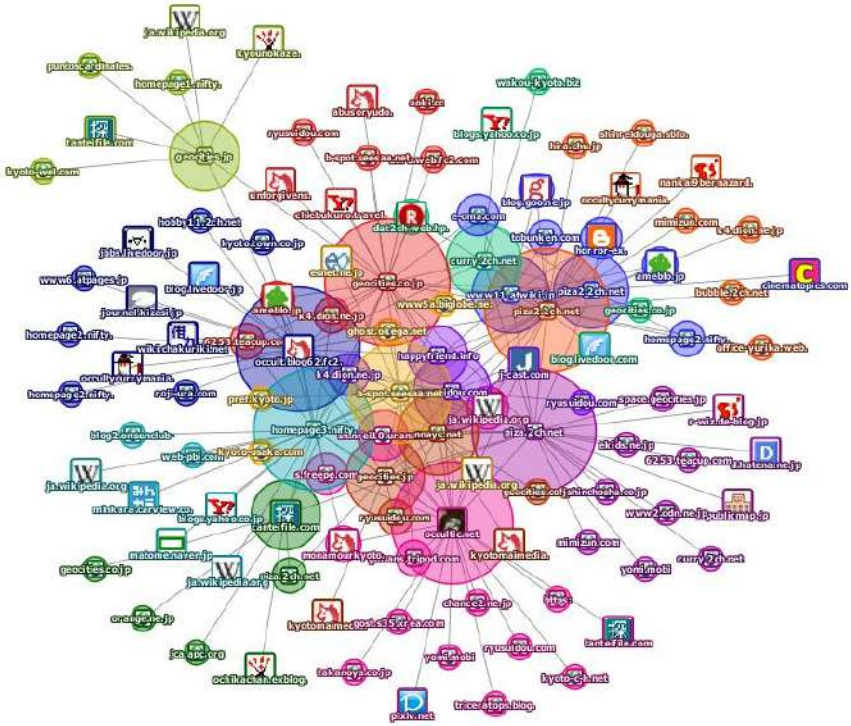

Fig. 1: Network of websites related to haunted places in Kyoto (08/12/2010)

In 2010, the Kyoto *kaidan-ya basu* ghost tours started on July 17, and were repeated six times up until the September 25. The normal tour was divided into two routes taking place on different days. In 2011 the tours took place every Saturday from the June 25 to September 24, and two more routes were

added to the previous two. The tours started from and arrived at the tour bus terminal in Kyoto Station and lasted approximately three hours, from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. People could take part in them by paying a 6000 yen fee, in which a special lunch box (*bentō*) was included.

In 2010, an average of twenty people attended the tour every time. The bus had twenty-four available seats and three times the bus was completely full. There were also people who took part in the tour two or three times. I met few people from Kyoto, although most of the participants were from Osaka and Shiga Prefectures, or from other cities in the Kansai or Kantō areas. Most of them were people in their late thirties to early fifties, both male and female, but there were also small groups of university students, young teenagers or children with their mothers. Most of the tourists joined the tour in small groups, from two to four people. In 2011, because of the influence of the great earthquake and tsunami that took place on March 11 in Japan, and the subsequent incident in Fukushima nuclear power plant on tourism in Kyoto, about half of the tours were cancelled, due to lack of demand and, when they took place, there was an average of ten participants.

I interviewed the staff of the travel agency that organized the bus tour. In particular the director of the agency – who was 42 in 2011, born and raised in Kyoto – and the guide – a male in his early sixties, from Kyoto[8] – were

[8] The guide used to work as artistic director in an advertising company and, after he retired, he decided to become a ghost storyteller. He is often invited to radio and television programs about ghosts and ghost stories, and he manages a free web-

extremely kind and available, therefore I could meet and interview them repeatedly.

I took part in the tours five times in 2010 and seven times in 2011. In 2010 I took part as a normal tourist twice, whereas, after I interviewed the director of the agency, I was allowed to take part in the tours for free and, during the initial speech, the organizers always introduced me to the customers as an Italian researcher in cultural anthropology from Kyoto University. Since the schedule of the tour was really tight and the guide or the organizers were constantly speaking, talking to the participants was not easy. Therefore, every time I focused on two or three people, particularly those who stated that they felt some ghostly presence, trying to obtain some more detailed information about their experiences.

Most of the tourists told me that they decided to take part in the tour because they found it "unusual" (*mezurashii*), but there were also people who stated they felt like "shivering" (*zotto suru*). There were also people who were interested in Kyoto history, as well as people who told me that they often visit haunted places. During the tour, people tried to interact with ghosts taking pictures of the places, looking for something weird, and, sometimes, someone claimed they actually took some ghostly pictures. In some cases, ghosts interacted with people: sometimes one person, or a small group of participants, claimed they heard lamenting voices that no one else had heard, sometimes

magazine with around 30,000 readers and a website (Ōmagadoki). He also writes and publishes books and CDs on ghost stories, that he sells through his website.

people would suddenly start feeling cold, or start crying, or screaming because something touched their shoulder. Needless to say, all these events would contribute to the eerie atmosphere and would be perceived, to various extents, as an evidence of the "authenticity" of the experience.

In the next paragraphs, I will take into consideration two very famous haunted places in Kyoto: Kazan-dō – also known as Kazan tunnel, or Higashiyama tunnel (Higashiyama tonneru) in Eastern Kyoto, and Midorogaike, a small pond in Northern Kyoto, showing the differences in the construction of the index.

Kazan-dō

Kazan-dō is a narrow tunnel that connects Higashiyama Ward to Yamashina Ward, on the Eastern side of Kyoto. It was built in 1903, yet, when in 1967 the broader Gojō bypass was opened, Kazan Tunnel was designated to pedestrians and bicycles only (Kyoto-shi 1987). This tunnel is one of the most famous *shinrei supotto* in Kyoto. It was included by most of the websites that listed *shinrei supotto* for the whole of Japan. However, it was not included in specialized magazines and books about haunted places in Kyoto, with the only exception of IRIE (2007: 203), who describes it as "the Mecca of ghosts for people interested in haunted places."

Yet the fame of Kazan-dō as a haunted place mainly spread through the Internet, and oral communication. In order to understand the relevance of narratives of the tunnel as a haunted place, suffice it to say that a simple research on

Google showed that results with the names of the tunnel were 4.9 percent of the haunted places in the whole Japan, whereas they were 11.4 percent of the haunted places in Kyoto (accessed April 11, 2010). Furthermore, Kazan Tunnel was also the first haunted place in Kyoto to be listed in the Wikipedia page about *shinrei supotto*.

Ghosts in Kazan-dō

> "Around Kazan Tunnel, in Awataguchi, there is the place that was used for executions during the Edo period. There is also the Kyoto central crematory, as well as several cemeteries of Honyoshi dera, Jōmyōin, and Hokkeji. Since the place where AKECHI Mitsuhide's retreat after the battle of Yamazaki was put to an end is close to Kazan Tunnel, it is said that one can see the figure of a *bushi*.[9] Furthermore, because in July 1994 a man who was riding a mini-bike really died on an accident in the neighbouring Higashiyama Tunnel on the 1st National Street, it is said that one can see the shape of a beheaded rider, or of a dead male.
>
> The two stories mentioned above about Kazan Tunnel are famous, but it is uncertain whether they are actually true or not." ("Kazan Tunnel," Wikipedia)

[9] AKECHI Mitsuhide (1528–1582) was a general under ODA Nobunaga. He betrayed his lord, attacking him as he was resting in Honnōji, in Kyoto, on July 21, 1582. Knowing there was no way out for him, Nobunaga committed *seppuku* and Mitsuhide took over his power and influence on the Kyoto area. Thirteen days later, he was defeated during the battle of Yamazaki by TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi. For references about AKECHI Mitsuhide and the battle of Yamazaki, see Kyoto-shi (1987) and NAGAI (1999).

This text was entered in the Wikipedia page before any other information about the history of the tunnel, on November 6, 2007, and it was not modified since then. The author translated the place as haunted by mobilizing, configuring and enrolling selected non-human actors, and creating an association that included not only the tunnel, a crematory, and nearby cemeteries, but also reified events in the past, such as the death of a famous general, and the one of the bike-rider, that created the ghosts that haunt the place.

Yet, one more actor was enrolled in the association with the place and ghosts: people with psychic powers (*reinōryokusha*), who acknowledged the place as haunted. Some of the people who managed websites dedicated to haunted places (e.g. Ryūsuidō below), claimed to have psychic powers themselves, thus playing an active role not only as authors, but also empowering the association, by directly linking themselves to the ghosts in the place (Figure 2):

> "Kazan dō
> This is a pedestrian street and, apparently, close to a crematory. The place for executions used to be there. It is said that the spirits of the people dead during a war wander about here. This place was visited by several mediums, such as GIBO Aiko."[10] (Okaruto Jōhōkan)

[10] GIBO Aiko (1932–2003) was often enrolled in the association. She was a very famous medium, author of several books, who was often invited to television programs, especially during the eighties.

> "Kyoto Prefecture, haunted places – Kazan-dō.
> Former Higasihyama Tunnel, also called Kazan tunnel. … It is a famous haunted places visited even by famous mediums such as GIBO Aiko. … Since, while passing through Kazan Tunnel, … there is the possibility to be possessed, it is better not to get close to it carelessly. If you absolutely have to walk through it, it is better that you take some *omamori*[11] with you." (Ryūsuidō)

The guide told me that his main sources of information about ghost stories and haunted places were specialized books and the Internet. Consequently, also the narrative he constructed in front of Higashiyama Tunnel and by which he informed us during the tour always linked the tunnel with the crematory, the accident, and the death of AKECHI Mitsuhide. Moreover, he also added that the place was haunted because of the neighboring Shogun-zuka, where SAKANOUE no Tamuramaro, the second Shogun of Japan whose spirit is said to be still guarding Kyoto, was buried. I report here the historical narrative about this place from a book on haunted places that the guide indicated as one of his sources:

> Shogun-zuka is where the grave of SAKANOUE no Tamuramaro, who wanted the place to be named after his military rank, is said to be. Apparently, the place is one of the seals by which Emperor Kanmu protected the

[11] Protective charms that can be purchased in Shinto sanctuaries and in Buddhist temples. For a more exhaustive explanation, see READER (1991) and READER and TANABE (1998).

capital from demons as he moved it to Heian. SAKANOUE no Tamuramaro is primarily renowned for having become a Shogun, but there are also several tales of his eroic deeds as a military man. He continues to be famous even today as the man who subjugated the Emishi and expanded the territory [of the Empire]. (YOSHIDA 2002: 74)

Fig. 2: Picture of the ghost of a child in front of the Yamashina side of Kazan Tunnel (RYŪSUIDŌ, 04/11/2010)

During the tour, after the guide introduced Kazan tunnel to us, we were invited to cross it and to come back. The staff and the guide would not cross it, stating that they did not want to go too much into such places. The tunnel was actually dark, even when I visited it during the daytime. It was

accessible only by walking a couple of minutes through a dark and narrow path, flanking some old Japanese style houses. Moreover, because of the mountain air that flows through it, it was always colder than the surrounding environment. Water percolated through its walls creating dark shapes that, sometimes, resembled the shape of a human face or a human body (Figure 3), and that attracted the visitors, who would take pictures of them. Moreover, since it was the last place visited during the tour, we always arrived there in pitch darkness, and the only light was provided by the illumination inside the tunnel. Most of the participants, uttered comments such as "It's creepy!" (*kowai*!), or "How eerie!" (*kimi warui*!).

