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THE SIGNIFICANCE AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF JIZÔ WORSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN: A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY

Thesis Submitted by

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in February 2008

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Anthropology, Archaeology and Sociology, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Education and Social Sciences, James Cook University

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Karl-J. Kampmark February 2008

ABSTRACT

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY - JIZÔ WORSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN: A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY

"A dead child [re]born [is] a buddha" *(shinde umaruru ko wa hotoke)*. (Haiku by Buson 1716-84)

We put advertisements in the papers. I gave lectures about the significance of mizugo (sic) memorial services in order to explain them in great detail. I appeared on radio and television to describe the importance of these mizugo services. The result was people in tears, people...travelling from faraway Hokkaido with a cutting of the newspaper in their wallet...As the campaign gathered momentum, temples all over the country gained a higher understanding of mizugo services, and there was a dramatic increase in the number of temples actually offering services. There were also temples that were using "mizugo prayer" as their catch-phrase. From our point of view this was an extremely happy turn of events (Abbot Miura, Enman-in Monzeki temple, <www.izu.co.jp/~enman/7.htm > Dec. 18. 2002)

Japan is currently experiencing a widespread religious revival. Specialist publications about the Japanese have devoted much space to the phenomenon of 'New Religions' (shinkô shûkyô), but they have yet to highlight in the same way the postwar changes which centre on the worship of the bodhisattva *Jizô*.

This thesis leads into several areas of controversy in scholarship, including the well-entrenched opinion that religion ceased to be sociologically significant for the Japanese during the second half of the 20th century.

In questioning this view, I collate observations concerning the contrasting place of $Jiz\hat{o}$ in Japanese Buddhism before and after World War II. I emphasize the responsiveness of religious belief to popular practice rather than sacerdotal documents whose study has long monopolized enquiry into Japanese cosmology and characterized such investigation as a philological discipline rather than as an ethnographic enterprise.

My starting point of my enquiry is the cult of *mizuko kuyô* whose origins date from no earlier than the late 1960s. This bears on the debate relating the upsurge in the popularity of *Jizô* to the frequency of abortion in Japan during the postwar period. It also provides an Asian corrective to support the argument that religious studies need to accommodate the impact of the computer on religious practice today.

Discussion of the new cult requires acknowledgment of its condemnation by Japanese and foreign commentators, including militant feminists and several scholars. Their assertion is that *mizuko kuyô* is the product of recent distortions of theology by Buddhist institutions seeking profits through the commercialization of their services by means of the printed media and the internet.

I challenge this criticism by enquiries that reveal the cultural breath, historical antiquity and demographic scope with which notions about *Jizô* are imbedded in popular Japanese religion. The deity should be interpreted as a multivalent metaphor whose meaning can be adapted to the changing needs of his believers. In this way *Jizô* resembles a formula with fluid parameters where the individual aspects that make up the sum-total of *Jizô* worship are defined by devotees in their dealings with him.

This analysis pays special attention to the pilgrimages in which I have participated, visual representations of Japanese notions of eschatology, ancestral and equinoctial celebrations, and especially to children's festivities. All these events serve to illustrate the need to understand that the nature of $Jiz\hat{o}$ is contextually determined. $Jiz\hat{o}$ is a potentiality, waiting to be shaped by the projections of his worshippers who ultimately create and recreate him every time they approach him.

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF JIZÔ WORSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN: A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY

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Buson (1716-84): "A dead child [re]born [is] a buddha" (shinde umaruru ko wa hotoke).

CHAPTER 1

I. Introduction

1.0. Thesis Objectives and Conclusion.

Jizô has become a frequently worshipped and the most commonly depicted deity throughout present-day Japan. My thesis seeks to explain why the distinctive cult to which he now is central has recently and suddenly become a widespread and persistent phenomenon in Japanese religious life. Towards this end I collate and synthesize the extensive range of scholarly and popular observations about Jizô bosatsu (Skt. Kshitigarbha bodhisattva) and consider their consistencies, variations, and contradictions, especially in the context of contemporary Japanese belief and practice concerning death and the afterlife, as well as the assumed power of Jizô to grant special favours to his believers.

I also investigate several strands to the thread which ties together past beliefs in $Jiz\hat{o}$, a bodhisattva of Indian provenance, to the powers of $Jiz\hat{o}$ in present-day Japan. I will substantiate the following: the one-dimensional icon, which became known in Japan around the seventh and eighth centuries CE as an ancestral deity, has over time turned into a multi-dimensional cult figure (Matsushima, 1986:18-24), especially since World War II. Many of the changes he has undergone have originated outside the religious establishment and have been shaped by folk religion and magico-religious practices. These transformations have taken place within the authority of established Buddhist discourse: the sutras extolling his virtues have promoted him as an infinitely mutable figure. Thus the bodhisattva

we see today is the product of a marriage between traditional orthodoxy and the idiosyncratic forces of popular religion with their distinctive practices and individualistic goals (Sakurai, 1975:283-5). $Jiz\hat{o}$ has thus not only been moulded to fit specific requirements on a general level, but he has also come to serve specific needs of individual worshippers. Since he can appear in an unlimited number of guises, it is possible to say that his form and functions at a given moment are determined by the nature of the encounter with his followers. Seen in these terms, $Jiz\hat{o}$ is a potentiality, waiting to be shaped by the projection of his worshippers who ultimately create and recreate him every time they approach him.

One could argue that the bodhisattva ideal is defined by omnipotence and unique adaptability, which Dayal (1970: 283-291) has demonstrated so persuasively. But in actual life a certain division of labour has developed so that over the centuries the competence of individual bodhisattvas has been limited to specific areas subject to a certain degree of overlapping. In the case of *Jizô*, the liturgical texts and popular practice imply that his activities know no boundaries and that he has the power to appear in whatever guise the moment requires (Itô, 1984:74; Yoritomi, 1987:94-6). This has produced a multivalent metaphor whose meaning is determined and shaped by the thought patterns that a believer projects onto *Jizô* at a particular point in time. In this way *Jizô* can be said to resemble a formula with fluid parameters where the specific parts that make up the sum-total of the content are defined by devotees in the process of dealing with him.

Such adaptability is no-where more clear than in the post World War II *Jizô* cult of infant memorialisation rituals and pacification services for dead infants and aborted foetuses *(mizuko kuyô)*. These, I will argue, constitute a new, and distinctly Japanese postwar religious Buddhist movement which started in the late 1960s.

I also pay special attention to the various theories, both indigenous and foreign, popular and scholarly, about the genesis of the cult. They in general focus on postabortion grief, media manipulation, and/or sacerdotal manipulation caused by a high postwar abortion rate in Japan. Whilst the presence of these factors is undeniable, I argue that they are conspicuous symptoms only and that they do not

constitute the fundamental cause for the rise in popularity of infant memorialisation rituals. The explanation, I believe, is to be sought in the demographic transition from country to town and in the increasing isolation of the nuclear family from traditional networks of support in the newly developed urban centres. I question the crisis-theory scenario which automatically equates the origin of *mizuko kuyô* with the high number of induced abortions which occurred after World War II. Neither do I believe that the cult can be explained by assuming that a large segment of the population willingly allows itself to be fraudulently controlled by the media or unscrupulous religionists.

Infant memorialisation ritual gained in popularity only when the abortion figures were declining, not when they were rising. In fact, abortion's frequency peaked in 1955 and it has been decreasing ever since. These figures were still falling when about a decade later, the public providers of *mizuko kuyô* became prominent (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2006). I do agree, however, that the main medium for transmitting an awareness and knowledge of the ritual is and has been the mass media and, after the popularisation of the personal computer, the world wide web. This observation invites comparison with American-style TV evangelism and also with theories relating to the development of the printing press and the spread of Christianity.

By comparing the *mizuko kuyô* with rituals of ancestor worship on Mt. Osore in Northern Japan, the thesis also confirms a trend observed by Yanagawa and Abe (1978: 34-5) in the late 1970s. In their time, they noted a tendency for "Japanese rituals for the dead" to become "mere memorials" by contrast with the traditional form of ancestor worship where "the dead [are not regarded] as dead but living in another world".

Ancestors have for centuries been worshipped as protectors of the traditional household (*ie*) with regular commemorative offerings and services (*senzo kuyô*). Today the need for memorial services has broadened to include aborted foetuses and stillborn babies, categories that in the past fell outside the parameters of this kin group (see below p.35 and section 2.3.0).

Yet regardless of the interpretation of these rituals, $Jiz\hat{o}$ is intimately connected with ancestor commemoration and the worlds beyond the present one. He is a familiar figure during the mid-year Obon festivities when the ancestors visit the living. But many other festivals and religious events fixed by the liturgical calendar also celebrate $Jiz\hat{o}$. Several of these popular festivals, the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' $(Rokujiz\hat{o} \ mairi)$ and the monthly pilgrimage to Togenuki- $Jiz\hat{o}$ in Tokyo, for instance, are investigated in this thesis. The particulars of his activities as merciful protector and tireless defender of the dead in the six realms of existence $(rokud\hat{o})$ were familiar to most believers in the past. This may no longer be the case, but the 'Heaven and Hell' paintings, on public display during Obon even today, are a powerful reminder of the continued operation of Buddhist cosmological theories.

Such events with their strong focus on the present highlight the equally important role that $Jiz\hat{o}$ performs for the living. Some believers implore him to relieve them of physical pain and to grant them good health in old age; others petition him for his thaumaturgic capabilities. In short, whether in this life or the next, he is regarded as a supramundane executor who has the capability to turn people's dreams and wishes into reality (Kanada et al., 1989:470-1). In fact, the guiding tenor of all $Jiz\hat{o}$ -related sutras is that he will take the sorrows of all devotees on his shoulders and that he can be petitioned for whatever people may desire in this world. These assurances are reflected in the presence of a multitude of images whose specific functions frequently are revealed in the nature of the epithet given to them: 'Child-Rearing-Jizô' ($Kosodate-Jiz\hat{o}$), for instance, will help parents with the difficult task of bringing up children and 'Rice-Planting-Jizô' ($Taue-Jiz\hat{o}$) will lend the farmer a hand in the rice paddy. I also analyse the rules for the name-giving process as well as the remarkable division of labour among these statues which frequently operate on the principle of 'one statue, one cure'.

My enquiry into the nature of popular *Jizô* worship in present-day Japan offers insights not only into the religious practices of the contemporary Japanese but also into the belief systems which sustain this behaviour; hence I investigate the circumstances under which people are most likely to ask for divine assistance and how the supplicating rituals are structured on these occasions. I conclude that *Jizô*

worship, whether private or communal, is emphatically focused on a physical manifestation, be it in the form of a statue or any other factual and readily identifiable image and that $Jiz\hat{o}$'s role in the memorial and pacification services for dead infants and aborted foetuses (mizuko kuyô) has ensured that he is the most widespread and reproduced Buddhist figure throughout Japan today. The recently developed image of $Jiz\hat{o}$ used in these rituals (Mizuko-Jizô), together with the old custom of erecting a $Jiz\hat{o}$ statue on the locations of fatal accidents gives him a public exposure of unusual proportions. Indeed, the visibility of this bodhisattva in Japan is so prominent that numerous images and otherwise unidentified stone statues of Buddhist icons (sekibutsu) in the open air have to many people become synonymous with $Jiz\hat{o}$.

The thesis concludes that $Jiz\hat{o}$'s independence of Buddhist sectarian affiliation, his close association with ancestral and mizuko memorialisation rites, and, finally, his ability to appear in a form that coincides with the needs of a given situation all go a long way to explain his popularity. The same factors also ensure that the worship of $Jiz\hat{o}$ is a phenomenon that is far from having completed its course. It seems that $Jiz\hat{o}$ will have a role to play in the religious lives of the Japanese for as long as people believe that through prayers and rituals, he can be influenced to shape events in favour of whoever supplicates him.

It is the contention of this thesis that part of the explanation for $Jiz\hat{o}$'s high profile and extra-ordinary popularity has to be found in his functional all-inclusive character which has made him a deity for all occasions. Standing outside the dogmatic structures of the many religious sects in Japan has no doubt played an important role in his popularity. Without fear of repercussion, adherents to most disparate religious movements in Japan have for centuries been able to petition $Jiz\hat{o}$ without doctrinal difficulties. The followers of the New Pure Land Sect (Jôdo Shinshû) and the Lotus Sects are the only exceptions. Otherwise, $Jiz\hat{o}$'s connection with the other world, the world of the ancestors, appears to have equipped him with the *sine qua non* prerequisite for long term religious survival in Japan, and as Smith, (1974:22-3) argues, as long as the Japanese construe the posthumous existence of themselves and their ancestors in Buddhist terms, $Jiz\hat{o}$'s religious survival seems assured.

1.1. The Study of Jizô

[O]ne of the curious paradoxes of modern Japanese Buddhist scholarship is that during most of the twentieth century - at least until fairly recently - its overwhelming concentration was on Indian and Chinese texts. Among scholars there tended to be a corresponding neglect of those aspects of the Japanese tradition that seemed to be extratextual and to embrace the more "lowly" folk traditions. The cult of Jizô probably epitomised what such scholars of Buddhism were happy to ignore (LaFleur, 1992:44).