Fig. 3: Water percolates from the walls of the tunnel, creating a human looking shape

Four different times, some people refused to enter, stating that it was creepy (*kimiwarui*), weird (*okashii*), and that they were feeling a "too heavy of an atmosphere" (*kūki ga omosugiru*) or some ghastly presence (*rei wo kanjiru*). Three times, while walking through the tunnel, some people claimed they heard some voices. As I asked for more detailed information, they explained what they heard as whispers, or small squealing voices coming from afar. Furthermore, in two different times, two people suddenly moved towards the wall with a small scream, claiming that they felt something touching their shoulder, or as if something had swiftly brushed past them, at the center of the tunnel.

These events appeared to have an influence also on the other participants' experiences, since everybody would start walking more cautiously, commenting that they were afraid. As I asked people who did not directly experience ghosts whether they believed what happened or not, most of them tended to state that they would not know, also because they had no *reikan*, literally "ability to sense the supernatural." Therefore, they tended to acknowledge the experience of the person who felt the ghost, because they thought it would have been possible in that place. The fact that it did not happen to them was mainly ascribed to their personal lack of ability. I have never found anyone who claimed to have *reikan* among the people who did not sense anything. Conversely, even those who claimed not to have a particular ability to sense the supernatural, were feeling that the place was "heavy."

Midorogaike

Midorogaike is a small pond in Kita Ward, on the Northern side of Kyoto. It is located in a basin surrounded by low mountains (approximately 200 meters high), with the exception of its South-Western part. The pond is characterized by a peculiar natural environment. Since no river flows into it, it is a nearly ten thousand-years old wetland mostly formed by spring and pluvial waters. In the central part, there is a small island called the "floating island" (*ukishima*), a natural formation of water plants and mud. Moreover, because of its peculiarity, its vegetation was declared as a National Natural Monument in 1927 and in 1988 the definition was extended to the all of the plants around the pond, since it was considered a surviving relic of the ice age (Kyoto-shi bunka kankō shigen hogo zaidan September 19, 2011).

The very characters that compose the name of the pond – that can also be read as "Mizorogaike" – have a strong impact, since they mean "pond of the deep mud," thus contributing to create an eerie atmosphere for the ghost stories of the area. According to KASHA and KIKUCHI (1999: 103), rumours about ghosts started to spread in the beginning of the Showa period. In contrast to Higashiyama tunnel, ghost stories about Midorogaike were mostly reported by books and specialized magazines, and their influence on the Internet was relatively limited, with a bare 1.91 percent relevance among the total haunted places in

Japan and 6.2 percent of relevance among haunted places in Kyoto (November 4, 2010). Even the Wikipedia page about the pond, although rich in information about its nature and history, barely mentioned its reputation as a haunted place, simply stating, "it is a famous area as a setting for ghost stories and paranormal phenomena. Various stories are part of the tradition of this place" ("Midorogaike," Wikipedia).

Ghosts in Midorogaike

As I mentioned above, narratives about ghosts in Midorogaike were mostly reported in books and magazines. I hereby translate one of them, which I personally found pretty representative and well written:

> "One of the seven entrances of Kyoto, Kōjinguchi, on the shores of the Kamogawa, that looks up to Hieizan. There was a hospital, and a young woman stopped a taxi that was passing by. It was late at night and the driver did not even like the place, which he found creepy, but it was business after all, so as he was told 'to Midorogaike,' he moved the car to the North. The dark forest, thick with vegetation, revealing the area of Shimogamo appears, but he continues to drive even more Northwards. In the surroundings there are only rice fields, and no presence of any human habitation. As the car approaches the Midorogaike in Kamigamo, the driver suddenly turns toward the customer, but the

> woman had vanished. The only thing that remained of her presence was a soaking wet and dripping seat." (KASHA and KIKUCHI 1999: 103)

This ghost story, that reminds the one about the "Vanishing Hitchhiker" reported by BRUNVAND (1991), is very famous in Kyoto. The author associated the place with the forest, thick vegetation, darkness, and the absence of "human habitation," but similar associations with the pond were inscripted in most of books and magazines. However, these were not the only non-human actors enrolled in the process of translation of Midorogaike: suicides, particularly committed by the patients of a psychiatric hospital that lays on the Northern side of the pond, hidden by the woods, and the environment of the pond, configured as deadly and hostile, also played a great role in the association:

> "It is said to be the most dangerous haunted place in Kyoto. Apparently, the patients of the nearby hospital commit suicide here by drowning themselves. This lake is also called 'the bottomless pond', therefore the corpses will never float back to the surface. They say that, on some street close to the pond, the ghost of a woman in her forties asks with a faint voice "please, take me to the Midorogaike," but if you let her enter your car, she will disappear as soon as you approach the Midorogaike." (Okaruto Jōhōkan)

Moreover, especially the narrative produced by the guide in front of the pond, tended to stress a historical continuity of the haunting, linking it to the nearby sacred Mount Kibune, and to Mount Kurama, from where demons were thought to enter Kyoto until the Meiji period. He also reported religious practices that were held in the area until the Meiji period, such as a pilgrimage (*rokujizō meguri*) that would involve also other areas in Kyoto.[12]

Yet, although people would silently listen to the guide's explanation of the pond, no one directly experienced any agency of ghosts. We accessed the place through an illuminated street that flanked houses and mansions and we would listen to the narrative provided by the guide, while standing on the side of a narrow street on the southern side of the pond. The pond itself was actually dark, but all the surroundings were pretty well illuminated. Moreover, on the Eastern side of the pond, there were some big mansions and, in front of them, a small public garden, that was always empty because of the late hour at which we reached the pond during the tour.

Trust in Mediation

I will first take into account the processes of translation of the two haunted places, in order to analyze the creation of the index and how, consequently, visitors could abduct the agency of the ghost. Both cases presented the elements

[12] A complete account of the history of Midorogaike, as well as the religious practices that used to be held in the area, can be found in UEDA (1981).

introduced by the definition of a "haunted place" that I introduced at the beginning of this article. In both cases, reified deaths in the past were configured as actors and enrolled in the association between the place and ghosts, and non-human actors connected to the place were mobilized and enrolled in the association, configuring them as "creepy."

In the case of Higashiyama tunnel, the translation provided clear links between the actors (the crematory, the nearby graveyards, Shogun-zuka, the accident) and the apparition of ghosts. Moreover, also the historical deaths presented by the narratives were clearly identified in time and space as personal deaths (AKECHI Mitsuhide, the rider), thus the resulting associations with apparitions of ghosts were coherent. Furthermore, a major role in the translation process of the place was played by *reinōryokusha*, both GIBO Aiko and Ryūsuidō. Mediums, in fact, were very powerful allied, since they could provide the "evidence" of the agency of the ghost, according to their ability to directly link with it. Moreover, especially the "famous" GIBO Aiko, because of her network that included all the people who supported her and people in the media who promoted her as a medium (LATOUR 1987), was translated as a particularly strong actor in the association. Similarly, also the guide constituted a powerful allied in the association, since his fame and ability as a ghost storyteller was renown and acknowledged by most of participants. Even though he claimed he had no *reikan* himself, he was a reliable and convincing actor because of his personal network.

As a consequence of the translation process and of the configuration of the actors, the association that constructed the place as an index from which visitors could abduct the ghost resulted convincing. This was possible also because people who could not relate to the ghost, had no means to contest what happened, since they claimed they had no *reikan*. In this sense, personal abilities to sense the supernatural provided the key to the processes of translation and the associations among the actors.

Higashiyama tunnel as an "index," therefore, was created on the basis of processes of translation that involved human and non-human actors in an association that resulted in the abduction of the agency of the ghost. According to the empowerment of the association resulting from the processes of translation and the configuration of actors, the authority of primary agents (authors, webmasters, mediums, guide) was defined and mediated through the secondary agents (crematory, cemeteries, deaths) that they had configured in the association. Accordingly, relationships of trust based on *reikan* and the possibility of abduction of the agency of the ghost also emerged.

In the case of Midorogaike, however, processes of translation were less clear and, consequently, the configuration of the pond as an index was more blurred. In fact, all the links between the place and death were pretty weak: no direct experience with ghosts in the place was reported, and the story of the taxi driver was never first-hand, since no one among mediators stated that they actually talked

to the driver. Moreover, the association did not provide any clear link between non-human actors in the place and the ghost itself. In fact, although apparitions were related to the peculiar and eerie natural environment of the place, suicides, and the religious history of the place, they were not directly connected to the ghost of the woman that was supposed to appear. Also the deaths that were linked to the pond were not clearly identified in time and had no reference to any particular person. Therefore, the association that constructed the pond as an index did not result in a clear and authority-organized chain of translations. As a consequence, the network became more fragmented and, therefore, less emotionally involving and convincing.

Everything in its Right Place

The last element to take into consideration in order to understand the processes of creation of haunted places as indexes, is the agency of non-human actors in the place. Visitors, who joined the tour because of their interest in the haunting and, therefore, were potential actors to be enrolled in the network, related to the places during the tour, thus negotiating their meaning through their own experiences abducting or non-abducting the ghost.