This neglect is all the more remarkable, given the fact that $Jiz\hat{o}$ must be one of the most frequently depicted, produced and reproduced figures in Japanese Buddhism, both as an object for artistic expression and the focus of religious devotion. Illustrations of the many century-old priceless statues and paintings of $Jiz\hat{o}$, possessed by numerous temples all over Japan, frequently find their way into art magazines. But mass-produced figures in all sizes are even more conspicuous and none more so than $Jiz\hat{o}$ in his function as $Mizuko-Jiz\hat{o}$, a central figure in the memorialisation rituals $(mizuko\ kuy\hat{o})$ for dead infants and aborted foetuses. To understand $Jiz\hat{o}$'s salient importance in these rituals, which have also attracted attention outside Japan, is to understand one of the most important religious developments that have happened in modern Japan.

Yet *Jizô's* influence extends far beyond recently developed memorialisation rituals: an appreciation of popular Japanese Buddhism also requires a knowledge of *Jizô's* dominant role in its belief system, both ancient and modern. This does not mean that other icons are unimportant, but as Yoritomi (1987:94) points out no other bodhisattva or buddha has managed to leave the confines of strict religiosity and like *Jizô* make an appearance in people's secular and everyday lives. He is mentioned in several popular songs and it is not unusual to see him as a cartoon figure. *Ribon*, for instance, a *manga* aimed at a younger female audience, has carried several serial cartoons in which *Jizô* figured prominently (Yûki, 2003:236-270). Since he is also featured in storybooks recommended for usage in primary schools in Japan, children from an early age readily recognise him as a meaningful figure in the cultural landscape. For instance, a textbook for the 2nd grade, first published in 1956 and then reprinted many times, mingles stories about *Jizô* with other fairy tales (*mukashi-banashi*). The frontispiece even depicts a scene from one of the familiar *Jizô* tales (*Kasa Jizô-sama*) included in the book which

describes how *Jizô* images standing outdoors in freezing temperatures are given warm hats for protection (Ohgi, 1992).

Serious works dealing with *Jizô* as a religious phenomenon are comparatively few but there are some notable exceptions, including those by Manabe Kôsai in particular (see below p.14). It is only in recent decades that Buddhist scholars, both Japanese and non-Japanese alike, have turned their attention to the cult of *Jizô* away from their previous focus on hermeneutics and doctrinal development (Sakurai, 1975:284-5). Previous benign neglect is also reflected in the paucity of English language publications compared to the massive volume of popular Japanese material. What is written in English owes a large debt to material already published in Japanese.

Much ethnographic and descriptive work about *Jizô* has been produced in Japanese. But it is important to recognise that frequently this work is produced by gifted amateurs who in many instances do not observe the rigorous demands of professional scholarship. Often these works seem to exist in a vacuum, unrelated to other socio-religious activities and the outside world in which I insist they must be grounded.

The recent explosion of *Jizô*-related websites on-line is a case in point. Staemmler (2005:350) makes an important observation when she writes that over sixty percent of the Japanese population was using the internet in March 2004 and, she adds, "elements of folk belief which are currently undergoing rapid changes and appear imbedded in most varying contexts ought to be included more prominently in the study of religion in the (new) media". I concur completely: on-line websites which join the *Jizô* discourse are a godsend since they provide an empirically accessible source bank of which the content can be analysed wherever the researcher happens to be. The internet has not replaced fieldwork but it certainly has reduced the necessity to be *in situ* for all events.

Hori Ichirô is unusual in his employment of non-Japanese theories from both sociology and anthropology, but he deals only peripherally with *Jizô*. Yanagita Kunio, who is regarded by many as the founding father of folklore studies in

Japan, pays tribute to De Visser and his monograph on $Jiz\hat{o}$, to be commented on below, but he makes no attempt to emulate De Visser's comparative method in order to contextualise the $Jiz\hat{o}$ cult of his epoch within the larger framework of Japanese belief structures. Perhaps there is a reason for the sporadic treatment of $Jiz\hat{o}$ in Yanagita's work: he states that the $Jiz\hat{o}$ subject-matter is so vast that it is impossible for a single individual to do it justice (Yanagita, Vol. 11, 1962:147).

II. Literature Review

1.2.0. Significant Materials and Prior Research in English

The attention *Jizô* receives from scholarly writers on Japanese Buddhism is, with a few exceptions, of a fairly recent date. The cursory interest of previous scholars is amply demonstrated in *Japanese Buddhism*, a work by the well-known and until recently very influential Sir Charles Eliot (1994). Without mentioning the nature of his cult in China and Japan, only one page in this otherwise detailed study of doctrine and practice is devoted to *Jizô*, his iconographic features and the provenance of the *Jizô* sutras. Yet this is more than can be said for another equally frequently quoted work, written some decades earlier. In Anesaki Masaharu's *History of Japanese Religion* (1968) the neglect is complete: here the name "*Jizô*" does not even appear in the index.

Other writers, perhaps less distinguished as scholars but better known to the general reading public, have devoted more writing space to the *Jizô* cult. Lafcadio Hearn (1970), whose name to many is synonymous with insightful observations and sympathetic interpretations of Japan in the period around the late 19th and early 20th century, is quite likely the first Westerner to have introduced *Jizô* to an English readership. But penetrating as his descriptions often are, they were not meant to be a systematic introduction to any subject in particular and his writings frequently magnify what appears to him to be strange and exotic.

In greater detail, but still basically on the level of a lengthy impressionistic sketch, the American philosopher James Bissett Pratt (1928), while journeying through East Asia in the late 1920s, wrote about $Jiz\hat{o}$ and commented on the different ways in which the deity was worshipped in China and Japan.

To my knowledge, the first person to deal extensively with Jizô in any language as a religious and social phenomenon was the Buddhist scholar De Visser (1915) whose monograph was and still is the only comprehensive study of this bodhisattva in English. There are bound to be a few inaccuracies in a pioneering study of this order. 'The 'Jizô Sutra of Longevity' (Enmei Jizô Bosatsu-kyô), for instance, is considerably older than De Visser originally thought. He was certainly aware of the existence of the many Buddhist collection of tales (setsuwa; monogatari) in Japan since both the Konjaku monogatari and Uji Shûi monogatari are mentioned in his work (ibid:111; 118). These collections of didactic tales provide a wealth of useful information about former religious practices and what people hoped to achieve from the icons of their devotion. They also tell us about the sutras in circulation at that time and the magic power associated with these texts. The thirty-two tales in the Konjaku monogatari (Mabuchi, 1971) devoted exclusively to the Jizô figure give us valuable information about his worship in the late Heian period. Yet in spite of being almost encyclopaedic in his treatment of texts dealing with Jizô, De Visser does not mention these tales. Perhaps he did not realise the voluminous nature of *Konjaku Monogatari*. Had he for instance been familiar with the Jizô tales in this collection alone, I am sure he would not have said that Jizô worship had to wait for the seventeenth century before it became popular among "the lower people" (1915:161). Several passages in his monograph describe funereal practices in relation to infant death but for obvious reasons De Visser's writings preceded the present *mizuko* phenomenon which only became conspicuous during the late 1960s.

LaFleur's monograph *Liquid Life* (1992) traces the history of the Buddhist stand on abortions in Japan over the centuries. As *Jizô* frequently is the bodhisattva charged with protecting the souls of deceased infants, he devotes a whole chapter to the *Jizô* figure and what role the deity plays in his tutelary capacity. In an analysis which narrowly concentrates on the *mizuko* aspect of *Jizô*, LaFleur describes the memorialisation rites as being therapeutic in nature, aiming to provide relief from the feelings of guilt experienced by those who have had an abortion. The author shows how the complex emotions and prayers of these women can be brought together in order to focus on one image. Through the rites performed, "*Jizô* [comes to] represent both saviour and saved" (LaFleur, 1992:53).

Thus $Jiz\hat{o}$ not only helps and assists the spirit of the dead child, he also becomes the representation of that child. This interpretation goes a long way to explain the preponderance of infantile images in the memorialisation rites for children.

LaFleurs's detailed and highly sympathetic account of the *mizuko* phenomenon and his views on abortions in Japan, however, has been challenged by several of his fellow American researchers in Japanese religion and during 1994-5 several writers made public these reservations in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. Over the years the same journal has published several articles which have looked at *mizuko* and *mizuko* memorialisation rituals from various perspectives, some studiedly objective, others less so and more strident and uncharitable in their observations. Several of these works are referred to in the following chapters.

Hardacre (1997) has addressed the *mizuko* issue from a very different perspective in *Marketing the Menacing Foetus in Japan*. As one may infer from the provocative title of her book, her interpretation is less than charitable. The issues covered range from economics to sexual politics, the structure of the memorialisation rituals *(mizuko kuyô)*, gender participation in these rituals, and attitudes towards abortion in general. In contrast to LaFleur, Hardacre shows little sympathy for the whole *mizuko* paradigm and how many Japanese try to come to terms with a practice that runs counter to the Buddhist precept against the taking of life. Where LaFleur in the *mizuko kuyô* detected obvious attempts to heal psychological wounds and to exorcise mental pain, Hardacre viewed the same memorialisation rituals as a display of crass commercialism, misguided intentions and uninformed foetocentrism.

Hardacre's unfavourable criticism is echoed in the many subsequent academic publications which seem to operate under the impression that $Jiz\hat{o}$'s primary function is related only to the memorialisation of aborted foetuses and the relief of post-abortion grief. I question this premise.

In his publication, *The Karma of Words*, LaFleur (1983) discussed the formation of a epistemological Buddhist framework for dealing with deteriorating social conditions and existential problems in the tenth century. He, as everyone else

writing of medieval religion in Japan, had to deal with the current concept of hell, the realm where Jizô was believed to be particularly active. During that period Jizô increasingly came to be thought of as a bodhisattva who would help the spirits of the dead to negotiate their journeys of transmigration through the six lower stages of existence (rokudô), i.e. "hell, and the realms of hungry spirits, animals, fighting demons, asuras, men, and heavenly beings" (Inagaki, 1992:249). Initially this journey was thought to be predestined in accordance with the law of karma. It was believed that Jizô, and in some circumstances Kannon as well, could alleviate the pain of the spirits travelling between different existences. But even a bodhisattva was unable to influence the overall process of transmigration. Gradually, however, there developed a perception, based on the eighteenth 'original vow' (hongan, Sanskrit: pûrva-pranidhâna) by Amida Buddha, that as a result of this Buddha's infinite compassion, believers would be granted release from the painful cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Everyone would obtain a final rebirth in The Pure Land, the Western Paradise of Amida, leaving once and for all the revolving wheel of samsara. The author (ibid: 249) points out how the Tendai sect made this belief possible with a set of theological propositions, based on the concept of 'co-penetration' of all known worlds.

"Non-dualism" is the fundamental point in Mahayana dialectics for which reason "good and evil are not seen as absolute opposites but...as mutually dependent" (LaFleur, 1983:53). This is strongly redolent of the theory of the "sameness of everything...the interpenetration of every element in the world with everything else", advocated elsewhere in the 'Kegon Sutra' (Skt. Avatamsaka). As parts of the cosmic fabric, heaven and hell and transmigration were regarded as dialectically interdependent. There was a "completely relative world in which all beings exist mutually dependent on each other for they are the cause for the existence of every thing in the universe and at the same time they undergo the effect of this existence" (Saunders, 1976:126-7).

In his well-known study of Japanese religion, Joseph Kitagawa (1966) briefly describes the gradual development of $Jiz\hat{o}$ from a lesser-known deity into one of the most popular bodhisattvas in the country. He particularly highlights the readiness with which $Jiz\hat{o}$ found devotees among the common people and how

they relied on the deity's compassion for release from the terrors of hell. Together with several other commentators, Kitagawa points out that $Jiz\hat{o}$'s rise to prominence in the tenth century, must be seen in connection with the burgeoning Amida cult where practices which displayed a blend of Amidist and shamanistic elements found many followers. Hell has always had its place in Japanese Buddhism where it is positioned at the bottom of the decipartite structure (jikkai) of existence. The wide diffusion and acceptance of Pure Land doctrines brought with it a simplified and popular concept of hell (Umehara, 1967:22-24). In the well-known twelfth century 'Scrolls of Hell' ($jigoku-z\hat{o}shi$) these concepts are expressed in visual images with "fantastic and hideous scenes of torture" (Grilli, n.d.:24). This preoccupation with hell, one could argue, was a direct outcome of the soteriological emphasis of Amidism with its "disgust for Hell and desire for the Pure Land" (Tsunoda et al., 1964:189).

The Konjaku monogatari is arguably the most famous collection of tales from the late Heian period. The thirty-two different stories dealing with the worship of Jizô among ordinary people and humble priests are a milestone in *Jizô* awareness (Mabuchi, 1971). But *Jizô* also appears in other Buddhist story collections with a didactic flavour. The collection of 'Miraculous Stories about Jizô' (Jizô Bosatsu *Reigenki*) is devoted exclusively to him and his works. Here the nature of his miraculous powers both in this and in other realms is revealed via the technique of story telling. Dykstra (1978) has translated some of these stories into English, prefixed by a lengthy introduction. She puts into relief several aspects of the Jizô cult that are not mentioned elsewhere, in particular the Chinese influences and the continental models that undoubtedly provided a powerful impetus to the initial shape of the Jizô cult in Japan. She also stresses the age of the syncretic elements Jizô worship and points to the many instances where Jizô devotees were also avid followers of the *Lotus Sutra* without any clear sense of contradiction. Dykstra further seems to suggest that such a combination of different approaches is an essential Japanese way of dealing with religious doctrines which owe nothing to practices in China, a country from which the Japanese otherwise borrowed so much and so indiscriminately. On the whole, the most illuminating aspects of Dykstra's paper is the way in which she shows how the discrete strands of beliefs

in Pure Land Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra and *Jizô*, have been taken up and combined by worshippers in Japan.

Matsunaga's (1969) treatment of Jizô in The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation is not extensive but very condensed. Within a limited space she manages to refer to most of the important traits of the bodhisattva, but minus the mizuko phenomenon which had barely begun at the time of her writing. She demonstrates the connection between the Lotus Sutra and the development of the theory that indigenous gods were avatars of Buddhist deities (honji-suijaku). By tracing the ramification and impact of this theory, she has made it possible to understand the conflation of Japanese kami with Buddhist deities, which in our context is of great interest when reflecting upon the union of the traditional guardian of borders (Saino-kami) and Jizô. It also explains the possible origin of the 'one-body theory' (dôtai), which says that Jizô can manifest himself in the bodies of other bodhisattvas and operate in that guise as if he were that particular deity. We see examples of this as early as the Nihon Ryôiki (Nakada, 1975:281-283). It is also taken up in Morrell's translation 'Collection of Sand and Pebbles' (Shasekishû) by Mujû Ichien from the Kamakura period (1185 -1333). In his collection, Mujû includes several engaging stories about the worship of Jizô and, perhaps more interestingly, describes how some of the newer sects, particularly the Shin Jôdoshû, rejected this cult with the same vehemence they rejected all other doctrines except their own. "When the *nembutsu* doctrine was becoming widespread, certain people threw copies of the *Lotus Sutra* into the river and others rubbed *Jizô* 's head with smartweed, saying that the non-Amidist buddhas and scriptures were useless" (Morrell, 1985:7). They presumably wanted to harm the bodhisattva since smartweed is the plant used in the painful moxibustion treatment whereby a powder extract from smartweed is applied to the skin and then set alight.

To those who find that Japanese and Chinese popular beliefs are largely different sides of the same coin, Teiser's study about the Chinese 'Ghost Festival' is an important corrective (1988). In his guise as a Japanese bodhisattva, *Jizô* makes only fleeting appearances in this book, but as *Ti-tsang*, the same deity in a Chinese garb, he is placed squarely within the context of popular beliefs on the continent. Some important aspects of these practices found their way to Japan via the 'Sutra

of the Ten Kings' $(Jy\hat{u}\hat{o}-gy\hat{o})$. This text provides a detailed compendium of the structural hierarchy in the various hells, both in terms their managerial divisions, the names of the various administrators in charge, and what actually happens in the afterlife.

A very important work, *Practically Religious - Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan*, was published by Reader and Tanabe (1998) with a wideranging analysis of the religious practices associated with the desire to obtain immediate benefits in this life *(genze-riyaku)* in a variety of contexts. In great detail the authors describe how these benefits can be accessed and who the benefactors are. People may often pray for health related matters but their wishes are also frequently extended to objects of an unabashed material nature. Dealing with wishes for materialistic advantages is not the exclusive prerogative of any particular religion or divinity. As we already read in the second chapter of 'Jizô Sutra of the original Vow' *(Jizô Bosatsu Hongan-kyô)*, fulfilling the aspirations of believers to personal gains, here and now, was and is a very important side of popular *Jizô* worship in Japan (Hua, 1974:95; Yoritomi, 1987:94-5).

Less focused on Jizô but important for their analysis of the strongly popular elements in Japanese religion are the works by Earhart (1982,1997) and the publications in English by Hori (1968). Earhart's textbooks accentuate what the author calls "persistent themes in Japanese religious history". While elucidating these themes, he gathers the many strands of popular religious attitudes and weaves them into a comprehensive fabric which demonstrates the range and diversity of traditions and ritual practices. While some may consider the technical vocabulary and the conclusions drawn by Hori as slightly dated, his penetrating observations and vast knowledge of Japanese folk religion, published in many books and articles in both English and Japanese, are still of great value, in particular his analysis of the adaptability of folk beliefs to changing circumstances, where doctrine yields to religious practices and interpretations that appear useful to believers. Both authors make frequent use of the now unpopular analytical opposition between the "little and big tradition" concept. They do so in order to explain the dominant role of popular religion as it is practised both inside and outside the official Buddhist establishment in Japan and how "the little tradition" is

transmitted "by word of mouth and by direct example" (Earhart, 1982:62). The significance of folk religion in Japan has even prompted one scholar to write that "in Japan the little tradition is the great tradition" (Davis, 1977:6).

To help one to understand the relationship between the living and the dead, Smith's (1974) Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan is indispensable as it helps to situate Jizô in this particular context. Apart from the perceptive observations of the author, whose predictions about the future course of Buddhism in Japan have come true, the reader is shown the organic growth of religious ideas and practices and how a diachronic investigation can shed light on contemporary rituals that at first glance appear out of place. The author insists that the customary memorialisation of the ancestors is a fundamental raison d'être of Buddhism in Japan, at least on a popular level. If, he says, the family as we know it ceases to exist, the idea of ancestor worship will come to an end as well and "Buddhism's hold on the population will be irrevocably lost" (1974: 225). The isolation of the urban, nuclear family has caused several changes to the way people commonly regard the concept of ancestor, i.e. who are they; who among them should be venerated and by whom. Even if fewer people are memorialised today than in previous times, the concept is still vital and very much alive. I will also quote from several insightful articles collected in *Ancestors*, edited by Newell (1976).

The publications by the Buddhist nun, Jan Chosen Bays, an American convert to Zen Buddhism, should be mentioned as well. Although her (2001) hagiographic *Jizô Bodhisattva: Modern Healing and Traditional Buddhist Practice* is clearly directed towards a very general readership, it does share the same distinction as De Visser's work in that it is exclusively dedicated to the treatment of *Jizô*. In simple language, it describes the role of *Jizô* in the context of grief, *mizuko* and the dead, and how an American audience may structure a relationship with a deity from a foreign tradition. This theme is taken up again but expanded to cover other of the deity's activities in a later publication by the same author in *Jizô Bodhisattva: Guardian of Children, Travelers, and Other Voyagers (2003)*.

1.2.1. Significant Materials and Prior Research in Japanese

In Japanese the standard work of reference about *Jizô* still remains Manabe Kôsai's (1987) *Jizô bosatsu no kenkyû*. More recent developments in the field have been added in later editions but they have not changed the original emphasis. This study, as well as an earlier monograph from 1941, republished in 1975 as *Jizô-son no kenkyû*, is mainly devoted to the *Jizô* figure as he is described in the literature and in canonical writing. In these works there is a wealth of information consisting of excerpts from historical documents which under normal circumstances are not readily available or accessible. Although the author's treatment of *Jizô* spans most of the time the deity has been known in Japan, there is a discernible focus on the development of earlier influences and how they came to determine the future directions of the *Jizô* cult.

Manabe also makes a detailed evaluation of the various sutras which deal with the derivation, the functions, the iconographic features, and relative rank of Jizô within the greater Mahayana hierarchy. There is also a discussion of the pseudosutras (gikyô) of Chinese and Japanese origin, as opposed to those which traditionally have been accepted as translations from Sanskrit although this question is not as clear-cut as it seemed to Manabe (vide Buswell, 1990). The few Jizô related pseudo-sutras are sharply focused on his activities and the benefits believers receive when worshipping him. The writers frequently summarise or promote particular practices and doctrines. When the extant Chinese translations from Sanskrit (?) are compared with so-called 'spurious' texts, the pseudo-sutras seem more concerned with describing of what the *Jizô* worship already consists. The so-called translated and therefore authentic texts, on the other hand, first establish a context for the bodhisattva before they commence to make a case for him. The 'Jizô Sutra of Longevity' (Enmei Jizô Bosatsu-kyô), written over a millennium and half after the death of the Buddha, is perhaps the most wellknown pseudo-sutra of Japanese provenance. For a modest amount of money it is still readily available and many temple stalls throughout the country carry the text as part of their religious inventory (see below Appendix II).

Jizô shinkô by Hayami Takusu (1975) omits lengthy quotation of older documents and is thus a less voluminous work than those mentioned above, but it is important

nevertheless. The discussion on p.168, for instance, where Hayami takes issue with the common belief that $Jiz\hat{o}$ is also related to the indigenous gods of the roadside $(d\hat{o}sojin)$ raises important questions about the nature of $Jiz\hat{o}$'s relationship with local gods, a subject which still requires further research. As is the case with many other $Jiz\hat{o}$ studies, this work, too, is indebted to Manabe's original research.

Tanaka Hisao's (1989) *Jizô shinkô to minzoku* deals with two aspects of *Jizô*. With occasional digressions into later times and practices, the first half of the work takes as its starting point the foreign origin and early history of *Jizô*. The author also explains the formative period of *Jizô's* general popularisation during which some of the newer religious sects rejected *Jizô* whereas others enthusiastically embraced a belief in the deity thus starting a movement which later was to turn into the cult which we know today. There is also a discussion about the extent to which individual priests in the medieval period inspired and promoted *Jizô* worship. The second part of the book is a discussion about the nature of Japanese gods, their relationship with the dead in general and the ancestors in particular, and how *Jizô* fits into this structure.

Many later practices that are only hinted at by Tanaka receive a fuller treatment in *Minkan no Jizô shinkô*, a collection of essays edited by Ohshima (1992), where more than twenty different contributors give accounts of the diverse nature of *Jizô* worship among the people in various parts of Japan today.

A more recent work by the scholar Ishikawa Junichi (1995), *Jizô no sekai*, written for the general reader, describes ancient and present day rituals and beliefs and how they unfold within the *Jizô* cult. Because of the book's specific target audience, popular customs are described in great detail. The emphasis is decidedly on what people do. For Ishikawa it is irrelevant whether these actions are based on scriptural authority or whether they can be justified in a buddhological sense. Perhaps the anthropological background of the author is responsible for his evenhanded approach to popular practices. They are no-where classified by him as superstition or vulgar displays of ignorance as so often is the case.

In a wide-ranging introduction to the belief in the deity, *Jizô-sama nyûmon* (Daihôrin, 1984) sheds an interesting light on the nature of individual *Jizô* worship. This collection of essays, mostly written by members of the Buddhist clergy, encourages an active engagement with *Jizô* and in this sense the book is not a critical study of the bodhisattva. Even so, the recommendations about which sutra to chant, on what occasions the *Jizô* mantra can be used effectively, and general guidelines about how to structure one's worship of *Jizô*, are a good indication of the Buddhist establishment's approach to the nature of *Jizô* veneration.

By contrast, the *Jizô* dictionary, *Shimpen nihon Jizô jiten* (Motoyama, Katsurakawa et al., 1988), could not be more different in its intent and in its treatment of the *Jizô* related material. Once again the emphasis is not on what people *should* do, but what they *actually* do. Legends, stories of origin *(engidan)* and summaries of curiously named *Jizô* statues and images have been gathered here from the whole country together with descriptions of the rituals connected with these icons. Here the *Jizô* statues used in phallic rituals find their place alongside images that promote success in life or offer cures for every conceivable ailment. Locations where statues form part of castigation rituals, during which they are threatened and ill-treated, are identified in conjunction with a simple guide for the correct identification of *Jizô* images. Also included are translations into modern Japanese of some of the more important *Jizô* tales.

The wide spectrum of folk beliefs receives ample treatment in Setouchi's (1989) *Bukkyô gyôji saijiki*. The twelve volumes, reflecting the twelve months of the year, take the reader through the varied landscape of Japanese folk religion. Informative articles about *Jizô* and practices associated with specific dates add yet another dimension to his activities which in this case are seen from the perspective of the liturgical calendar.

The iconographic background of $Jiz\hat{o}$ and his development in the plastic arts is well recorded by Matsushima Ken (1986). $Jiz\hat{o}$ bosatsu- $z\hat{o}$ documents the more formal images of $Jiz\hat{o}$, in particular those where he is treated as a cult object in temple rituals. Liberally illustrated, the stylistic changes of the $Jiz\hat{o}$ figure are shown in graphic detail. The under-representation of the more numerous but

artistically less distinguished stone sculptures of *Jizô* is compensated for in other works specifically dealing with religious sculptures in stone. The important *Nihon sekibutsu jiten* (Kôshin Konwa-kai, 1975) should be mentioned here, but there are several more. *Jizô bosatsu - sono minamoto to shinkô o saguru* by Mochizuki (1989) also deals extensively with the origin of several statues of *Jizô*, both famous and lesser-known ones, from all over Japan.

Takemura's (1994) *Kyô no o-Jizô-san*, which is a guide through the city of Kyoto, is also of great iconographic interest because the itinerary takes the reader to various temples with notable *Jizô* statues. The focus is on statues known more for their thaumaturgic powers than for their aesthetic appeal.

Finally, one should pay tribute to the massive volumes of sutra translations edited by Iwano, *Kokuyaku issaikyô indo senjutsubu*. Vol. V from 1978 is of particular interest in this context since this is where one may locate all the relevant *Jizô* sutras, annotated and translated from classical Chinese into formal epistolary Japanese.

III. Methodology

1.3.0. A Marriage of Philology and Ethnography

Because I have lived, studied and worked in Japan for extended periods of time during the 1970s and the middle of the 1990s, I function with ease within the social and linguistic context of that country. For this reason I have had no need of local interpreters or translators when dealing with Japanese materials, be they of a verbal or written nature. This also means that all conversations and interviews used in this thesis have been conducted by myself without the aid of a third party.