In the case of Kazan-dō, visitors themselves, who were interested and enrolled by the association created by mediators (authors, webmasters, the guide), contributed to the process of translation by selectively enrolling further non-

human actors to which they linked (water percolations, darkness, cold), even though these actors had not explicitly been configured by mediators in the association. Thus, they provided further allied to the association that constructed the place as "index," and they could abduct the agency of the ghost.

In the case of Midorogaike, however, although the pond itself was actually dark, the surrounding environment was illuminated and we reached it through a large street flanked by houses and mansions. Visitors could not directly link with any of the non-human actors connected to the environment, that mediators enrolled in the association: the forest was no longer there, since the pond had become an integral part of a bigger urban area in Northern Kyoto, all the surrounding were illuminated and, obviously, there was no corpse of drown people. Therefore, in this case, non-human actors "betrayed" (CALLON 1986) the association created by mediators, with the result of a less effective index, giving few possibilities for the abduction of ghosts. Visitors at Midorogaike, in fact, associated the pond with normal residential areas with which they were familiar, because of the surrounding mansions and the illumination. Therefore, the association that constructed the pond as an index did not result convincing enough and the visitors could not abduct the agency of ghosts:

> I knew that Midorogaike was a very famous haunted place, but I expected something creepier. The pond is somehow dark and eerie, especially thinking about all the mud and the fact that if one enters, he or

she will drown because of the plants. However, after all, there are houses and mansions everywhere, so it is difficult to think that it is actually haunted. (Man, late thirties, Midorogaike, July 23, 2011)

In other words, non-human actors in the place as translated and configured by mediators, played an active role in the processes of creation of the index. However, visitors used to negotiate their beliefs in the haunting not only according to the power of the associations assembled by mediators, but also through their own experiences, influenced by the performativity of non-human actors in the place. The role of personal experience and the relationship that people had with these elements related to the morphology of the place, therefore, were central in the processes of translation.

Conclusions

In this article I tried to propose an approach that takes into consideration mutual interactions and intercommunication among actors, in order to propose an anthropological interpretation of the occult in post-capitalistic societies. This approach made clear that beliefs in and practices of consumption of the occult are constructed by primary agents that configure and organize associations of human and non-human actors through processes of translation, on which basis authority and trust emerge and are negotiated, and beliefs are organized. These processes create haunted places as indexes, thus making possible (or non-possible) the

abduction of the agency of ghosts. Moreover, this approach showed that taking into account how associations are constructed, and consequently, how significations of haunted places are negotiated through personal experiences in a network of performativity – in which the agency of non-human actors plays a fundamental role – is central in order to achieve a full understanding of these phenomena.

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Reconsideration of the Relationship between Rituals and Noh: the Case of Noh *Seiōbo* in Oomoto

Junko NAGAHARA

Introduction

In May 1993, the ceremony for the completion of *Chosei-den*[1] was held at Ayabe, Kyoto Prefecture, the sanctuary of *Oomoto*,[2] at the same time as the Centennial Anniversary of *Oomoto*, which was a long-standing dream of the religious group, and one of these ceremonies was the first Noh performance on the Noh stage, which was built into the main hall. On May 3, there were performances of Noh '*Okina*' and Noh '*Shojo*' in the morning by the *Kongo* school and the *Hosho* school, and in the afternoon the Noh *Seiōbo* was performed in which the fourth spiritual leader, Kiyoko Deguchi plays the leading role.

[1] This building was completed in 1992, the 100th anniversary of its inauguration. This is where the Holy Spirit possessed Nao Deguchi, the founder of the cult, that is where Oomoto-kyo began. Ayabe, Kyoto Prefecture.

[2] Oomoto is a new Shinto religion that began in 1892. Its founder is Nao Deguchi. Her son-in-law, Onisaburo Deguchi, promoted it in Japan and abroad. The headquarters of the cult are located in Ayabe and Kameoka in Kyoto Prefecture.

Seiōbo is one of the *Karagoto* Noh plays based on a story from China. In this type of Noh, a kyogen actor (*kyogen-kata*) first appears on the stage and speaks out *(Kuchi-ake* Kyogen). The chapter is as follows.

> *"Mata kon-nitta, kono Aya no seichi, Chosei-den ni miyuki arubeshi tono onkoto nite soro aida, minamina kono den he anai mousare sorae."*
> Today, (the holy being) is coming to this *Chosei-den* in this sacred place, Aya. Everyone, please come to this palace[3].

In the usual Noh *Seiōbo*, the dialogue "*Chosei-den*" should be "*kono den*" (*den* means "palace"). After *Mae* (the first act of Noh), in the part of *Ai-kyogen*, the dialogue was changed drastically. The dialogue is as follows.

> "This is a very propitious sign.
> Looking at *Aogakiyama* on all sides, *Ogumo* River flowed cleanly, and *Kunitokotachi no mikoto* descended on Takamagahara, the sacred place of *Aya*, as the name of *Ushitra no konjin*. A hundred years later, this *Chosei-den* was built here, worship *Shintaisan* (holy mountain), towering high, with thick pillars, and fragrant wood. It's really a pleasure."

Undoubtedly, these lines were made to celebrate the centenary of the religion and the completion of the main

[3] All the translations from Japanese into English have been done by the author.

shrine. They were inserted in the *Ai-kyogen* part. (Tensei sha 1993 (1)).

In a survey conducted at the Kameoka headquarters before seeing this Noh *Seiōbo*, there were several cases showing a relationship between Noh *Seiōbo* and *Oomoto*, such as playing the song of *Seiōbo* as the wake-up time signal in the living quarters. However, the dialogue of *Ai-kyogen* in the *Seiōbo* further emphasizes this relationship.

Therefore, this paper discusses the religious and ritual aspects of Noh by analyzing the above-mentioned relationship.

Noh "*Seiōbo*"

A government official serving a Chinese emperor announces the holding of a banquet. Before long, a woman appears and presents a peach branch that blooms and bears fruit once every three thousand years to the emperor, who has a feast in the palace. Then, congratulating the Emperor's reigning reign, she says, ' In fact, I am the incarnation of the mother of the West King, and I will appear again and dedicate the peach fruit, ' and leaves the stage. In the section of *Ai-kyogen*, a government official states that there was a mention of playing various kinds of music to welcome the arrival of *Seiōbo*. Soon, *Seiōbo*, who brought some maids and birds, comes down from heaven; she presents peaches and many treasures to the emperor, and after performing some elegant dances, she returns to heaven riding on the spring breeze. It is a beautiful

Noh play centered on the dance of an elegant goddess, *Seiōbo*. The description provided by Onisaburo Deguchi[4] is as follows.

> "The story that *Seiōbo* descended to the earth and, wearing a golden robe, presented this peach with many angels to the person who held the divine power on the earth, will be surmised by the Noh song that is popular today." (Deguchi 1921)

Perhaps he had seen Noh *Seiōbo* on some occasion and read the lyrics of Noh directly. Later, it seems that this influenced his thoughts and writings greatly (Deguchi 1924).

How Bishops Interact with Nohgaku

Chapter 3 looks at the relationship between *Oomoto* and the arts, mainly Nohgaku, centering on the five gurus of *Oomoto*, including the Founder of the cult, Nao Deguchi, Onisaburo Deguchi, the second guru Sumiko Deguchi, the third guru Naohi Deguchi, and the fourth guru Seiko Deguchi. The relationship between the Noh *Seiōbo* and the *Oomoto* becomes apparent when one looks into the evolution of the cult and the actions of its leaders.

1. The founder of the cult, Nao Deguchi (1837 to 1918)

The following is a story about Nao Deguchi, the founder of the *Oomoto* doctrine (Tensei sha. 1993). At that time, the

[4] One of the two great gurus of Oomoto. In order to convey the teachings of the founder, Nao Deguchi, he dictated 81 volumes of *Reikai Monogatari*. See also note 2.

spirit possessed her and she wrote down an oracle called "*Ofudesaki*".

> “She (Nao Deguchi) closed the room, held a Japanese fan, and performed the Noh play, being guided by the God. Then, She left the following words to her second generation guru, "When the world of *Miroku* comes, will everyone dance like this."

Oomoto has an ideal image of how society should be called " *Miroku no yo*." It refers to the ideal world of God to be realized on earth. Onisaburo wrote about *Miroku no yo* in *Reikai monogatari* as follows:

> “Fifty and six hundred and seventy million years have passed since the beginning of the world, and the time has come for *Miroku* to finally emerge. In order for the god of *Miroku* to descend and fulfill the world's reforms, *Matsu no yo* [the world of pine] will emerge. Here, the pillar of God was built. Preaching *Ku, Ju, Metsu, Do* [pain, gathering, destruction, the way], disclosing the moral manner, exhorting good, disciplining evil, spreading the teachings of love, revealing the law for a peaceful world, the time has come to expand to the top and bottom.” (Deguchi 1921)

In order to realize this goal, *Oomoto* will become a model of the world and promote its ideals worldwide. The words of the founder mentioned above symbolize the

relationship of “the form of Noh, that is the form of the world of Miroku”, and from this anecdote, one can read that Noh was closely connected to *Oomoto* from the dawn of the religious community, or that she wanted to emphasize the relationship between Noh and *Oomoto*. In order to understand why *Oomoto* has maintained such a close relationship with Noh, we must look into the actions of the late Onisaburo and the gurus.

2. Saint Onisaburo Deguchi (1871-1948)

His name was Kisaburo UEDA. In 1900, he became Nao Deguchi’s daughter's husband, and changed his name to Onisaburo Deguchi. His charismatic existence led to the expansion of *Oomoto* from a private religion to a large one in Japan and abroad. On the other hand, he also had a great interest in art. His creative works spanned calligraphic works and paintings, *tanka* poems, and pottery, and he was also interested in Noh. In February 1921, ' Taisho Nichinichi Shimbun ' introduced the stories of Noh *Seiōbo* and ' *Makiginu* ' as *Yokyoku Genreiroku* in accordance with the teachings of *Oomoto*, and included the religious interpretation of *Seiōbo*. His interest to Noh began around this time.

It was around 1925 that he fully incorporated artistic activities into the religious community. Despite the fact that the religious community was oppressed and Onisaburo was held in prison because his interpretation of Japanese mythology, which was in conflict with State Shinto, was deemed to have insulted the Emperor, their activities continued.