Initially I had planned this thesis as a disquisition in philology, hence the annotated translation into English of 'Jizô's Sutra of Longevity' in Appendix II. My ability to deal with Japanese texts has been vital for much of the research I have done. Accessing Japanese websites, for instances, which has given me an invaluable perspective on the *Jizô* narrative as it is conducted in Japan by the Japanese, would not have been possible without philological skills. However, because Japanese folk religion, and by extension many *Jizô*-related matters, are

grounded in annual events that are celebrated with rituals, I realised that I had to go out into the field and become an observer as well. This departure took me in a different disciplinary direction about five years ago but I felt vindicated when I became familiar with the thoughts of Ama who in an interview once said that "Folk religion does not have a set of scriptures, but it does have the propagation of a story, or narrative, by means of...annual events" (Ama, 2006). This statement stresses the importance of direct observation, the need to see what people are doing. This situation where rituals privilege actions over religious doctrines has been analysed in great detail by Weber (1965:151-165). However, I also believe that the written tradition is important in its own right because Buddhist texts frequently substantiate the rituals and practices of lay practitioners (cf. Appendix II).

For these reasons, literary research as well as the general rules of ethnography have been my guiding principles. These rules of ethnography I understand to be a "firsthand study of an ethnic group...combined to a varying degree of descriptive and analytic elements" which are not seen a-historically but as manifest phenomena of a social and historical process (Seymour-Smith, 1992:99). Thus this thesis is in the "historical-descriptive mode that emphasizes historical and cultural continuities more than any specific interpretive scheme (Earhart, 1976:183).

1.3.1. Locations and Geographical Areas of Field Work

Because the goal of the present work was to gather under one umbrella as many facts about $Jiz\hat{o}$ worship in contemporary Japan as possible, the research has taken place on two levels. It was vital to ascertain how this worship was carried out by believers in their natural environment, i.e. seeing what people actually did and under what circum-stances. This entailed field work in a number of locations spread over a large geographical area as I wanted to include both rural and urban communities in order to observe how these disparate groups celebrated the important festivals and highlights of the liturgical year (saijiki). As part of this process I travelled to the Northern tip of the main island of Honshû, Sado Island in the Japan Sea, as well as to Tokyo. Most of my research, however, took place in Western Japan, more specifically in Kansai. A personal familiarity of long

standing with this region as well as the large number of $Jiz\hat{o}$ related activities in this area made this location an easy and ideal choice.

1.3.2. The Nature of My Field Work

In the field I often sought to play the role of an unobtrusive observer; for instance on Mt. Osore in Northern Japan where the target group of my research turned out to be composed mostly of elderly women. For obvious reasons, intimate personal participation would not have been possible under these circumstances. Similar conditions typified those occurrences when I was sampling the display of formalised behaviour and worshipper attitudes in the small *Jizô* shrine under Umeda Railroad Station in Osaka. Here the objective was to record possible changes in ritualistic patterns from previous surveys or, as the case might be, to duplicate the findings of earlier scholars and researchers. The contents of Obon, which celebrates the continued spiritual existence of one's ancestors, also saw me in the marginalised role of observer since the nature of the festival severely limits the extent to which outsiders can participate. Here I focused on observable practices, an activity which I also maintained during the yearly pilgrimage to the Six Jizô (Roku-Jizô-mairi). There were fewer constraints during Jizô Bon which usually follows the principle of 'the more the merrier', an attitude which also came to the fore at the end of Obon when the attention is turned towards the unattached spirits (*muen-botoke*). On this occasion prayers are said for all sentient beings, whether living or dead, in Adashino Nembutsu-ji temple where everyone, regardless of background or creed, is encouraged to participate actively in the sombre festivities.

In one instance in particular, however, my role changed to that of an acknow-ledged observer and "conspicuous visitor" (Barrett, 1984:29), and I became a person whose identity was known to most others present: Once the priest in the Sekibutsu-ji temple in Kyoto's Nishijin district had let it become known that he did not mind my activities in the place, people no longer paid any attention to me and they went about their own business, letting me take notes and ask questions. This location was where I was able to speak to the largest number of people and conduct most of my recorded interviews.

My last field trip to Japan took place in the beginning of the year 2003. It was spent mostly talking to priests and worshippers, clarifying points of doubt and double-checking the veracity of earlier observations. At the same time I had the opportunity to observe how many of the places described in the thesis appeared in an everyday light as opposed to the festive atmosphere, which had dominated the various locations where I first began my research.

I should emphasise that at no point did I introduce myself as a believer, nor was I ever asked whether I believed in the factual existence of *Jizô* or what my personal attitude towards Buddhism might be. I paid my respect to the deities enshrined in the temples I studied by pausing a brief moment in silence in front of their altars. Occasionally I was given a small joss stick which I would light and put into the ubiquitous incense burners. That was all that was expected of me: visible respect, not displays of simulated belief.

1.3.3. Document Collection, Library and Internet Research

Full-time teaching responsibilities during the process of this thesis have imposed a time limit on fieldwork and have thereby been conducive to library research. This has given me the opportunity to verify my responses to personal experiences and to ascertain the correctness of my own observations against the research results of others. A large part of this research took place in the libraries of Kobe University, my *alma mater*, The International Research Centre for Japanese Studies in Kyoto, Kyoto University and Bukkyô Daigaku (Buddhist University) also in Kyoto. The municipal library in the city of Kyoto provided me with much material as well. In Australia I have on several occasions visited the library of the Australian National University and that of University of Queensland, availing myself of their considerable Japan-related holdings and their interlibrary loan facilities.

The many Japanese websites on the internet have provided me with valuable and much needed material. I refer particularly to memorialisation rituals for dead infants and aborted foetuses which would have been inaccessible to me under normal circumstances. From web pages on the net it has been possible to gauge the extent of the *mizuko* paradigm and how it is presented to the public, i.e. how to go about organising a memorialisation ceremony, its symbolic meaning, how

much one should pay and what the expectations are of the individual. Some online sites, which I discuss later in the *mizuko* chapter, for instance, even provided me with a flow chart which detailed the progress of the spirit of aborted foetuses. The many temple advertisements and pieces of information on the internet about these matters, which provided me with the same materials that a prospective supplicant would read and consult, made me realise the dimension of the present-day synchronicity with strangers which Anderson (1991) described and named in *Imagined Communities*.

1.3.4. Guiding Theories

The methodological principle of this thesis has been to focus strongly on empirically observable patterns of religious behaviour in the ambience of a rural-urban continuum from the perspective of folk religion. In light of the century old popularity of *Jizô* and the number of temples and statues dedicated to him, I have taken for granted that the observable behaviour within a clearly defined situation of a religious nature would be readily understood by most "since folk religion means a group of rites and beliefs which have been...supported and transmitted ...from generation to generation" (Hori, 1968:2). A given individual may not know in detail what to do in front of a statue. However, by repeatedly observing the behaviour of others, anyone will be able to realise the procedure in the execution of a religious ritual on the level of folk religion.

Folk religion refers to behaviour whose driving force is from below, rather than instructions from above. It may also imply autonomy and individual perspective but "the routines necessary for 'outward' performance" (Berger & Luckman, 1973:94) are fairly standardised. As far as Japan is concerned, many researchers have pointed out how much Japanese religion is characterised by formalism (Tsukamoto, 1997:245). These observations make it possible to understand the 'what' in a ritualistic context because of its repetitive nature. The importance of these acts has been famously described by Durkheim who claimed that they were "not merely a system of signs by which the faith is outwardly expressed; it is the sum total of means by which that faith is created and re-created periodically (2002:47). In many instances it is even possible to know why a person turns to *Jizô*. The epithet of a given statue may give us this information. Since it often

expresses the nature of the statue's curative powers, we are in a position to make an educated guess as to why someone is addressing a particular *Jizô* image.

For an understanding of the underlying structures in worshipper - deity relationships, I found the theory developed by Mauss (1969) in relation to gift-giving exchanges very applicable in a Japanese context even if 'archaic societies' were the original focus of his investigations. Just as an ideal Japanese visitor should never arrive empty-handed, so a petitioner cannot approach a deity without bringing a gift or an initial sacrifice with which to start the mutual association. There is, as Mauss says (1969:10) "an obligation to give, an obligation to receive, and an obligation to repay", a statement whose truth is daily enacted whenever people in Japan turn to religion for personal assistance.

1.3.5. Areas Not Explored

The sheer scale of the *Jizô* discourse, which unremittingly forms and recreates the object with which it deals, makes it impossible to analyse each and every individual manifestation of *Jizô* beliefs and practices. It will require much more work and research before the topic could be said to have been adequately dealt with and before the hermeneutic circle has been closed. The role of *Jizô* in esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyô*), for instance, has been left untouched. Yet by dealing with some salient features of contemporary *Jizô* worship, this thesis sheds enough light on its central figure for one to realise the complexity of the belief structure surrounding him.

For the reasons stated above, my work took place within boundaries that allowed for empirical generalisations but not for an in-depth analysis of every singular practice or activity associated with $Jiz\hat{o}$. An ideal point of departure for some unexplored areas of this nature would be an investigation of the framework of lay devotional associations for the promotion and support of $Jiz\hat{o}$ related activities $(Jiz\hat{o}-k\hat{o})$. The tantalising glimpses Hori (1968) provides of these religious associations only demonstrate that further research into their activities is much needed. It would greatly enhance our knowledge about the background and motivations of those people who play a pivotal yet frequently unacknowledged role in the $Jiz\hat{o}$ cult, be it as anonymous organizers of traditional festivals, fund

raisers behind the scene, pious caretakers, or just plain cleaners of popular sites of devotion.

I also comment in several places on the high profile of women in $Jiz\hat{o}$ worship but I do not attempt to analyse the relationship between age, gender and religious practices. In a research note, Alan Miller (1992) attempts to address some of these issues but I am not wholly convinced that his application of the deprivation theory fits Japanese circumstances.

Controversy over the nature of Japanese religion is another area that I have left largely unexplored. Since the issue appears to be an issue over definition, it is not surprising that the debate seems to fall into two categories where one party "declares that Japan is one of the few secular countries in the world, and the other, on the contrary, claims that Japan is one of the most religious" (Shiose, 2000:317). I have treated religiosity as a given without attempting to define what it exactly means in a Japanese context. This silence is not because of insensitivity to the complexity of the issue in a place where "it is difficult to draw a line between the 'religious' and the 'secular' and what the Japanese understand by the term 'religious belief" (Hendry, 1996:115-6). The point is well illustrated by the fact that "Many Japanese claim to be non-religious, if asked directly...[yet] the same people may be observed practising a variety of 'religious' activities in the course of their lives" (ibid). This observation is substantiated by the vast number of worshippers in sacred locations on specific festivals during the year when several temples and shrines are visited by more that three million people during the New Year Pilgrimage (hatsu-môde) to shrines and temples in the first week of January (Havens, 1994). It should be pointed out, though, that participation in these festivals can be said to be just as much an expression of social conventions as it is can be regarded as a manifestation of religious convictions. The issue which is rooted in a resistance to the construction of a clear demarcation between what is, and what is not a religious activity in Japan has been debated at length by Anderson (1991), Fitzgerald (2003; 2004), Rambelli (2000) and Reader (1991b, 2004).

Personally I think that this problem will only be solved when Japanese sources are looked at from a new perspective, when "diverse disciplines ...participate in heterogeneous discussion and negotiation from a standpoint free of the Western notion of *sui generis* religion, which the science of religion has tried to transplant into Japanese society as an agent of the idealized West" (Isomae, 2005:244). I find it striking that many eminent Japanese scholars, as opposed to their non-Japanese counterparts, do not view Japanese religiosity as problematic. Ama (2006) has a deceptively simple approach: He writes there is a need to differentiate between "founded religion" with normative doctrines expressed in specific text, and folk religion which is an inherited set of procedures that operate extratextually and unconsciously. Those Japanese who profess that they have no religion, Ama seems to say, usually mean that they do not subscribe to the doctrines of a founded religion controlled by an administrative priestly hierarchy. Folk religion, however, is a different matter because "folk belief constitutes the real character of Japanese religious sentiment" (ibid). If that is the case it should come as no surprise when "all statistics on religion repeatedly point out that most Japanese prefer to call themselves 'irreligious'" (Swyngedouw, 1977:245).

This phenomenon has been treated in great detail by other writers elsewhere (Reader, 1991; Swyngedouw, 1976,1993). Even so, it would be illuminating to know how $Jiz\hat{o}$ worship fits into general religious attitudes since one of the salient traits of $Jiz\hat{o}$ is his cross-sectarian appeal. That argument will also have to await future investigation.

CHAPTER 2

I. Jizô's Connection with Mizuko and Mizuko Kuyô

2.1.0. Introduction

Mizuko kuyô are Japanese memorialisation rites for dead infants and aborted foetuses. I emphasize that such ceremonies have become part of the Japanese religious complex only since World War II and that they are a main factor in the current prominence of the Jizô cult. I seek to show that while the basis for these rites is traceable to tradition, the cult has transformed the beliefs and practices they invoke almost beyond recognition. To symbolise this change of emphasis, Mizuko-Jizô, a newly created religious image of Jizô surrounded by infants, has come to represent one of the most important elements of this new memorialisation ritual whereby Jizô's traditional relationship with children is maintained yet represented in a decidedly new manner.