The idea that flows through his theory is that "art is the mother of religion". At the end of volume 65 of *Reikai Monogatari*, he concludes that “The ART, as I say, does not refer to what happens in today's society. Everything between heaven and the earth, created by great power, is an artistic product of god. It is a true religion that touches the inner surface of this great artist, that is, the craftsman, and lives with god, and moves with god.” (Deguchi 1925). To him, art is synonymous with religion, and his conviction connects Noh as an already established art to the foundation of the *Oomoto* religion. In addition, the central plot of the *Seiōbo* Noh focuses on the idea that a goddess brings happiness to the emperor, the society he governs, and the people - a story which Onisaburo regards as the ideal world of *Oomoto*.

The two main works related to Noh *Seiōbo* itself are *Reikai Monogatari* and *Genreikai.* In *Reikai Monogatari*, the name of *Seiōbo* appears in volume 48. Volumes 47 and 48 depict two people traveling around heaven, Harukuniwake and Tatsuko. They overcame various trials and were led to *Tenshibi-kyu* Shrine in heaven, where they met *Seiōbo* (here called I*zanami no mikoto* [deity of Izanami], *Konjin* [the Golden God of Hitsujisaru]). *Seiōbo* guides them to the peach field and tells them about the peach tree. After that, they are reunited with *Seiōbo*, who was the great god of the moon, at the *Gekkyu-den* Palace on Mt. Gessho. Then *Seiōbo* says to them, “You can participate in the divine work of *Hitsujisaru no mikoto*”, and they go back to the lower world. From the texts

above, it becomes apparent that *Seiōbo* is considered to be the highest god of heaven in *Oomoto* (Deguchi 1924).

Based on this idea, Onisaburo wrote in his book *Genreikai* a detailed description of the Noh *Seiōbo*. *Seiōbo* was not a mere creation of human beings, but a grand divine Noh play borrowing from Chinese stories in *Shinmon* (divine writings).

In addition, in *Oomoto Shinyu*[5] the following passage appears:

> "Ayabe's *Oomoto* cannot continue without being the direct spiritual line of Nao Deguchi, that is *Henjo Nanshi* (a male with a deformity). The body was a woman, and *Mitama* (spirit) was Kunitokotachi no mikoto. Generation after generation, the successor is a woman. This is important, so I wrote it with care." (Deguchi 1918)

It is said that *Seiōbo*, who was the great god of the moon and the great acting goddess of *Henjo-nyoshin*, finally completed the divine works and established the divine government of *Miroku* on earth, and returned to heaven again. In these descriptions, one can read the idea that the guru, who is a male altered, assimilates with the god *Seiōbo*, who integrates everything, by playing the role of *Seiōbo*, who is a metamorphic goddess, and the appearance of the world of *Miroku* becomes possible.

[5] A collection of *Ofudesaki*, the oracle of Nao Deguchi. Oomoto scripture.

Although there is no record that Onisaburo performed Noh by himself, he was photographed wearing the costume of *Seiōbo*, and carried the photo with him when he conducted missionary work in Mongolia. His interpretation of the Noh play *Seiōbo* will be passed on to the next generation.

3. The second guru Sumiko Deguchi (1883-1952)

Sumiko DEGUCHI, and Onisaburo as her husband, devoted themselves to missionary work after the founder Nao died in 1919. *Oomoto* was under attack from the government at the time because its interpretation of Japanese myths conflicted with the National Shinto ideology. As a result, Sumiko was detained for about seven years, but she continued her missionary work after bail. In 1950, she founded *Rakutensha,* an artistic activity organization, after Onisaburo died. The headquarters for this organization is currently in Kameoka. People can learn various arts such as singing, pottery, textiles, calligraphy, *koto*, singing, and dancing. It is following the flow of *Meikosha*, founded by Onisaburo. During the era of the second generation, two massive waves of persecutions of *Oomoto* were made carried out by the government (1921, 1935). In addition, many wars broke out in various parts of the world, and *Oomoto* was in a critical situation. That is why there is little evidence left of the relationship between Noh and Sumiko Deguchi. What should have been pointed out is that, in order to entrust her with the

completion of the image of the "*Seiōbo*" in *Oomoto*, which she and Onisaburo had not been able to do, she had her daughter practice Noh songs with a local Noh musician.

4. The third guru Naohi Deguchi (1902-1990)

Naohi DEGUCHI learned *tanka*, tea ceremony, and *koto* as a teenager, and began training in Noh in 1921, when she became the third guru, holding *Yokyoku to Shimai no Kai* (Noh performances) from 1946, after the war. Every time she performed the rituals, she was the one playing the rhyme, chore, etc. In 1953, on April 16 (March 3 in the old lunar calendar), *Miroku-den* was completed in Ayabe, and in commemoration of that, the Noh play of the Kongo school is dedicated to the *Miroku Taisai* Festival. This is the first time that Noh was played from its beginning to the end in *Oomoto*.

At the wish of the third guru, *Bansho-den* was built in Kameoka to coincide with the 1958 Onisaburo *Shoten junen-sai* Festival. This temple was a structure that should be the center of Kameoka, which is considered to be one of the holy places. The architectural style refers to the worship hall of *Ujikami-jinja* Shrine in Uji City, and consists of three buildings: a temple, a worship hall and an office. Inside, there is a Noh stage and a *Shoin-zukuri* style tea room, and it can be said that it is a sacred place where the idea of the coincidence of art and religion advocated by Onisaburo is embodied.

Within the religious community at the time of the *Bansho-den*'s construction, however, there was a strong opposition to the construction of this Noh stage, as only some

believers thought it good that the third guru and her followers enjoy practicing Noh dancing or singing. Nohgaku was not favorably incorporated into *Oomoto* from the beginning. Noh dedication was carried out every year after the completion of *Bansho-den*, but the level of understanding of Noh within the religious community did not increase drastically, so people did not gather in the audience seats, and only the bishop was watching Noh all day.

The performance of the *Kameoka Bansho-den* Noh stage was performed on December 5, 1958 at Kuro Hosho's Noh plays *'Takasago', 'Hagoromo*', Sengoro Shigeyama's '*Suehirogari* ', and Naohi's ' *Soshiarai* '. This first full-fledged Noh stage has had a great impact on the relationship between *Oomoto* and Nohgaku from then on.

Finally, on March 7, 1961, the Noh play *Seiōbo* was performed at the celebration of the Bishop's 60th birthday. Naohi DEGUCHI played the *Seiōbo* (*Shite*: main role), and almost all other performers (musical instrument performances, Noh chants, etc.) were also handled by the staff and believers of *Oomoto*. There were still few people who understood her designs within the cult organization, and this stage was established by the efforts of only a few believers, but this performance was the opening of an era for the great Nohgaku.

The driving force behind this performance of *Seiōbo* was based on the relationship between the gurus and ' *Seiōbo* '. People who joined the performance said, “Everyone had the feeling that the Noh *Seiōbo* played by the guru should naturally be realized as a promise of *Oomoto* as a vision of

divine works." The relationship between the *Oomoto* and *Seiōbo* finally became an accomplished fact, one supported by the actions of the past gurus, such as the form of Noh performed by the founder, Nao Deguchi, led by the gods (the dancing and playing of the gods, the *Hina*-type of the *Miroku no yo*), and the image of *Seiōbo* made by Onisaburo, in *Genreikai* (Tensei sha 1988-1).

One believer who joined in the Noh play *Seiōbo* commented as follows:

> Practicing Nohgaku becomes a qualification to become a resident of the world of *Miroku.* The world of *Miroku* cannot be brought to bear if each person does not improve his or her mental discipline sufficiently through Nohgaku training. The same applies to tea ceremony, martial arts, and language (Tensei sha 1988-2).

The performance of Noh *Seiōbo* had the potential to develop from the faith of believers to the faith itself, into a stage that involved the movement of the entire foundation.

Nowadays, at the *Oomoto* accommodation facility in Kameoka, at 5:00 a.m., the time of waking up, they play the sound source recording the *Seiōbo* played by the Third guru and followers. The believers who come to worship wake up and go to the morning ceremony. Now, *Seiōbo* is not only used when there is a Noh performance, but also penetrated to the point where believers can come into close contact with each

other, symbolizing how closely they are connected to the religious community.

The confrontation between *Oomoto* and *Seiōbo*, which had continued since the era of the founder, came to an end. It was the birth of Bishop as *Seiōbo*. The interpretation of "*Miroku Sanshin*" is as follows. Nao Deguchi is "*Miroku as a Dharma*" (works for the good). Onisaburo Deguchi and Sumiko Deguchi are called "*Miroku* as a self-responsibility" (according to time, place, and position, a function of salvation). Naohi Deguchi and Kiyoko Deguchi are "*Miroku* aiming for realization" (work to realize the world of *Miroku*) (Deguchi 1967). The work of "*Miroku Sanshin*" was completed here, and the foundation of " *Miroku no yo* " was completed. After this, a special meaning began to take shape when the guru performed Noh playing *Seiōbo*.

However, there remained the challenge of constructing the *Chosei-den* Hall as the main shrine, which was a long-lasting dream within *Oomoto*. As Onisaburo once stated in a poem, this hall has a special meaning for *Oomoto*, *Chosei-den* appearing to be indispensable to carry out and complete *Kami-no-Shigumi.*

5. The fourth guru Kiyoko Deguchi (1935-2001)

"We will continue our mother's will and work hard with the believers to complete the *Chosei-den* Hall."

On September 30, 1990, at the funeral of the third guru Naohi Deguchi, the fourth guru Kiyoko Deguchi stated her

determination to continue her mother's work. On August 7, 1992, the 100th anniversary year, Kiyoko Deguchi put a brush underneath the picture of a pine tree on the Noh stage, saying the *norito* of *Oomoto* (prayer words), ' *Kannaagara tamachihaemase*'. This pine painted on the back wall of the Noh Stage is called the "*Yogo no matsu*", and it is said that god is descending there. The person who actually painted the picture of the pine tree was Taizo Hirota, a player of the Kongo school, who was nominated by the will of the third guru. He asked Kiyoko to write the most important words of *Oomoto* on the pine tree draft. With a brush and Japanese ink, she wrote more than 30 ' *Kannaagara tamachihaemase* ' on the *Kagamiita* (the back wall). (Tensei sha 1992)

The following year, on May 4, 1993, the Noh stage of *Chosei-den* was performed, and the fourth guru dedicated Noh *Seiōbo* on that new stage. The lines of *kyogen* mentioned at the beginning of this paper were written by Sagano Kagami, who worked for *Ai-kyogen* at the recommendation of Hirota, based on *Oomoto ' Norito* '. It is said that Shingo Shigeyama, from the Kyogen Okura-ryu School, readily approved it after seeing the new composition.