The people who request *mizuko kuyô* frequently insist that these rites are conducted in private. This emphasis on privacy is often accompanied by a desire for anonymity as well. Thus sponsored *mizuko kuyô* are in many instances not collective events but rites of a reclusive nature that even may take place via the internet (see section 2.2.6). Whereas some individuals may ignore completely the services provided by institutionalised Buddhism, others still feel the need to have the rituals validated by an established religious body, a feeling that is not necessarily accompanied by a commitment to the teachings and doctrines that the religious organisation in question advocates. This trend to individual spirituality and personal healing has been noticed by several commentators. Shiose (2000:317, 324) argues that such a shift is one of the results of the post-war separation of the state from religion. The Japanese, she says, are rediscovering the private dimension of religion and "people often find religious outlets in the form of diffused, non-organized cultural and social activities".

Yet not everyone accepts the ritual as something that is unequivocally beneficial. Several commentators regard it as the manifestation of a false need, artificially fabricated by unscrupulous journalists and venal members of the clergy whose motives are based on greed rather than a desire to dispense spiritual comfort.

These critics point to the frequently sensationalist and manipulative coverage of *mizuko*, both by the media and fraudulent religionists, with gory tales of vengeful spirits and nightmares (Hardacre, 1997; Werblowsky, 1991).

One is bound to agree with parts of this assessment since it is a fact that much of the media gives noisy and prominent treatment to the phenomenon of *tatari*, i.e. curses or spells cast on the living by dead spirits. It is also undeniable that the threat of spirits of aborted foetuses coming back to haunt the living plays a certain role in the *mizuko* discourse. It effortlessly taps into an age-old folk belief in Japan of the existence of vengeful ghosts who cause havoc from beyond as revenge for some injustice committed against them while alive. Thus the concept of *post mortem* curses (*tatari*) can be used to exploit those who feel uneasy about having had an abortion. However, even if the idea of "supernatural punishment" has a very long history in Japan (Befu, 1971:113-4), many temples are openly hostile to this idea, calling it a superstition (*meishin*), as does for instance Jôkô Enman-ji temple on its homepage (http://enmanji.com/soudan/tatari.html). Nevertheless, this belief enjoys widespread support and, as we shall see later, it is responsible for many requests for *mizuko kuyô*.

It is also common to link the high abortion rate in post-war Japan with the emergence of *mizuko kuyô*, a set of rituals that aims to assuage the burden of post-abortion guilt. But I intend to show that this interpretation is erroneous and that the reality is far more complex. Even though *mizuko kuyô* is intimately linked with abortions and infant mortality, infant memorialisation rites have arisen in response to certain sociological changes, not to the incidence of abortions as such.

The development to which I refer reemphasised the vulnerability of women. Previously, pregnant women appear to have been in a position to make a choice and their concerns were of a practical nature. Information prior to the late 1960s dealt generally with abortions in terms of concern for the health of the mother and dispensed sound advice about the physical side of abortions. As the decade went by, the focus on practical information and the fitness of the mother were sidelined as the general mood seemed to shift to apprehension about the wellbeing of the aborted foetus and what it might represent. Biological concerns were gradually

replaced with spiritual concerns and a new way of looking at the foetus which slowly started to manifest itself in manipulative and emotionally charged articles in the popular media (www.ne.jp.asahi/time/saman/juyouki.htm). Now prospective mothers came to be seen as beings in the grip of biological destiny. As the catch phrase would have it, they were saddled with the 'sadness of being a woman' (onna yue no kanashisa). During the mid-1960s, the aborted foetus was imperceptibly turned into more than just an unwanted growth in the human body that had been surgically removed. Little by little magazine articles began to appear with descriptions about *mizuko kuyô* and the activities of *mizuko* temples replete with public transport guides. In the media the hitherto vague images of embryos and foetuses in their early stages of development were gradually replaced with pictures of babies possessing fully developed human features. Simultaneously, photo-graphs of numerous rows of small *Mizuko-Jizô* statues lined up in temple compounds appeared in the major magazines, often accompanied by sentimental captions which emphasised the defenceless, yet very human aspect of these figurines in their obvious role as substitutes for aborted "babies" (see Appendix I). The concreteness of these figurines in particular made it possible to "see" what previously only had been imagined or mediated in verbal terms. Eventually these tiny figures were thoroughly anthropomorphised and invested with human emotions the foetus image was conflated with the child-like representation of the Mizuko-Jizô figurines (www.ne.jp.asahi/time/ saman/juyouki.htm; Brooks, 1981: 131-2; Hardacre; 1997:60-71).

In 1967 McFarland (1967:92) pointed out the enthusiasm with which "the mass-communication media" were being used by the religious sects that had started to flourish in Japan after The Pacific War. Several decades later, Ess (2004:9-10) writes that a general "colonization of cyberspace" has taken place in which the computer provides a religious "safe haven" for those who seek an "emotive experience" without being bound by "rational approaches to Scriptures". This cultural phenomenon, which began in USA, was made possible with the development of the MODEM program in 1978 (Helland, 2005:905). One of the pioneers in the field of online religion is Brenda Brasher (2001), who also has a website devoted to virtual religion, a subject which Paolo Apolito (2005) deals with in *The Internet and the Madonna: Religious Visionary Experience on the Web*.

According to Tamura (2004:3), the first websites to deal with religion in Japan started much later. He estimates that by 1996 there were only about forty religious websites in Japan but does not specify their content. Today religious online activities are no longer unusual and the number of spiritual and religious websites has grown immensely. In the case of *mizuko kuyô*, many temples advertise and promote these rites on the internet. Offering assurances of strict anonymity, these temples clearly target those people who need the *mizuko kuyô* to be authenticated but at the same time wish to remain unknown to the clerics. The performance of *mizuko kuyô* can take a variety of forms but a lot seems to depend on the level of the individual temple's computer literacy. The whole rite may be enacted in cyberspace in real time where the act of chanting and making offerings is visually mediated via a computer monitor and the sponsor never leaves home. In other instances, only parts of the *mizuko kuyô* may be of a virtual nature. Some temples offer a selection of static images and text messages with which the viewer may engage on the screen.

There is no doubt that *mizuko kuyô* has over time also become an online phenomenon with global impact. The many websites dedicated to the *mizuko* paradigm bear witness to that. From its Japanese beginnings it is now known by an inestimable number of people outside that country. Abbot Miura from Enman-in temple, for instance, claims that he has received "applications for memorial services... from adherents of 32 different faiths in Germany, France, Great Britain, and Australia" (Miura, www.izu.co.jp/~enman/7.htm - Dec. 18. 2002).

2.1.1. Definition of Mizuko

The religious and social structures which enable the Japanese to deal with the emotional as well as the practical sides of infant mortality and abortions are expressed in the concepts of *mizuko* (foetus, placenta, and stillborn), the practice of *mizuko kuyô* (memorialisation service for a *mizuko*), and the icon *Mizuko-Jizô*, which is the title given to *Jizô* in his capacity as protector of *mizuko*.

The term *mizuko* has been used in Japan at least since the middle of the Edo period (1600-1868). The practice of erecting *Jizô* statues for the *mizuko* also started during this era (Komatsu, 2003:274; Mochizuki et al., 1974:212). *Mizuko* is

usually taken to mean 'water child' or 'water baby' in accordance with the general meaning of the two characters with which the word is written. It may originally have referred to the bag of waters in the maternal womb whence the foetus originated. LaFleur (1992) translates *mizuko* as 'liquid baby', an original term which also appears in the title of his study on abortion and Buddhism in Japan.

An alternative theory refers to the manner in which the removed placenta / foetus during the pre-industrial era reputedly was set afloat on available waterways on top of bundles of bamboo leaves, thus creating a 'water child' (Terauchi, 1984: 95). Other explanations turn on the word 'mizu' ('not seeing') which is homophonous with the Japanese word for 'water' (mizu). According to this interpretation, *mizuko* can also mean 'unseeing child', a child who 'neither sees the light of day nor its mother's face' (Coleman, 1984:60). The quotation alludes to the rhetorical figure of speech which refers to an aborted foetus as a life form (seimei) that moves "from darkness to darkness" (yami kara yami e) "without seeing the light of the sun" (yo no me o mizu ni). Abbot Miura of Enman-in temple in Kansai near Lake Biwa defines *mizuko* as a foetus (*taiji*) that has been aborted either naturally or by medical means before birth (Miura, 2002b). He also points out that since most contemporary mizuko are the result of an induced abortion, to many people the word is synonymous with an aborted foetus. Ohnuki-Thierny (1984:78-81), for instance, consistently translates *mizuko* as 'aborted foetus' in her work. This could be misleading since it unnecessarily excludes other infant deaths from the definition.

From the above it should be evident that the conceptual area covered by the word *mizuko* is wide and rather imprecise as it simultaneously may refer to the body of a prematurely dead infant, a stillborn child, as well as the foetus from an abortion, whether induced or the result of natural causes. This has prompted Coleman (1983:67) to observe that:

[T]here is considerable symbolic confounding of foetuses, infants, and children. A 1968 survey...reflects the lack of one widely accepted definition of human life that categorises the foetus as a non-person.

However, the vagueness of the term should not be taken to mean that the average Japanese cannot make a distinction between the different phases of prenatal, neonatal, and postnatal development. Apart from the unrefined expression of *ko o orosu* (to 'let [a] child down/off', i.e. to have an abortion), specific terms describing how a pregnancy terminates are readily available: *shisan* (stillborn); *ryûsan* (miscarriage); *ninshin-chûzetsu* or *datai* (induced abortion), and, finally, if induced illegally *dataizai* (crime of induced abortion). Yet these words only occur when clinical precision is of the essence and judging from the comprehensive use of *mizuko*, or its variant *mizugo*, it appears that the need for making this distinction under normal circumstances is not strongly felt.

I personally prefer Tanabe's (1998:377) definition which says that "*mizuko* is best explained as foetuses, infants, and young children who die from a number of causes, only one of which is abortion"; babies, in other words, "who die in miscarriage, aborted babies, stillborn babies, babies who die a short while after birth and the victims of infanticide" (Brooks, 181:119). So while bearing in mind that there is no fixed definition of *mizuko*, I shall use these broad definitions that have the advantage of being all-inclusive rather than being narrowly focused on one single aspect of infant mortality.

According to Terauchi (1984:93), the term *mizuko* became almost obsolete in the immediate post-war era. Infant deaths, which previously had been entered in temple registers (*kakochô*) were now left unrecorded, he says, as more and more people gave birth in hospitals where stillbirths and dead foetuses were clinically disposed of. Until the time of the great 'mizuko-boom' in the late 1960s and early 1970s, an association named *Hôi-kaisha* ('placenta corporation') collected these remains and had them cremated (Brooks, 1981: 119-20, 141).

In the following I propose to deal with *mizuko*, *mizuko kuyô* and *Mizuko-Jizô* in separate sections but a certain degree of repetition cannot be avoided since each of the three elements belongs to a composite whole. Further, since the discussion frequently will deal with abortions, an issue that many regard as contentious, ethical considerations about *mizuko* cannot be completely ignored. It goes without saying that the first of the five precepts *(gokai)* for the Buddhist laity, i.e. the

injunctions against the taking of life (fusesshô), has a direct bearing on any ethical perception of mizuko in so far as it refers to induced abortions (Inagaki, 1992:74). However, much has been written about this already (LaFleur, 1990; Florida, 1991) so I shall not treat this particular aspect in great detail. Suffice it to say that there are certain obvious limitations to any argument about the absolute "sanctity of life" in a country like Japan, Buddhist or otherwise, which has capital punishment as part of its penal code.

As for the ethical position of $Jiz\hat{o}$ in the context of abortion, I believe that it is guided by principles that justify an emphasis on his compassion (jihi; Skt. Maitrî) rather than moral absolutes. The morality of abortions per se does not fall under the purview of $Jiz\hat{o}$. Before the occurrence of an abortion, which is the moment in time where the moral issue of affirmation or negation has to be decided, his role is to guard and protect the wellbeing of the prospective mother. His function is not that of a spiritual guru who tells people what to do. As Burke (2001:20) reminds us "the object of Buddhism is not to impose behaviour upon others, but to enlighten individuals on such issues so that choices can be made freely but wisely". Seen from this perspective, *Jizô* in his role as *Mizuko-Jizô* can be regarded as someone who comforts those who have suffered the loss of a child while he also offers succour to those who have experienced or committed acts with which they find it difficult to come to terms. Thus he has also come to play an important role in *mizuko kuyô* both in its generic and individualised manifestations (Mutô, 1983: 115; Hoshino & Takeda, 1993:178). For this reason I concentrate on Jizô's functional relationship with *mizuko* and the role he plays in the *mizuko* rites, not the moral dimension of abortion.

The development of the iconographically new *Mizuko-Jizô* statues and the eponymous figurines is closely related to the ritualistic structure given to the new *mizuko* rites. These statues and figurines may be encountered in different, but closely associated situations. Large *Mizuko-Jizô* may appear in temple compounds, erected for the purpose of collective worship. Smaller statues are also seen within the confines of family graves as part of the ensemble of ancestral tomb-stones and the classic five-storied memorial pagoda (*gorin-no-tô*). A *mizuko* commemorated in this manner is almost without exception an infant who has died prematurely, not

an aborted foetus. Yet one may also encounter small *Mizuko-Jizô* figurines, sold as part of the official *mizuko kuyô*, which are put up in areas dedicated to this purpose. Individuals who want to commemorate a *mizuko* without any involvement by the religious establishment may also use similar miniature figure. In these instances the small *Mizuko-Jizô* is placed outdoors in areas that frequently bear the name *Sai-no-kawara*, a mythological location that is thought of as the boundary area between this world and the next. Here the spirits of deceased infants are welcomed by *Jizô* in his capacity as the "bodhisattva who protects the children who could not be born *(umarete korarenakatta)* into this world" (Jôanji, 2004) or as the protector of the very young.