On the day when the Noh play *Seiōbo* was played, the program progressed in a solemn atmosphere as if to offer prayers. At the end of the song, some believers put their hands together and bowed in worship towards the stage.

In the next day's grand festival greeting, Kiyoko says:

I feel a miraculously divine thoughtfulness in playing Noh "*Seiōbo*" on the Noh stage of *Chosei-den*. The god

mold of the *Miroku* world was largely made this time. We must make every effort to create the shape of the *Miroku* world in the hearts of each and every one of our families (Tensei sha 1993(2)).

6. The three major eras of Oomoto

Looking at the attitudes of the successive gurus and Onisaburo toward the arts, especially Noh, there are three major periods as follows.

First of all, the period of the first guru Nao and the second guru Sumiko and Onisaburo, followed by the period of the third guru Naohi (the second), and the period of the fourth guru Kiyoko (the third).

The first period coincides with the founding period of *Oomoto*, about 60 years from 1892, when the founder was in a state of divinity, until 1952, when the second guru died. Despite the two repressions of 1921 and 1935, they did not lose their interest in art and Noh because they strongly sought to define the identity of *Oomoto*. The founder Nao expanded the form of Noh and showed the form of the *Miroku* world. In order to materialize it, Onisaburo skillfully interpreted *Seiōbo*, a female deity from an exotic realm, and incorporated it into *Reikai Monogatari* (The Tale of the spirit world), which could be called a myth of the religious community. In an attempt to appeal more visually to his audiences, he ordered a *Seiōbo* costume. He was unable to perform *Seiōbo*, however he himself put on the *Seiōbo* costume, took a photograph, and brought it with him during his missionary work in Mongolia. It is thought

that the outcome that was ultimately expected was the performance of "*Seiōbo*", which can be said to be the materialization of the *Miroku* world. Their will was passed on to the Third guru through the Second guru.

In the reign of the third guru, that is, in the second period, it was the time for Noh "*Seiōbo*". On the stage where "*Seiōbo*" was performed on March 7, 1962, the image of *Seiōbo* made by Onisaburo and the world of *Miroku* merged for the first time. The relationship between the Shite (main role of Noh) and *Seiōbo* as the *Oomoto* guru was also born. This period can be said to be the era of the birth of guru.

In addition, a sacred place was required to ensure the appearance of the deity, who would only descend to a holy place. For *Oomoto*, it was the *Chosei-den*. In the following period of the fourth guru (the third period), in the fall of 1992, *Chosei-den* was completed, and the following year, on May 4, 1993, the Bishop performed *Seiōbo*. Gurus dancing in holy places appeared to their believers as an incarnation of divinity, and the appearance of a guru as "*Seiōbo*" on stage determined that he or she was the legitimate successor of the previous guru.

Noh and rituals

One of the basic contents of Noh, ' monogatari ' has its origins in various festivals, and the traces of these festivals (besides Noh itself) can be seen in modern and contemporary festivals and folk entertainments. However, this does not necessarily mean that Noh has evolved

directly from rituals, much less that Noh itself is a ritual. On the other hand, it is obvious that Noh has more ritual elements than many other theatrical forms (Beichman 1983).

Janine Beichman focuses her attention on the *Mugen*-Noh in Noh drama, and compares Noh with the more general concept of ' rite of passage, ' while acknowledging the ritual element commonly held by Noh called *chinkon* (Requiem). In addition, Beichman concludes that "Theatrical performance means that the individual protrudes by breaking the ritual pattern. Festivals are about the social structure and the parts where we humans are similar. The ritual involves the similarities between social structure and humans. In *Mugen*-noh, *Shite* (main role) is a human, these extremes meet."

Finally, reconsider the meaning of Noh in *Oomoto*.

As mentioned at the beginning, in the Noh song *Seiōbo*, there is *kuchiake* (a preface) in which Kyogen-player, *Ai* first appears, a type of staging method of *Karagoto* Noh. The original song says *Shu no Boku ou* (King Boku of Zhou) comes to this palace. However, in the *Seiōbo* held at the main shrine, *Chosei-den*, the dialog as follows “The emperor seems to visit this sacred place, *Aya* (Ayabe), *Chosei-den*”. In *Ai*-Kyogen, which connects *Mae* (first act) and *Nochi* (second act), the Kyogen player also praises *Ushitora no Kinjin*, and describes the words to celebrate the completion of *Chosei-den*. The stage, which was supposed to be the residence of an emperor in China, was changed to *Chosei-den* in Ayabe, the holy place

of *Oomoto*, by these words. The very stage becomes the "holy place" where god descends. Then, the rite of passage, as the Beichman says, to become a guru, is carried out, and the Shite acquires the divinity of the guru. In other words, for *Oomoto*, Nohgaku is a ceremony and *matsuri* (festival) itself.

The *Seiōbo* symbolizes the birth of Nao Deguchi as the founder and even the establishment of the religious community by being performed by a woman guru during each period. To play *Seiōbo* is to reproduce the history of *Oomoto* itself as an image. The drama of the establishment of the religious community is condensed on the stage.

Noh *Seiōbo* in *Oomoto* accomplished a reunion between Noh and rituals, and it was firmly supported by Onisaburo, who continued to assert the coincidence of art and religion. People could see the atmosphere of medieval Shinto rituals Noh in *Seiōbo* played at *Chosei-den* Hall. Noh had many elements of festival even today and maintained its original form. In other words, Noh is still firmly equipped internally with rituals.

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Uchimashô - Fieldnotes on Tenjin Matsuri

Carmen SĂPUNARU TĂMAŞ

Uchimashô! Mô hitotsu se! Iôte sando[1]! [Let's clap (*clapping twice*)! Once more (*clapping twice*)! Let's celebrate three times (*clapping three times*)!] Osaka-*jime* (the Osaka "greeting") is, together with the bells of the *dondoko-bune* and the drum of the dragon dance, one of the sounds characteristic to Tenjin Matsuri. The origins of this particular type of greeting, said to have been performed by merchants when sealing a deal at the Kitahama Rice Market, are unclear, with some researchers connecting it with a festival from the Miho Shrine in Shimane (Ueda 2016). It is by no means surprising that a celebration organized and supported by Osaka's richest merchants as a way to display their wealth and power during a time when such ostentatious gestures were permitted only to the aristocracy should feature a type of greeting that had nothing to do with the sacred, and all to do with business. The present paper is based on fieldwork conducted from July 2017 to July 2019, as well as participant

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, the translations from Japanese are mine, Carmen Săpunaru Tămaş.

observation over ten years, and it is an attempt to offer a glimpse into the way one of Japan's three greatest festivals is conducted in the 21st century.

Origins

Like most Japanese festivals, Tenjin Matsuri is proof that myths are still alive (or are being kept alive) in contemporary society, but a significant difference is that this myth began with a verifiable historical fact. Sugawara no Michizane, a character whose existence is attested by documents, was born in 845, passed the official scholastic examinations at the age of 18, and obtained the highest scholarly rank at the age of 33. He was promoted by Emperor Uda to the rank of Minister of the Right, but in 901 was exiled (after being unjustly accused of plotting against the new Emperor Daigo) to Dazaifu, in Kyushu, where he died two years later (Fukuta 2000: 166). Political views and actions aside, Michizane was incontestably a scholar, and that is why students across Japan go to pray at his shrines before tests and exams. It also seems that the prayers are quite efficient since supplicants are willing to pay 3,000 yen for a simple wooden tablet (*ema*) when the "market price" at regular shrines is around 1,000 yen or less.

While the belief is that all souls go to the land of *kami* after death, Sugawara turned into a particularly powerful and angry spirit, an *onryô* (vengeful ghost), phenomenon suggested by the fact that in 923 the crown prince died suddenly, and in 930 the Imperial Palace was struck by lightning. The incident in 930 also caused the death of some of his political rivals (who

had orchestrated his exile), and thus rumors that Sugawara's ghost was responsible for the disaster appeared. The emperor himself suffered after the incident, and died shortly, which prompted a shamaness to claim in 942 that she was possessed by "the deceased Sugawara's spirit … [and] that these disasters had been willed by him. In 955 an inspired young child of a Shinto priest also announced the same divine message and proclaimed that the spirit of Sugawara had become the deity of disasters and a chief deity of the thunder demons. The imperial court, surprised by these divine messages and the public rumor, enrolled his angry spirit among the deities and dedicated to him a shrine, named the Kitano-jinja, Kyoto." (Hori 1974: 115) Sugawara's name is associated with a religious belief popular at the time, "the belief in evil or restless spirits… [that] had to be treated with great respect." (Plutschow 2007: 72) The worshipping and appeasement rituals centered around Sugawara's spirit are a classical example of *goryô-e*, a religious practice popular in the ninth and tenth century Japan, which is also the origin of the equally famous Gion Matsuri. "Offering the spirits proper burial and enshrinement was, apparently, one of the means of appeasement. Indeed, several Japanese shrines are dedicated to evil spirits in an attempt to put them to rest. Enshrinement also entailed proper and regular worship, including periodic matsuri organized on the spirits' behalf, called *goryô-e*, or Meeting with the August Spirit. These were usually as gay and lavish as possible in order to counteract the spirits' dark, evil natures." (Plutschow 2007: 83)

Although a sacred dwelling for Sugawara's vengeful spirit was created in Kyoto, the festival for the god Tenjin has become much more popular in Osaka than in the old capital. According to the records of Osaka Tenmangu, the present-day shrine was built on the site of an older one, called the Shrine of the Great Shogun (Dai Shôgun Sha), erected around the year 650 in the northwestern part of Osaka. The area was called the Great Shogun's Forest (Dai Shôgun no Mori), later known as Tenjin no Mori, names as Minami Mori Machi or Kita Mori Machi (South Forest Town, North Forest Town) being still in use nowadays. The legend says that on his way to exile, Sugawara stopped at Dai Shôgun Sha to pray for a safe journey. Almost fifty years later, in 949, seven pine trees appeared overnight in front of the shrine, emitting a strange light in the dark. Hearing of the miracle, Emperor Murakami ordered another shrine, dedicated to Sugawara/ god Tenjin to be built there[2]. The shrine was completed in 950, and in 951 the ceremony that was to become one of Japan's greatest three festivals took place for the first time[3].