2.1.2. Prayers and Rituals

At this point it might be helpful to introduce the Japanese terminology for different modes of prayers. By a slightly different definition of the nature of prayer, the two Weberian forms of "divine worship" (1965:26-8) have become three. According to Yamaori (1995:203-4), the renowned Buddhologist, prayers can be divided into three separate categories: unselfish prayers in praise of a transcendental entity which are called *inori*; prayers whose aim it is to obtain immediate or future benefits for oneself termed kitô; and finally, kuyô which are the prayers said for the benefit of someone else, usually in the form of memorial services. Kuyô can also be offered to the spirits of slaughtered animals and as a way of expressing gratitude to worn-out articles and toys. These modes of worship cut across religious and sectarian boundaries and can apply to both Buddhist and Shinto practices. *Kitô* and *kuyô* are also used to define both the prayers and the accompanying rituals that are usually performed by a priest, either in private or in public. Inori, on the other hand, will frequently consist of nothing more than bowing one's head, putting the palms of one's hands together (gasshô) in front of a religious icon. One may also utter one of the traditional mantras (namu amida butsu or namu hyôrenge-kyô) one or more times (see section 6.3.3).

Some form of purification and offering is required before all prayers of petition. There is however a distinction between "offerings made before praying and donations made after a request has been granted. The offerings *(sonaemono)* are little gifts for the kami or hotoke [Buddhist divinity]. The donations are usually

made to commemorate the fulfilment of a vow or granting a prayer, by the person who benefited from it" (Kanzaki, 2000:22). Since many prayers and religious rituals have an instrumental functional, petitioners make an effort to get the components rights. This knowledge is usually acquired through a 'look and learn' process (minarau) where skills are transmitted "through demonstration and minute imitation, rather than by explanation and formal teaching" (Hendry, 1996:170). The result is frequently the kind of ritual which Catherine Bell (1992:19) describes as a "routinized, habitual, obsessive, or mimetic [action], and therefore purely formal, secondary, and the mere physical expression of logically prior ideas". This assessment in no way invalidates rituals. As Hubbard (1992:10-11) remarked in his paper about religious doctrine in Japan that although it is likely that "the vast majority of participants in the ritual and institutional life of tradition have no knowledge of the often complex explicatory apparatus that develops around them", it does not automatically follow that these beliefs and practices are without institutional direction and foundation. What is really surprising is the exceptional variety of symbols and means employed to communicate religious ideas in Japan (Ito, 1997:14), a phenomenon I deal with in sections 3.7, 5.1.0, 6.1.2, and 6.3.3.

II. Mizuko Kuyô.

2.2.0. Sponsors and Performers of Mizuko Kuyô

Although *mizuko kuyô* is closely related to the customary memorialisation rites performed for the dead (*tsuizen-kuyô*), some differences are worthy of note. One aspect of *mizuko kuyô*, for instance, when compared with the general memorialisation rites for the dead is the reversal of roles. Normally children will perform the memorial rites for their parents but in *mizuko kuyô* the spirit of the foetus/dead infant becomes the recipient of the rite instead of being its donor. Further, comonly the rituals meant to soothe a dead person's spirit take place within a period of either thirty-three or forty-nine days after that person's demise (Inokuchi, 2001: 181). These formalities are usually taken care of by the temple with which the deceased was affiliated. This is not so in the case of *mizuko kuyô*. The fact that there is no corpse to bury in the case of an abortion induced *mizuko* (Brooks, 1981:121) means that the first *mizuko kuyô* can take place whenever it is convenient and the literature abounds with examples where the rites occur long after the event which produced a *mizuko* (Earhart, 1989:60).

Opinions differ as to the authenticity of *mizuko kuyô* as a Buddhist ritual. Some even go so far as to call *mizuko kuyô* a clerical invention (Werblowsky, 1991:324). To many observers, myself included, these objections have little meaning given the fact that the question of 'authenticity' in a religious context is notoriously problematic. Tradition, after all, is a practice that was invented at one point or another. The *kuyô* rite is a case in point: it has departed so much from its original meaning as a gift to monks returning from their summer retreats, that today it has come to mean almost any ritualistic expression of memorialisation or gratitude (Inagaki, 1992:198).

Be that as it may, it is undeniable that the Buddhist establishment has successfully instituted a spiritual ritual that caters for individual as well as for generic and pluralistic needs. As a result, for many people today, *mizuko kuyô* has come to mean a religious ritual with an officiating priest (Terauchi, 1984:93; Coleman, 183:60; Mochizuki et al., 1974:211-216; asahi/hakken, p.3). As we shall see later, there are many exceptions to this and some people prefer to manage these rites on their own or to participate in them only from a certain distance. What most commentators do agree on is the central position of *Jizô* in these rites. Of all the bodhisattvas, he is the only one who "is associated with the all the six worlds, being present in each simultaneously" (Smith, 1992:80).

Today various individual and semi-official practices of offering $kuy\hat{o}$ and erecting statues have been united in "a structured memorial rite" (Brooks, 1981:120) that is carried out by the Buddhist establishment either for the individual mizuko or for mizuko in general. In conjunction with the rites for a specific mizuko, Mizuko- $Jiz\hat{o}$ statuettes, or in some instances memorial tablets (mizuko-ihai), have become popular as part of the ceremony (see section 2.3.0). The incorporation of these iconic paraphernalia into the $kuy\hat{o}$ gives mizuko $kuy\hat{o}$ a different slant from the traditional ancestral memorial rites. The statuettes and ihai are normally maintained in the temple where they are purchased. As a result of the $kuy\hat{o}$, their essence has been altered and they have turned into religious icons with a 'spirit' (reikon). To outsiders, the tangible manifestation of the miniature $Jiz\hat{o}$ figures and the special ihai represents one of the most conspicuous sides of mizuko $kuy\hat{o}$, if only because of their high visibility and the vast numbers in which they appear. In

2003 in the basement below the huge *mizuko* tower in the headquarters of one of the more recent religious sects, Bentenshû in Osaka, I personally counted close to sixty thousand commemorative *mizuko ihai*.

In the following sections about *mizuko kuyô* it is worthwhile to bear in mind that, apart from the priest, the people present are not expected to play an active role in the rituals. They are usually passive spectators. In theory it does not matter whether a supplicant is present or not when a Buddhist service is being carried out. It is, as the *Jizô Hongan-kyô* writes, meritorious to do a good deed that is no larger than "one strand of hair, one mote of dust, or a drop of water" (Hua, 1974:197) and sponsoring a holy ritual goes far beyond these minimal demands. The number of *kuyô* and how a deceased person or aborted foetus is commemorated, on the other hand, are important issues since the expenses have to be born by those who request the rituals. The nature of the scriptures chanted on the occasion, will depend very much on a given temple's denominational affiliation. These fees are not uniform but they appear to lie between \(\frac{1}{2}\),000 and \(\frac{1}{2}\),000 (\(\frac{1}{2}\) AUD. is approximately \(\frac{1}{2}\)100). Further expenses, as the Yokohama based Buddhist Consultation Centre advises (Bukkyô Sôdan Sentaa, 2002), hinge on the purchase of material objects with which the deceased is memorialised.

2.2.1. The Liturgical Text Used In Mizuko Kuyô

The scriptures used during *mizuko kuyô* vary greatly. Although, strictly speaking, the *Jizô Wasan*, i.e. a hymn in praise of *Jizô*, cannot be classified as a canonical text, its haunting lines about the suffering of deceased children and how *Jizô* comes to their aid makes it a natural liturgical choice in this context, an observation which is confirmed by Brooks (1981:123) and Chow (2003). Yet one may say that the scriptures used in the *mizuko* ritual are largely identical to those used in the traditional burial and memorial rites that include the traditional Buddhist ritualistic objects such as incense, gongs, etc. But the lack of a fixed canonical basis makes the protocol of rites very flexible. As pointed out earlier, sectarian affiliation will have an impact on the nature of the scriptures used. Followers of the Zen sect, for instance, use the 'Kannon Sutra', and, as one might expect, the various 'Lotus Sects' (*Hokke-shû*) will invariably use passages from the Lotus Sutra. Anderson and Martin (1997:123) report the chanting of passages from the

'Parable Chapter' which famously likens existence in three realms of transmigration (sangai) to a house on fire (sangai kataku). Chapter XVI in the same text, which preaches the eternal nature of the Tathâgata, is also frequently used. The 'Heart Sutra' (Hanya Shingyô) enjoys cross-sectarian appeal and popularity. For centuries this short sutra has been revered for its magical properties and its brevity is such that the meritorious act of writing out a copy by hand is a manageable task. Enman-in uses it extensively (Hardacre, 1997:183; Earhart, 1989:261). The 'Pure Land Sect' (Jôdo-shû) uses some tracts written by Hônen, its Japanese founder, as well as passages from the 'Amida Sutra' with its promises of salvation and rebirth in the 'Pure Land' (Fukuhara, 1994:167).

In 2002 Chow attended a public *mizuko kuyô*, which she describes as follows:

On the third day of May each year, Miidera performs this ritual for a fee of \(\frac{\pmathbf{\frac{4}}}{3},000\). Before the process began, women came with their families to register and pay to attend the service. Many headed into the incense-filled inner room of the temple and picked up a \(Jiz\hat{0}\)-wasan before sitting down. The ringing of the bell signalled the beginning of the ritual and six male priests entered the room. They chanted the "Heart Sutra" for approximately forty minutes before the participants recited the ...Jiz\hat{0}\)-wasan along with the priests...The ceremony was closed with the abbot of the temple making a short speech explaining the importance of the ritual in helping the souls that are lost in darkness, exonerating the guilt of those who come with a heavy heart of regret...He also thanked everyone for participating in the service (Chow: 2003:21-2).

Some temples conduct their rites in accordance with the *segaki-e* ritual. This is a special *kuyô* for the benefit of 'hungry ghosts' and originally performed around the time of *Obon* to pacify 'unattached spirits' (*muenrei*), so called because they are without descendants to perform the proper ancestral rites. Yet regardless of the religious affiliation of the scriptures chanted and the nature of the sacred objects employed, the ultimate goal is to obtain a "transfer of merit arising from the recitation of the liturgy, rather than through the response of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas" (Robinson, 1993:326). All actions performed for the benefit of the dead can be subsumed under the term *ekô*, which can be translated as an "act of dedication" or "benevolent acts" (Bukkyô Sôdan Sentaa, 2002; asahi/kuyo, 2002; Hardacre, 1997:170-184; Hoshino & Takeda, 1993:176; Anesaki, 1961:69-71).

A fairly low-key involvement with *mizuko kuyô* may follow the pattern outlined below. During a visit to Jizô-in Zen temple in Kyoto's picturesque Arashiyama district in the late 1990s, I became aware of a notice on the wall that explained that the temple performed memorialisation rituals for ancestors, dead friends and relatives, as well as *mizuko*. Visitors were asked to write down the real name or the posthumous name (*kaimyô*) of the person on whose behalf they wanted the memorialisation rites or *mizuko kuyô* to be conducted. For this purpose the temple had provided a *jizô-fuda* (a small piece of white paper with a black outline shaped like an *ihai*, the traditional ancestral tablet, which was crowned by a seated *Jizô* figure). Supplicants were asked to place their completed *fuda* in a special box within the temple together with ¥2,000 for each spirit that was to be commemorated.

This interchange between priest and supplicant(s) obviously operated on a basis of trust and the question of personal contacts was never mentioned. There was no reference to the specific days on which the temple normally perform $kuy\hat{o}$, nor was the length of time spent on the ritual itself mentioned, so I asked those questions of the caretaker priest on my way out. The 'Kannon Sutra', i.e. the last chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he explained, was used for all the temple's weekly memorialisation rituals, regardless of whether the deceased belonged to the ancestor category, had been a spouse or was a *mizuko*. All *hotoke* (i.e. dead people) were treated equally and separate services were not conducted for the different categories of death.

In other temples there is no need to ask since information is readily provided. Some even explain in great detail how they conduct their memorialisation services. The monthly *mizuko kuyô* services that Anderson and Martin (1997: 123) have investigated lasted for about an hour. Renge-in temple, which I shall return to below, informs us that their dedicated *mizuko kuyô* is of approximately twenty minutes' duration, and the Hasedera temple website says that sutras are being read continuously every day as part of the temple's *kuyô* practice for the many *Mizuko-Jizô* the temple has enshrined. On the other hand, no information about the length of the privately commissioned rite is provided (Hasedera/kuyouannai, 2003; Renge-in, 2002).