While the legends surrounding the creation of the festival are generally regarded as fiction (at worst), or creatively recorded history (at best), even the actual "date of birth" of the festival must be taken with a grain of salt. The

[2] I heard the story directly from one of the priests from Osaka Tenmangu, as he was introducing the various elements of the parade on July 25, 2017. Similar information is available on the shrine website, and this is the official version of the origin of the shrine.

[3] Prof. Kôji Takashima has argued repeatedly that these dates and facts are part of the creation myth of the festival, and not accurate historical facts, but this discussion is not within the scope of the present paper.

rivalry between the Kyoto aristocracy and the merchant class from Osaka being a well-known fact, the records may have well been altered so that Tenjin Matsuri would appear older than Gion Matsuri (dated from the year 970). The festival was also known as Tenma (the neighborhood most involved in the organization of the festival) Tenjin Matsuri, or Tenma no Misogi. Shôji Kurahayashi describes it as a simple summer purification (*misogi*) festival, and, although he includes it among the three famous Japanese festivals[4], he makes no reference to Sugawara or the god Tenjin (Kurahayashi 1983: 299). Nowadays, the celebrations generally known as Tenjin Matsuri are conducted on July 24th and July 25th, with a newer addition on July 23rd: the girls' *mikoshi*, an event created 37 years ago, which will be discussed later in this paper.

July 24th - *Yoimiya*

It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the meaning and mechanism of a Japanese *matsuri*; however, for clarity purposes, a brief explanation is necessary. A Japanese *matsuri* (generally translated as "festival") is a concrete manifestation of an ancestral set of beliefs in *kami*, some kind of supernatural presence that had the power to control nature and influence the annual cycle - particularly in relationship to agriculture. Thus *matsuri* have developed as a set of rites meant

[4] It is worth mentioning that, while the other two festivals included in "Japan Greatest Three Festivals" may differ from author to author - Kurahayashi lists Aoi Matsuri from Kyoto and San'ô Matsuri from Tokyo) - Tenjin Matsuri is almost always included. Gion Matsuri is also usually on the list.

to appease a potentially wrathful deity, and to pray for the orderly continuance of daily practices that supported the human existence. Kunio Yanagita explains that initially *matsuri* were not rituals supported by a unified, coherent set of beliefs or religion, but local practices organized, conducted, and, when necessary, modified by people who had taken part repeatedly in the event. He also explicitly connects matsuri as a set of practices related to the concept of *kami*, or "the way of the *kami*." (1974: 176-177) The fact that *kami* are central to *matsuri* is extremely important, as it is this relationship that determines the basic structure of a Japanese festival: *kami oroshi/ kami mukae*, or the descent of the god from its elevated realm of existence into the world of humans, *kami asobi*, the various rites and forms of entertainment prepared by the humans in order to make the *kami* happy and well disposed towards the believers, and *kami okuri*, the return of the *kami* to the shrine from the journey place where they "vacationed" during the festival, and from there to the non-human world where they belong.

In many cases, these three stages are spread over at least two days, or even more, as it is the case of Gion Matsuri, where the *kami* spend seven days at *otabisho* - the journey place. During Tenjin Matsuri, Tenjin-san - the divine form of Sugawara no Michizane - is taken out of the shrine on July 25th in the morning, and returned at night on the same day, which means that everything that takes place on July 24th is either preparation for the 25th, or entertainment for the local community and other participants. Like most big festivals,

Tenjin Matsuri requires extensive preparations. According to one of my informants, the preparations for Tenjin Matsuri begin on July 26th. While this may be an exaggeration, the *ujiko*[5] involved in the organization of the event start having official meetings in early autumn the previous year, which means that a single day is not enough to reward the expectations and the work of those who make the festival possible. These community members belong to various *kô*, local associations that are in charge of specific events during the festival.

The day of July 24th begins very early, at 4 in the morning, with the sounds of the *moyôshi-daiko*, the huge drum that is one of the central elements of Tenjin Matsuri. The drum is enclosed in a square wooden frame with seats for six drummers, three on each side facing each other, and long wooden poles that allow it to be carried. There are 36 drummers are called *ganji*, and wear specific tall, red hats called *aka eboshi*[6]. Everything about these drummers, who are the stars of the Taiko-naka Kô, has a symbolic meaning. There are 36 of them because when Tsushimanokami Inaba, a high official in charge of Osaka Castle, visited the shrine to pray every day (in a ritual called *nissan*), he was accompanied by 36 vassals. The yellow strips tied to their arms represent the earth, the red on their chest is the sun, the white represents the clouds, and the blue on the tails of the shirt - the water and the air, the overall meaning being that they are

[5] Members of a community associated with a particular shrine.
[6] Tall lacquered hats worn since the Nara period by men who had come of age, particularly common with the aristocracy. (*Kôjien Dictionary*, 6th edition, digital version)

wrapped in the universe. (Uchida 2011: 31[7]) One of their most spectacular performances is called *kara usu* ("the empty pestle"), when the drum is turned to one side, so that three drummers are close to the ground, while the other three are high in the air. This is no easy feat, particularly considering that *moyôshi-daiko* weighs one and a half tons, and the drummers must keep up the beat the entire time. Some of the participants have asserted that to drop one of the drum sticks while on the *moyôshi-daiko* is to be shamed for the rest of your life. Considering its popularity, as well as the degree of difficulty of the performance, the *kara usu* is repeated throughout the 24th and the 25th, a symbol of masculinity, strength, and a kind of offering to the gods[8].

Taiko performance at a pre-festival event on July 23rd, 2013

[7] Text by Nobuyuki Fuku and Maki Mashiba.

[8] Most Japanese festivals include at least one event where men have the chance to display their "manliness" - pure strength or endurance, be it related to cold, fire, or pain. (Tamas 2016)

Taiko inside the Osaka Tenmangu precints, July 24th, 2014

At around 7am, the preparations for the first sacred ritual of the event begin. The most important amongst the organizers, a group of elders who hold significant positions in the economic world of Osaka, gather inside Osaka Tenmangu to get dressed. They are the *ujiko sôdai*, representatives and prominent members of the community. In the changing room of the Shrine, men of all ages, from the ten-year old boy who performs the role of the *shindô* (the "divine child" acting as a vessel for the descending god), to the older boys who are his official guardians, to the high priest of Osaka Tenmangu and his son, to the above mentioned *sôdai*, prepare for the first solemn event of the day. Depending on the degree of complexity of their formal attire, they either dress themselves,

are aided by their secretaries, or by the *miko* - women in charge of performing various rituals at the shrine. As one of the purposes of this paper is to report on my personal observation, I will limit myself to describing the formal dress worn by the *sôdai*, which was composed of faded green *umanori-bakama* (a type of divided skirt) over a white kimono, and a black transparent *haori* (jacket), tied over the chest with a white string with tassels (*haori-himo shirofusa tsuki*). The atmosphere was formal, but the participants were obviously old friends and business partners, all quite excited by the events about to unfold.

The main event of July 24th is called *hoko nagashi shinji* - the act of letting a wooden stick flow on the river near the shrine. When the festival started in the 10th century, the *otabisho* (journey place) used to be built on the place where the *hoko* stopped, considering that it indicated the place where the god wanted to be during the ceremonies. However, after the Kan'ei period (mid 17th century), a permanent space for ceremonies was built, Osaka geography changed, so the *hoko nagashi shinji* was discontinued. In 1930 the ritual was reinstated, but with a different meaning: the *hoko* became part of the purification ceremony which is a fundamental element of Tenjin Matsuri, whereby the pollution and evil affecting the community are symbolically transferred onto the *hoko*, which is then cast away into the Dojima River. This way a celebration that started as a summer purification practice, being later enriched by the legend of the God Tenjin, comes full circle to the original ritual.

Shinji are the most sacred part of a *matsuri*, a set of Shinto rituals that directly acquiesce the presence of *kami*. They are seen in direct opposition to *kôji* (public ceremonies) and *butsuji* (Buddhist rituals), and are performed inside shrines or at designated places, that have been purified and separated from the profane space through the use of various implements, such as the sacred rope *shimenawa*, or the white paper strips - *gohei*. With permission from the chief priest of Osaka Tenmangu, Mr. Tanenori Terai, and thanks to the kind support of Mr. Yoshihiko Higashi, owner and president of the Godai Ume Company (I will return to this company later, as it has a special meaning within the Tenjin events), I was able to attend the Tenjin Matsuri *shinji* both on the 24th and the 25th, so the following report is based on direct observation[9].

On the 24th, the lay participants enter the Main Hall a few minutes before 8am, followed by the *miko*, and then by the priests and *shindô*, role performed in 2017 by ten-year old Isei Kanda, a student at Nishi Tenma Elementary School. A typical Shinto ritual follows the purification - offering - prayer - dance pattern, and the one at Osaka Tenmangu was no different. The purification was conducted in order of importance: first the shrine (where the god was supposed to descend), then the priests, the *shindô*, the *sôdai* (who always sit closest to the ritual stage), and finally the rest of the audience. Considering the formality and the sacredness of the ritual, the *shinji* are not open to the public; the participants are the *sôdai* (who are

[9] These details are based on fieldwork conducted in 2017. The current head priest (as of March 2020) of Osaka Tenmangu is Mr. Taneharu Terai.

allowed to invite two more people each), representatives of each *kô*, and city officials. The food offerings - *shinsen*, presented immediately after the purification rite - consist of water, sake, salt, *mochi* (rice cakes made of glutinous rice), red sea bream (*tai* in Japanese, a kind of fish that is used for celebrations), seaweed, daikon radish, burdock, taro, lotus root, gourds, cucumbers, apples, and the *hoko*. Food in Japanese culture almost always has a symbolic meaning, and this is no exception. The *mochi* rice is boiled at a high temperature to make it last longer in the Japanese summer heat; the traditional Tenjin bento (packed lunch) consisted of boiled rice (*shiramushi*) and pickled plums, wrapped in bamboo bark, which was known to have anti-bacterial properties. The root vegetables are supposed to provide energy, while the cucumbers have a cooling and refreshing effect.

Sacred offerings for the *hoko nagashi shinji*

Once the offerings have been placed in front of the altar, the *gûji* (chief priest, a title held until March 2018 by Mr. Tanenori Terai; since April 2018, the position has been occupied by his son) reads the formal prayers - *norito* - after which a *kagura* dance is performed. After they complete the dance, the *miko* purify again the *shindô* and the audience with their bells, and the ritual ends with the offering of a *tamagushi*, first by the priest, and then by the officials present in the audience. *Tamagushi* are branches of the sacred tree *sakaki* with a *gohei* attached to them - compared to the *shinsen*, which are real food and drink offerings, they have a purely symbolic value, yet they connect present-day rites with mythological episodes. According to Japan's oldest chronicle, *Kojiki* (712), when the sun goddess Amaterasu hid herself in a cave, plunging the world into darkness, the gods created a ritual space in front of the cave, attaching cloth strips to the *sakaki* tree that grew there. Another goddess, Ame-no-Uzume, danced in front of the cave holding a similarly decorated *sakaki* branch (*Kojiki* 2003: 63-67). *Sakaki*, which, depending on which characters are used, can be "the gods' tree", or "the tree at the border", signifies and creates a temporary connection between the world of the *kami* and that of the humans, and is thus indispensable to a Shinto ritual, despite the fact that it has no practical value. After the *tamagushi* rite is over, the offerings are covered, the *hoko* is handed to the *shindô*, and everybody exits the Main Hall, to head in an orderly procession towards the Dojima River.

The *shindô* and his parents in front of Osaka Tenmangu in the morning of July 24th, before the *hoko nagashi shinji* procession started

By the river, where a temporary ritual space has been established, a shorter version of the *shinji* is performed, after which the *shindô*, two priests and a flute player - sacred music is played as a purification gesture and, at the same time, as an offering to the gods - get on a boat. The *hoko*, onto which all the pollution and negative elements afflicting the community

have been transferred, is cast into the water, in a first gesture meant to rid the participants of evil and protect them from disease. A second gesture is going through the grass circle - *chi no wa* - set near the ritual space; although this grass circle is connected to the god Susano-wo and Gion Matsuri, Tenjin Matsuri developed originally as a purification ceremony meant to protect the community from the epidemics that accompanied the summer rains and heat, and incorporated many aspects not directly related to the god Tenjin.

The *hoko nagashi shinji*

Once the *hoko nagashi shinji* is completed, the formal procession returns to Osaka Tenmangu at around 10am, where preparations for the big day continue. The 24th is a day of entertainment, when the entire area surrounding the

shrine, as well as participants from all over the country can enjoy the *moyôshi-daiko*, lion dance (*shishi mai*), dragon dance (*ryû odori*), and the *mikoshi* processions. If during this season, the atmosphere in Kyoto is defined by the *kon-chiki-chin* sound of the *matsuri-bayashi* (festival musicians), it is drums that are most present on the Osaka stage: the great *moyôshi-daiko*, the drum of the dragon dance, and the one on the *dondoko-bune*. The lion dance is an old folk performing art where several wooden lion heads are worn by the dancers, said to have been imported from China before the Nara period (Kurahayashi 205-206). It is part of numerous Japanese festivals, being considered a ritual that would remove evil and misfortune, and bring luck and fertility; during Tenjin Matsuri, the performers visit the local stores and businesses, blessing them for the coming year. They are part of Tenjin Kô Shishi, a group that was created in 1725 (Kyôho 9), and still has around 600 hundred members. The *shishi mai* group itself is said to have the largest number of participants in Japan, and it includes dances with the lion heads, umbrellas, *bonten* (ceremonial wands with white paper strips), and *yotsutake* (bamboo castanets).

Dondoko-bune are the boats announcing that the ceremonies are about to begin, or that they are ongoing. Designated as sacred spaces with *shimenawa* and *gohei*, they glide fast to the sound of drums, as fast "as to make the river seem slow"; one of the boats is manned by adults, the other by children (all male).

The lion dance on the eve of Tenjin Matsuri

The dragon dance is characteristic to most summer festivals in the Osaka area; the performers (both male and female) dance in an apparently non-coordinated, non-formal manner to the sound of drums, to the point of reaching a kind of mystical trance. The common characteristic is the position of the fingers of both hands, with the index and middle finger pointed so that they would suggest the horns of the dragon. The dragon dance, just like the *sakaki* tree, stands at the border between the sacred and the profane, being enacted both as ritual (mostly as a rain charm and prayer for protection and prosperity), as well as entertainment for the viewers. It is such an integral part of Tenjin Matsuri and the

community around it, that it was performed during the festivities on December 5th, 2017, when Mr. Tanenori Terai was bestowed the *chôrô* title, the highest distinction awarded by the Association of Shinto Shrines, which recognizes the lifetime achievements of a Shinto priest[10].

The dragon dance

[10] The ceremony and the party that followed took place at the Imperial Hotel in Osaka, with the entire Tenjin Matsuri community in attendance (the author included).

July 25th - Honmiya

The actual day of Tenjin Matsuri is of the highest importance, both ritual (from the perspective of the shrine and its attendants), and social, for the entire local community. As mentioned before, I received special permission to attend the religious rites performed in the morning of the 24th and 25th in the Main Hall of Osaka Tenmangu; for the 25th it was suggested (considering that it is the day when the god is considered present among the mortals) that I wear formal clothes. And thus July 25th, 2017 became the day when not only was I (symbolically, of course) in the presence of the divine spirit of Sugawara no Michizane, but I also did field work wearing a black dress and pearls. The *shinji* is called *shinrei igyosai* ("the transfer of the divine spirit"), and differed from the one on the preceding day in one aspect only: the descent of the god. After the purification - prayer - offering - dance pattern was completed, the high priest, wearing white gloves and a white piece of cloth over his mouth and nose, so that his breath or touch would not pollute the sacred presence of the god, transferred the *kami* from the shrine onto a plum branch[11], which was then reverently placed in the *mikoshi* - ceremonial carriage - awaiting in front of the hall. The general public was allowed inside the shrine precincts, but for this part of the ritual the ceremonial *mikoshi* was hidden from sight, protected on three sides (except the

[11] The plum was Sugawara no Michizane's favourite flower, and it is now the official crest of Osaka Tenmangu.

entrance to the Main Hall) by a piece of white cloth - the descent of the god is too sacred to be seen by mere mortals, whose profane stares might pollute the divine presence.

The first procession of the day - *riku togyo*, the "land crossing" - begins once the god Tenjin is inside the *mikoshi*. First, the participants present themselves in front of the shrine, in a formal greeting, then they go around the neighbourhood, offering the god a chance to see and bless his believers. There are about 2,600 people who take part officially in this procession, the Taiko Naka and Tenjin Kô counting about 1,200 members. The *moyôshi-daiko* enters first, at around 3pm, and its brave drummers display their strength and skills in front of the *kami* and other participants.

The *moyôshi-daiko* seen from inside the Main Hall of Osaka Tenmangu

They are followed by the god Sarutahiko, who is said to have guided the imperial ancestor when he descended from Heaven, and as such has a similar role during the *riku togyo*. After Sarutahiko, the following *kô* and officials present their formal greetings before starting the procession:

(1) Kami Hoko (Nishi Tenma Kami Rengô Kami Hoko Kô) - a group established mid Meiji period, and resurrected in 1930, when the *hoko nagashi shinji* started being conducted again. They are the keepers of the sacred *hoko*, and the role of the *shindô* is always performed by a boy from the districts that make up this *kô*.

(2) Ji Guruma: Danjiri - a *kô* formed by various local business, the Tenma Market being the focus of the organization. The group is centered on *danjiri*, a parade float with intricate wooden carvings, hosting the matsuri musicians.

(3) Shôjô Dashi - a traditional noh mask embodying a character who liked to drink sake. This is also called Omiki (sacred sake) Kô.

(4) Osaka Tenma Lions Club

(5) Tenjin Kô Shishi

(6) Uneme - ladies in charge of preparing food for the Emperor; a role performed by ten young, unmarried women selected through a general application process.

(7) Chigo (“divine children) procession

(8) Osaka Tenmangu Keishin Fujin Kai (The Osaka Tenmangu Pious Ladies Association) - a fairly recent group established in 1956.

(9) Osaka Shorin Obunko Kô - a group founded in 1730, representing a publishing house.

(10) Ushi Hiki Dôji - "The Cow Pulling Children." The cow is venerated at Osaka Tenmangu as a messenger of the gods, as Sugawara no Michizane was born in the year of the cow; this particular group was created in 1949.

(11) Mihata Kô - a group representing various restaurants from the Kitanoshinchi, Dojima, and Tenma areas, established in 1887.

(12) Shinsei Karabitsu - the portable box containing the food offerings.

(13) Sakaki Kô.

(14) Gobaguruma - a sacred carriage for the gods, which makes a journey across the Tenjinbashi Shopping Arcade on July 23rd.
(15) Ontachi - a *kô* dating from 1750, distinguished by the specific type of sword they carry.
(16) Beikokushô Okingai Kô - established in 1892 by a group of merchants from the Dojima Rice Market, this *kô* offers the white cloth used to protect the presence of the god from the eyes of the mortals.
(17) Hokushin Tomo no Kô - founded in 1965, this *kô* offers the *okangai* - the cover for sacred recipients.
(18) Gohôren - the most important of the *mikoshi* used during Tenjin Matsuri, this is the sacred carrier of Sugawara no Michizane/ god Tenjin.
(19) Mizue no Dôji (Shindô) - the "divine" child pays his respects to the shrine.
(20) Iwai Nushi - the chief priest of Osaka Tenmangu pays his respects to the attending divinity, followed by
(21) Osaka Tenmangu Ujiko Sôdai.
(22) Ôtori Mikoshi and,
(23) Tama Mikoshi - two more carriers of divine presences in attendance for the festival.
(24) Tenjin Matsuri Bayashi - the festival musicians, which end the procession.

The land procession on the streets of the North District of Osaka (July 25th, 2017)

The above order of presenting oneself in front of the shrine and bowing to the gods that are assumed present is based on a schedule created in 2004, and it is the one I observed from inside the Main Hall of Osaka Tenmangu in 2017. More details on each *kô*, as well as the tools and symbols they carry will be provided in a later study; it must be mentioned here, however, that each group has a specific, clearly determined role. As one of the community representatives (*ujiko sôdai*) poetically told me, "Tenjin-san goes around the city once a year, to see how his believers are faring. During his journey, he might want to take a walk, that is why a box with his sandals is prepared. He might get bored, so we have a trunk of books, he might get hungry or thirsty, so we bring food. It might also rain, that is why we have an umbrella handy." I believe it is quite significant that regardless of what the participants truly think (something that an anthropologist could never ascertain), they acknowledge the god, as well as their ancestors - as the owner of a big pharmaceutical company based in Osaka asserted - present during the festivities, and they feel obligated to honour them through rituals and entertainment.