2.2.2. Diverging Perceptions of Mizuko Kuyô

It is instructive to see how *mizuko kuyô* perceptions differ, depending on who is doing the assessment. Shiunzan Jizô temple, for instance, has been the target of much negative criticism because of the vigorous and very open way it promotes its *mizuko* memorial services. When in the early 1990s LaFleur used a publication from this very temple to illustrate the nature of the Japanese *mizuko kuyô* practices, Shiunzan became known outside Japan. It acquired a certain degree of notoriety in American feminist circles even if its literature as such does not differ greatly from that of other institutions promoting identical rites (LaFleur, 1992: 221-2). Notwithstanding the negative reactions and in some instances outright hostility towards this temple for what it has come to represent, the local tourist association sees Shiunzan's activities in a very different light. The association promotes the temple as a place of topical interest and worthy of a visit:

Shiunzan Jizô-Ji Temple is noted for its service for the soul of "mizuko" (stillborn babies), and is also known as Mizuko Jizô-Ji Temple. In the temple there are more than 13,000 sculptures of the guardian deity for the "mizuko", which are called "mizuko jizô". Every year in August the Urabon-e Ceremony (a Buddhist ceremony to pray for the repose of ancestors' souls) is held and candles are lit for each "mizuko jizô" (Ogano Town Tourist Association, n.d).

Through the entire length of the Japanese archipelago, temple after temple advertises its *mizuko* memorialisation services accompanied by exhortations to sponsor the performance of these rites. Not all of these notices, it must be said, are deemed to be in good taste, prompting one scholar to brand this form of advertising as "kuyô propaganda" (Werblowsky, 1991:322). These advertisements appear in the printed media, on posters and notices in public places, and on banners within temple precincts. In addition to this, numerous temple websites also list *mizuko kuyô* as one of the religious rituals they offer for the benefit of the public. Enman-in temple is very active in this connection, claiming that it holds more *mizuko kuyô* than any other temple in Japan (www. enmanin.jp/mizuko/). It specialises in the performance of virtual *mizuko kuyô* that can be followed over the internet on a computer screen in the comfort of one's home. Referring to their virtual services, their internet advertisement in 2002 explains that every day at the same times, sutras will be read by a priest "so even while you are in your own

home you can fold your hands [in prayer] while facing the memorial tablet of your *mizuko*" (izu.co.jp/~ enman/ihai.htm).

In the beginning of 2003 I saw a notice on a large signboard above one of the many gates to the well-known Tôji temple near Kyoto station, which was and is emblematic of the many visible reminders of *mizuko kuyô* in the country. "Let's at least perform a *kuyô*", it said in a line written over the four large kanji for *mizuko kuyô*. Below this, the word *jizôson* (Venerable *Jizô*) appeared together with the cryptic phrase "if you had been born...". Next to the notice an arrow pointed in the direction of a *Mizuko-Jizô* shrine (see Appendix I). This openness may lead one to conclude that the rite in its present form is generally accepted, but this is not necessarily the case.

There is a "great deal of ambivalence toward the issue of abortion on the part of the Buddhist clergy" (LaFleur, 1995:41). *Jôdo Shinshû* (New Pure Land Sect), for instance, is not only opposed to abortion; it also rejects the practice of *mizuko kuyô* (Hardacre, 1997:191; Bloom, 2000; LaFleur, 2002; Bukkyô Sôdan Sentâ, 2002). However, this opposition should be seen in the light of Jôdo Shinshû doctrine, according to which salvation depends on the individual's total reliance on *Amida Buddha*, expressed in the recitation of his name (*nembutsu*) and an unquestioning belief in his 'original vows' (*hongan*). The eighteenth vow in particular is interpreted as a firm promise for rebirth to all believers in The Pure Land, the paradise where Amida resides (Anesaki, 1968:182-4). For this reason the sect also rejects the doctrine of *ekô* which states that religious merits obtained by the chanting of sutras and other devout activities can be transferred to the dead so that they may rest in peace (Inagaki, 1992:43-4; Ono et al., 1986:45). Accepting this doctrine would imply doubt about the intentions and reliability of Amida.

To conclude, the words *mizuko kuyô* appear in the public domain with such frequency that it is difficult to brush the ritual aside as a socially derided activity, performed and engaged in by dubious religionists as Hardacre (1997:191) and Werblowsky (1991:320) suggest. One may find the practice disagreeable yet it will not do to lose sight of the fact that *mizuko kuyô* is performed by some of the major and most respected temples in the country. Nevertheless, Hardacre (1997:

247) is scathing in her rejection of *mizuko kuyô* and she condemns any association with abortion in its Japanese manifestation as distasteful. She furthermore is very critical of temples for their perceived "passive and reactive" attitude when it comes to *mizuko kuyô*. In Japan itself, *Seichô no Ie*, described as a religious group with strong nationalistic tendencies and syncretic beliefs (McFarland, 1970:145-172), has consistently been against any legislation facilitating abortion. It is adamant in its insistence on the "sanctity of life" *(seimei no tôtosa)* and that we are all god's children *(kami no ko)*, a message that is repeatedly emphasized on its online homepage (Norgren: 2001:56-67; http://www.sni.or.jp/fac/04/index.html).

2.2.3. Mizuko Kuyô and the Internet - The Background

The notice from *Jizô-in* quoted above alludes to the factors that separate the mizuko kuyô paradigm from the customary memorialisation rites. Kuyô for the dead is normally considered a praiseworthy act and there is no need for surreptitious behaviour when remembering and honouring the ancestral dead. Mizuko kuyô, on the other hand, is frequently carried out in an atmosphere of secrecy. The reluctance, if not outright refusal, by some temples to perform mizuko kuyô if it is for the benefit of an aborted foetus underlines the perceived difference between mizuko kuyô and tsuizen kuyô, the memorialisation rituals for the dead in general (LaFleur, 1995:187-8; Hardacre, 1997:92). Nevertheless, numerous temples, as mentioned above, perform *mizuko kuyô* at fixed intervals for all generic *mizuko* without any attempt at concealment. Privately requested *mizuko* rites, on the other hand, are frequently characterised by deliberate attempts to keep them hidden from the outside world. This has prompted Anderson and Martin (1997:138) to speculate that "non-family temples are chosen for mizuko kuyô in the interest of greater anonymity" and the almost universal guarantee given by most temples to keep secret the identity of the person(s) requesting *mizuko kuyô* seems to substantiate this.

This strain comes to the surface in unexpected places. Normally one can only guess at a person's motivation for praying to a religious icon or participating in a religious rite. However, this is not the case with a *mizuko kuyô* or prayers in front of a *Mizuko-Jizô*. Here worshippers run the risk of turning a private act into a public statement that identifies them as someone who, for whatever reason, did not

go full term with a pregnancy or whose confinement was unsuccessful. It is not difficult to imagine that this involuntary revelation is a cause for anxiety in cases where someone is trying to come to terms with a personal experience of an unsettling nature. Such tension between public and private comes to the fore in the following notice which I first saw in the summer of 1995 near an outdoor *Mizuko-Jizô* statue in Adashino Nembutsu temple in Kyoto's north-west. It said:

- the public is prohibited from harassing (*meiwaku o kakeru*) the worshippers of *Mizuko-Jizô* and must refrain from the following activities:
- noisy conduct,
- the carrying out of surveys and request for interviews [with the worshippers],
- the making of videos and/or audio recordings, or the taking of photographs [of the worshippers].

A desire for privacy together with the previously mentioned reluctance by some sects to conduct *mizuko kuyô* may make it necessary for some to look for a temple with which they normally have no links, a fact which has not gone unnoticed. A host of temples now offers *mizuko kuyô* accompanied by guarantees to guard the identity of the person(s) requesting the rites. Frequently these services are also advertised on the internet. In its information pamphlet *Enman-ji* in Osaka, for instance, (not to be confused with *Enman-in* in Ohtsu), makes a virtue of the fact that anyone can commission a *mizuko kuyô* in the temple regardless of this individual's sectarian association (www.enmanji.com/soudan.jiin.html).

2.2.4. General Outline of Virtual Rituals and the Providers of Spiritual Comfort With the general popularity and easy access to the internet in Japan, many obstacles to the protection of one's personal identity have been removed. The lack of personal contact in online communication, which many regard as a serious disadvantage, actually works in favour of those who want to protect their privacy. It is no longer necessary to make face-to-face inquiries or even to speak to someone over the phone about mizuko kuyô arrangements. One can, for instance, access a site called 'Mizuko Kuyou Online' which solicits narratives from women who have had an abortion. In exchange for talking about their individual and personal experiences (taikendan), the participating women are assured individual counsel-

ling. This pledge is spelled out below a banner with the following legend in English: "Mama please do not suffer for me" (http://www.mizukokuyou.jp).

'Sad Things', another Japanese website (www.kanashiikoto.com/issues), also mentioned by Komatsu (2003:260), operates a webpage with an excess of information about gynaecological issues, in particular those related to birth and abortion. There are links to clinics that perform abortions together with warnings about the possibility of post-operative physical discomforts. A 'chat-room' makes it possible for people to talk about their own abortion and to read about the experience of others. There are also scholarly essays about the history and nature of *mizuko kuyô*, which can be downloaded. The website does acknowledge, however, that many people have a need for religious rites when faced with the dilemma of abortion, but it points out that there is no compulsion, neither legally nor religiously, to perform *mizuko kuyô*. Nevertheless, in line with the general non-judgmental and informative character of the webpage, kanashiikoto.com also supplies web links to temples that offer *mizuko kuyô* with the caveat that *mizuko kuyô* fees and rituals may differ considerably from temple to temple.

Renge-in in Gumma prefecture is one of those temples that offer online *mizuko* kuyô to the public. It used to have a five-page information pamphlet on its website about *mizuko kuyô* (Renge-in, 2002). Recently the contents of its website have changed and the copious references to *mizuko* have been scaled down dramatically (Renge-in, 2004). I am almost certain that the exorbitant fees (¥18,000, approx. \$180 AUD) the temple demanded and still demands are related to this. The great extent to which the temple went in the original text to assure prospective worshippers of absolute confidentiality first made me aware of the issue of confidentiality between temples and those requesting memorialisation rites for *mizuko*. Renge-in repeatedly assured that no questions of a private nature would ever be asked, that no records of the *mizuko kuyô* performance and of those who requested it would be kept. And, furthermore, no one was not required to identify him or herself. In all dealings with the temple the privacy of the individual would be respected and the temple was perfectly happy with the usage of pseudonyms. It was even possible to request a secret mizuko kuyô, which would be conducted in such a way that no one would ever know that the rituals had taken place.

Subsequent research confirmed that these guarantees still are standard practice, shared by almost all net providers of *mizuko kuyô*.

On the temple's homepage there was a picture of the temple's 'Mizuko Hall' (*mizuko-dô*) with a caption which promised that the place would never run out of flowers and toys [for the entertainment of the infant spirits]. Immediately below the *mizuko-dô* there was a row of five 'Infantile Jizô' (*Warabe-Jizô*) with closed eyes who bore an uncanny resemblance to embryos. Subsequent pages contained practical Q&A information about what preparations potential supplicants had to make for a *mizuko kuyô*; what to wear if one decided to attend in person; and even where to park one's car.

As for the *mizuko kuyô* proper, it would take place in the temple's main hall (hondô), lasting approximately twenty minutes. Although the information contained guidelines for those who wanted to attend the ceremony in person, on reading the advertisement, one got the impression that the temple did not expect the sponsors to be present during the rites. If they were, they would be asked to place a *sotoba*, a simplified wooden slat of a *gorintô* (stupa image) in the *mizuko-dô*. In those instances when the priest conducted the rites alone, he would transfer the *sotoba* himself. The text on the *sotoba* would be written before the ceremony, containing information about the day of the *mizuko's* demise and its name, if any. Since the Taishô era (1912-1925) appeared in the column for the date of death, it was clear that the temple was prepared to conduct *mizuko kuyô* not just for recent *mizuko* but also for those that had occurred within past generations. The last columns in the application form asked if the supplicant(s) had any message they would like to convey to the *mizuko* (*mizuko ni tsutaetai koto*). This is a topic I shall return to later (see section 2.2.5. below).

Enman-in in Ohtsu is one of the largest, if not the largest online temple which specialises in virtual *mizuko kuyô*. It has a website which provides a wealth of regularly updated information about its services and is the proprietor of the most elaborate virtual setup I have come across. It appears to be the ideal site for those who dislike high fees, the completion of complicated forms, and dealing directly with priests. The activities of this temple have been researched in great detail by

Hardacre (1997:174-181) and there is no need to repeat her findings here. For comparative reasons I have chosen other temples which conduct virtual *mizuko kuyô* in different ways.

An'yô-ji temple on Izu Peninsular (An'yô-ji, 2004) is one such place. It introduces itself with a brief outline of its sectarian affiliation (Jôdo-shû), its foundation history, and where it is located. A charming photo on its homepage with a splendid view of Mt. Fuji in the distance gives an indication of the scenic setting of the temple. The services provided are in principle not very different from those of many other temples, and privacy is guaranteed as a matter of course although the modest size of the place may suggest a certain degree of simple rusticity and less sophistication than what is found elsewhere. But in essence the temple attempts to do the same thing as the previously mentioned Enman-in and other temples in the same category. In place of a large virtual setup, this temple provides an 'internet prayer camera' (intânetto omairi kamera) on its homepage which is focused on an image of Mizuko-Jizô which appears to be within the temple precincts. People are encouraged to access this image on their PCs, to put their palms together and to offer prayers in its direction at fixed intervals.