The *riku togyo* is followed by the *funa togyo* - the "crossing by ship" - which represents, at least from the lay participants' point of view, the climax of the festival. Following the old aristocratic custom of looking for some cool air during the summer on pleasure boats, a similar form of entertainment was created for the god Tenjin and the other *kami* that might be accompanying him. The land procession

begins in the afternoon at Osaka Tenmangu, reaching the Yodo river at around 6pm, when the *mikoshi*, as well as the accompanying tools and boxes of provisions are transferred onto boats. The entire river procession contains over 150 boats, the three vessels carrying *kami* (the Gohôren, Ôtori, and Tama *mikoshi*) included, and the return ride lasts about three hours. All the sacred carriages, *kô*, and official participants return to Osaka Tenmangu at around 11pm, where they enjoy a few more moments together with the gods, before Tenjin-san returns to his other realm of existence, to wait patiently (and hopefully appeased) until the next year, and the next festival.

The Gohôren (mikoshi carrying the sacred spirit of the god Tenjin) before the beginning of the boat procession

Shinji performed on the boat carrying the Ôtori Mikoshi

The community

Like all human ceremonies, Tenjin Matsuri has three major layers: the core, elevated one, pertaining to the sacred (the descent and presence of the *kami* amidst the believers), the slightly inferior one, which includes the prominent members of the community, and the one for the masses, which on the

afternoon and evening of July 25th encompasses most of the northern area of Osaka City. The highly significant role played by *matsuri* in the life of a Japanese community is emphasised by John K. Nelson in his 1996 ethnography: "Festivals such as these returned the celebrants to a mythical time, when the Kami and their creations were fresh and bursting with the vigor of creating energies. One need only witness a single festival of this sort to see how much enjoyment people take, sometimes accelerating into a wild abandonment, when participating in the cycles of Shinto observances." (Nelson 41)

My first encounter with Tenjin Matsuri took place in 2007, when I was invited on one of the pleasure boats; I did not really understand the meaning of the elaborate celebration around me, but I found it interesting. A three-hour boat ride (complete with a sophisticated, two-layer food box, and all-you-can drink beer and sake) on the river, gliding along the spectacular *dondoko-bune*, or the Noh boat, under even more spectacular fireworks, was an event that I had come to look forward to each year. Without being aware of the sacred aspect of the festival, I realised that I was lucky to be included in one of the upper echelons: the group of people who could afford a ticket on a pleasure boat, with prices ranging from ¥25,000 to ¥38,000. Those who could not secure a ticket on time would wait on one of the numerous bridges connecting the sides of the river, to enjoy the fireworks show and to exchange the Osaka-*jime* with the passing boats. The bells and drums of the dragon dance musicians have an effect akin to the Pied Piper's flute on the people from Osaka: they are attracted to the river, vying for the

best spots on the shores, in the nearby buildings, or paying up to ¥500,000 for one night (dinner included) in one of the rooms with a view of the Osaka Imperial Hotel. Many companies and public institutions (such as Osaka University, to give just one example) hire their own boats, for the employees and their families; trains slow down when crossing the bridge so that passengers can watch the *funa togyo* or the fireworks. Restaurants rent spaces on the riverside and establish temporary dining places for one night only, and they strive to offer their best food in order to honour the presence of the gods, at prices that are much higher than usual, yet accepted without complaint. One such example is a restaurant specializing in French food, Carte Blanche, which offers seats plus a French-style bento for about ¥30,000 (drinks are separate), and the tables are booked well before the 25th of July. The value of the seat consists not in the quality of the food, but in the position of the stationary "boat" (the tables are set on a floating device anchored to the shore) right in front of the Osaka Imperial Hotel, one of the best spots for admiring both the procession, and the fireworks.

For the organizers - Osaka Tenmangu priests, members of the *kô*, and small local business that support the festival - the entertainment is combined with a tremendous amount of work, as well as individual sacrifice. For example, the six people chosen to play special roles during the sacred procession, the *shindô*, Sarutahiko, the two *zuishin* (symbolic guardians of the deity, wearing clothes and a bow specific to the Heian period), and the two *ushi hiki* (children "pulling" the

sacred cow) are supposed to keep themselves pure by avoiding contact with mortuary rites and not eating the meat of any four-legged creatures (*Weekly Osaka Nichinichi Newspaper* July 2017, p. 7) before the festival. According to an NHK documentary (2011), the *shindô* abstains from contact with any kind of polluting element for three weeks prior to the *matsuri*. One other element that indicates the deep connection between the city and its major festival is the fact that in 2017 the *ushi hiki* roles were performed by the eleven-year old twin daughters of the Mayor of Osaka, Mr. Hirofumi Yoshimura.

Pleasure boat and some of the food enjoyed by the revelers (July 25th, 2014)

Another important contribution is that of the local businesses, without which the festival itself would not exist; the costs of an event of this scale are so grand, that this year (2018) the organizers decided to use the crowdfunding system in order to cover the budget deficit. As of July 10th, 203 individual contributors had donated ¥2,090,000 - 69% of the proposed amount[12]. One such company is Godaiume, a family business established in 1834 in Wakayama, which produces and sells various plum-based foods and drinks. Despite not being a native of Osaka, the actual president, Mr. Yoshihiko Higashi (thanks to whom I had the chance of

[12] https://www.makuake.com/project/tenjinmatsuri/?utm_source=sp_1_facebook (retrieved on July 10th, 2018).

directly observing the rites pertaining to Tenjin Matsuri in 2017), is a *ujiko sôdai,* his elegant little shop specialising in pickled plums of all kinds, plum liqueur, plum sparkling wine, plum salt, and many other plum-based delicacies being located right near Osaka Tenmangu. According to popular lore, one "should eat the plum, but not its kernel, because that is where the spirit of Tenjin-san is resting", and those who do will not be able to make progress in their studies (Sugawara no Michizane/Tenjin-san being the protector of scholars).

The Godaiume store on the day of the festival

There is also a taboo on roasting plum kernels, or throwing them into the sea, as this gesture would go against

the life-restoring powers of the plum tree. Pickled plums are placed on the stomach as a remedy against sea sickness, or on a bee bite, while in the case of beriberi, a plum paste should be attached to the soles of the feet - or so suggest folk remedies (Fukuta 2000: 185). An easily verifiable fact, pickled plums are indeed good in the heat of the Japanese summer, and they do make a tasty snack - as attested by all the *ujiko sôdai,* who ate the pickled plums provided by Godaiume and drank tea while waiting for the Tenjin Matsuri *shinji* to begin.

Although the word "tradition" tends to suggest something that is centuries old (and Tenjin Matsuri is already beyond its millennium anniversary), a new tradition was created 37 years ago: Gyaru Mikoshi. By custom, the sacred carriages for the gods, *mikoshi*, are taken around the neighbourhood by men only (for reasons related to the concepts of pollution and taboo that shall not be discussed here), but in 1981 Gyaru Mikoshi ("gals' mikoshi") was established through the combined effort of several shopping arcades in the northern district of Osaka and the Gobaguruma Kô, with the declared purpose of creating a "bright, fun town[13]". The main day of the event is July 23rd (with a few sporadic appearances on the 24th and 25th), as Gyaru Mikoshi is not (yet) connected to the sacred, but mainly to the local community. Pretty, energetic, fun girls between the ages of 15 and 30 are selected to wear costumes similar to those worn by men when they perform the same task, only in brighter

[13] http://www.galmikoshi.com/contents_2.html (retrieved on July 10, 2018).

colours, while carrying a smaller *mikoshi* through to shopping arcade for the entertainment of the local community. While offering beautiful girls to the gods is by no means an innovation in the history of religious practices, Gyaru Mikoshi is a modern, future-oriented, international organization, which takes pride in the fact that they were invited to perform abroad (Australia, USA, Thailand) and that international students joined their event. One of my own international students (German) was a *mikoshi gyaru* in 2017, when out of 150 applicants who go through a rigorous selection process, 80 were chosen to perform on July 23rd.

Gyaru Mikoshi inside one of the shopping arcades

Osaka Summer Festivals

Tenjin Matsuri is most definitely not singular among the summer festivals in Osaka; it is, nevertheless, the oldest, at least according to legend. Either emulating the rituals and entertainment forms conducted at the biggest shrine in the city, or simply continuing a pre-existent practice, similar *matsuri* have developed and are still performed nowadays. A summer festival with a *mikoshi* and a *taiko* (ceremonial drum) is depicted in a scroll from the second half of the Edo period, called *Hirano Gozu Tennô Matsuri* (*Tokubetsu Ten. Osaka Matsuri* 2009: 42); Gozu Tennô[14] being the avatar of the god Susano-wo, both central figures at Gion Matsuri. This *matsuri* (July 11th~14th) is currently the main event at Kumata Shrine in the Hirano district of Osaka, where the tall red hats are worn by child drummers carried around in a *taiko-dai* (a drum similar to, although not quite as spectacular as *moyôshi-daiko*). Sumiyoshi Matsuri (the Grand Sumiyoshi Shrine, July 30th~August 1st) hosts dragon dance performances, and the list could continue. Regardless of the legend chosen as the mythical/historical background for the rites and festivities, one of the main functions of the summer *matsuri* remains that of ritual purification in order to prevent epidemics. A source that I have not been able to verify yet stated that the *aka*

[14] "The deity also became associated with the legend of a Japanese kami of plague called Sominshôrai and was identified with the kami Susanoo; taking on a trinitarian nature that incorporated characteristics of Susanoo's consort and child, he also came to be identified with the Japanese kami Onamuchi." (Yonei Teruoshi - *Encyclopedia of Shinto*).

eboshi (the red hats worn by the drummers) symbolise the varicella pustules, in an attempt at a type of contagious magic that might protect children from a potentially deadly disease. Tenjin Matsuri is incontestably the biggest among these performances (as I have asserted before, it is one of Japan's three greatest festivals), but it is by no means unique. The historical, ritual, and social ramifications are intricate and vast, requiring further research, observation, and comparative analysis, an endeavor whose results shall hopefully be published in a later study.

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