A flow chart on its webpage, made up of simple and easily understood drawings, illustrates the *mizuko kuyô* procedure of the temple, a process which is set into motion when a fixed sum of money is paid into a designated account. One drawing shows a cheerful looking young woman seated next to a mobile phone and a PC. Behind her some faintly visible writing mimics the phrases that a mother presumably would use when addressing a child. Sentiments of maternal love are also expressed as are the opening lines of what appears to be a letter with the beginning of an explanation. The words 'gomen nasai', a standard expression of apology, are likewise legible. The meaning of this becomes more evident as one moves on (Appendix I).

After having received the memorialisation fee (kuyô-ryô), the temple will issue two specially consecrated charms (o-mamori-fuda) wrapped in separate envelopes, one for the mother and one for the akachan (baby), the terminology used here when referring to the mizuko. The envelope destined for 'the baby in heaven'

(tengoku no akachan) will also include a heartfelt (omoi o kometa) message. This message, which is in the form of a letter purporting to be from the "mother", is reproduced on the webpage in an illegible handwriting. The envelope addressed to the "baby in heaven" is kept in a special "box made of paulownia wood" where it will remain till the day of the mizuko kuyô. The other envelope will be sent to the mother of the mizuko but, the temple writes, it does not really matter if the mother declines to receive her o-mamori-fuda. The ritual performed in the temple will ensure that her feelings reach the akachan in heaven (ibid).

The exact time and date of the *mizuko kuyô* will be posted on An'yô-ji's webpage so that supplicants can prepare themselves for the occasion. During the actual performance of the *mizuko kuyô*, the supplicants are encouraged to access the image of *Mizuko-Jizô* on the 'internet prayer camera' and join in with prayers or the chanting of the *Jizô* mantra. According to the drawing on the flow chart, a youthful *Mizuko-Jizô* will emerge from the hall once the *kuyô* is over. Again the viewer is presented with a cheerful expression, this time on the face of *Mizuko-Jizô*, who from now on, the caption explains, will be infused with the spirit of the *akachan* as a result of the ritual conducted by the priest. In other words, the temple seems to say that the *mizuko* spirit and *Mizuko-Jizô* are now one (An'yô-ji, 2004).

2.2.5. Letters to Jizô and the Mizuko Spirits

Reader (1991a:24) has pointed out how thin the dividing line often is between *ema*, the wooden plaque that traditionally is used when supplicating the gods, and the form of communication normally associated with letter writing. In a Japanese context, letters to the gods are not so unusual. *Nurikobe-Jizô* in Kyoto's Fushimi district yearly receives postcards from all over the country from people who request him to cure them of their tooth aches (Takemura, 1994:133). Communications with *mizuko*, however, are unique in that the writer addresses the *mizuko* directly and, apart from an occasional expression of regret, she does not request anything for herself (Reader, 1991a:39). In some locations these messages have been left behind in the form of entries in a visitors' notebook (Kobayashi, 1979:19 quoted in Brooks, 1981:122).

Some temples have gone beyond communications in the form of notebook entries. They have actually what can only be called a spiritual mail service. Hôrin-in, for instance, a Zen temple in Ibaragi prefecture, has a web page that encourages people to mail letters to 'their' *mizuko (mizuko e o-tegami)* which the temple subsequently promises to pass on (www.Hourin.or.jp, 2004). The delivery of these letters to the temple can be by hand, by e-mail or through the normal postal channels. Having arrived at the temple, these letters will be placed in a letterbox in front of the temple's *Mizuko-Jizô* where they will remain till the end of the year. On the last day of the year, the temple will conduct a *kuyô* after which the accumulated *mizuko* letters will be burnt.

Enman-ji in Osaka (www.wnmanji.com/soudan/sessge.html, 2004) also encourages people to write *mizuko* letters. For those who are in doubt as to what one should write to a *mizuko*, the temple offers a few suggestions. One could for instance write about one's regrets, talk about one's feelings and emotions, or just give an account of the various events happening in one's everyday life.

All mizuko letters received are incorporated into the Buddhist morning services $(gongy\hat{o})$, during which, the webpage explains, the intent of the letters is transmitted to $Jiz\hat{o}$. At the end of the ceremony these letters will be placed as offerings in front of $Jiz\hat{o}$. On the following day they will be replaced by more recent letters after which the letters from the previous day are burnt. These rituals ensure, the web text explains, that the extent of $Jiz\hat{o}$'s compassion is not limited to the children; the smoke from the offerings will fan out and reach the adult supplicants as well on whose hearts it will have a healing effect.

As we have grown to expect, in all instances the anonymity of the sender is guaranteed. No attempt, we are assured, will ever be made to contact the sender or to physically read the content of the letters, neither by the temple itself nor by any outsiders.

2.2.6. Mizuko Kuyô, the Establishment, the Net and the Individual
As in the case with so many other issues, the web caters for people of all persuasions. Kanashiikoto.com, mentioned above, was clear about the voluntary

nature of *mizuko kuyô*. But, at the other end of the spectrum, there are also sites that champion the cause of *mizuko kuyô* and not necessarily from any obvious financial motivations. They see it as their task to impress on people the need for these rituals to be performed, both for the good of the *mizuko* and for the benefit of those who initiate a *mizuko kuyô*.

'Sukuma' (http://www.sukuma.or.jp/sukuma/menu/mizuko.htm) is one such site. It tries to persuade people of the necessity of a *mizuko kuyô* by arguing that a *mizuko* is condemned to remain in darkness for as long as no *mizuko kuyô* is performed on its behalf. Only the ritual, and nothing else, can release the *mizuko* and ensure its rebirth. *Kairyu.com* is a site that considers the memorialisation rituals for the foetoid spirits so important that it actually promises to conduct *mizuko kuyô* on behalf of those who are unable to go to a temple or not in a position to request the rites themselves for whatever reason (http://kairyu.com/cgi_local/form). These promises are not accompanied by a request for money. The only requirement is that people sincerely want the rites to be performed in which case the appropriate sutra readings will be conducted by volunteers. The site emphasises, however, that the accumulation of merit (*kudoku*) for the benefit of the *mizuko* is something for which each individual is personally responsible. The gratis prayers can only assist with the process; they cannot complete it.

Another example is Kômyô-in temple (Kômyô-in, 2004) in Tokyo, which sets great store by the procedural correctness of the *mizuko kuyô* rites. In contrast to many other places where pragmatic attitudes seem to prevail, this temple is emphatic about the spiritual dimension of *mizuko kuyô*. Although the temple operates a mail order business with religious items, the advice is freely given and product advertisements are not directly linked to the *mizuko kuyô* page so the temple appears to be genuinely concerned that the ritual is being carried out correctly.

After a brief definition of *mizuko*, Kômyô-in temple highlights the moral responsibility of the "parents" toward the unborn foetus. Chanting sutras or paying a lot of money for the performance of rituals, it says, is not enough. Friends, relatives or parental substitutes, be they priests or not, cannot offer effective and sincere

apologies. Individual regret towards the unborn foetus must be expressed by those directly involved. After these words of caution, procedural considerations take over.

In the opinion of Kômyô-in, a *mizuko kuyô* properly performed by an individual should include the enshrinement of a Mizuko-Jizô in the domestic Buddhist altar (butsudan). For those who do not possess a regular butsudan, the purchase of a small one specially made for the *mizuko* in question is recommended. Since the nature of a *mizuko* is different from those who have spent some time on earth alive before they passed on, it should not be given an ancestral tablet (ihai) or posthumous Buddhist name (kaimyô). Instead, the explanation continues, Mizuko-Jizô will act as a substitute while looking after the *mizuko's* spirit. When placing Mizuko-Jizô, the mizuko surrogate, in the butsudan, one should introduce the newcomer to the spirits already enshrined in the altar. Since the status of the mizuko is low, the Mizuko-Jizô image should be placed below the other ancestral tablets already in the *butsudan*. Ideally speaking, the *Mizuko-Jizô* image should be carved in wood because of its warm qualities (nukumori o kanjiru mokubori) rather than the traditional materials of clay or metal. When making offerings on the butsudan, it is also advised that the spirits of the enshrined ancestors are reminded about the presence of the newcomer for the first week and that they be requested to share the offerings with the *mizuko*. Special offerings, which appeal to children, can also be given, but in either case it is important that the offerings are consumed by the living soon after the formal presentation to the spirits. And, finally, no day should go by without chanting the 'Heart Sutra' in front of the butsudan at least once. If at all possible, the text adds, one should endeavour to make handwritten copies of this text (shakyô), preferably a hundred times, as a way of showing one's regrets to the mizuko.

III. Mizuko Kuyô, Mizuko-Ihai and Mizuko Figurines

2.3.0. The Role of Jizô in Mizuko Kuyô

Official Buddhism may at times display an uneasy attitude towards women but on a more popular level there is a pervasive awareness of the suffering women must endure in order to give birth to a child. This ordeal is expressed in several proverbs. For instance, *san no ku wa aotake o mo kujiku* ('the pain of childbirth will

crush even a young bamboo'); *san wa seishi no sakai* ('childbirth is a borderline between life and death'); *san wa onna no taiyaku* ('childbirth is a woman's curse'), etc., (Kaneko, 1969:36).

The profound desire to alleviate this agony is reflected in the large number of Anzan-Jizô ('Safe Delivery Jizô') encountered all over the country. Previous generations had to endure life without the high clinical level of obstetric expertise that we benefit from today. Not supported by our technological advances in medicine, people relied on prayers, pious wishes and good luck to carry them through pregnancy. As women had the most to lose, it is no wonder that they in particular are credited with having many images made of the bodhisattva who provides hope during the difficult period of pregnancy (Takemura, 1994:144). Then as now, he is "the single most important figure in the drama of young children, infants, and unborn foetuses in Japanese Buddhist cosmology, and in ritual related to this" (Smith, 1992:80). Jizô's association with pregnant women, childbirth, infants and children is so strong that even Enman-in until recently had a large image of *Jizô* with emanating rays and aureole on its home page for its mizuko kuyô bookings in spite of this temple's overt preference for posthumous name tablets (ihai) rather than for Jizô figurines in these rituals (Miura, www.izu. co.jp/~enman/mizuko.htm, 2002).

In the Edo period (1600-1868 CE), generic *Jizô* statues would usually administer to the emotional need of grieving parents in infanticide (*mabiki*) and *mizuko* related matters. It is also during this time that people gradually begin to dedicate *Jizô* images and set them up on country roads in memory of infants who had met an unfortunate end as well as the victims of *mabiki* (Mochizuki et al., 1974:212). The emphasis of these practices appeared to be more on the *kuyô* than on the *mizuko*, something that notably set these practices apart from contemporary conventions. Deceased infants were not buried individually. Instead they were interred in the vicinity of or under a *Jizô* statue in "unpretentious mounds (*akago-zuka*) in the belief that they would be born again soon" (Kitagawa, 1966:84). Whereas these statues in the past would stand on their own, today it is not uncommon to see a *Mizuko-Jizô* occupy a place within the confines of family graves where they are placed next to the traditional tombstones and stupas. They are often carved in high

relief or in the round with the names of the donor engraved on the side or at the back. *Jizô* statues on family graves, however, normally commemorate a *mizuko* who came about by accident rather than by abortion.

Today the Buddhist establishment conduct *mizuko kuyô* both for the individual *mizuko* and for all *mizuko* in general with the ensuing erection of statues, where "Jizô remains the central figure" (Brooks, 1981:120). In conjunction with the rites for a personalised *mizuko*, *Mizuko-Jizô* statuettes, or in some instances *mizuko-ihai*, have become popular as part of the ceremony. The incorporation of these iconic paraphernalia in a *kuyô* for aborted foetuses gives *mizuko kuyô* a different slant from the traditional ancestral memorial rites. The purchased statuettes and *ihai* are normally maintained in the temple where they are sold. After the *kuyô*, they are no longer 'just' statues or figurines (Nishi-izu no o-tera, 2004). The ritual has altered their essence and they have turned into religious icons with a 'spirit' *(reikon)*, merging the abstract and the concrete.

2.3.1. Temple-based Mizuko Kuyô and the Ritualistic Treatment of Mizuko-Jizô When the mizuko kuyô is performed with a supplicant who is physically present, the procedure is usually more or less in agreement with the outline described in the section about Renge-in above but as is the case with most Buddhist services, the donor only participates in a passive role. The ritual aspect is dominated by the religious expertise of the priest. As one might expect, the fee structure depends not only on the opulence of the service but also whether Mizuko-Jizô statuettes or posthumous name tablets (ihai) are bought. Their purchase is voluntary but judging from the myriad mizuko-ihai, Mizuko-Jizô figurines and slats with posthumous names (sotoba) that crowd many temple precincts in Japan, the acquisition of a physical memento as part of the kuyô is very common.

Tatsue-ji temple in Yokohama, for instances, charges five thousand yen for a *mizuko kuyô* alone. An *ihai* costs ¥10,000 (approximately \$100 AUD), with an additional ¥2,000 if other names apart from the *kaimyô* are to be inscribed on the *sotoba* pro-vided by the temple (Tatsue-ji, 2004). However, in many places a small *Mizuko-Jizô* figure may replace the *sotoba* or the *ihai* with startling consequences: instead of easily managed rows of the wafer-thin *sotoba* placed in

special stands against the wall in a *mizuko-dô*, temples that offer *Mizuko-Jizô* figurines for sale often appear overwhelmed by the vast number of these minute figures within the temple precincts. Brooks (1981:125) seems to say that in the places enshrining large *Jizô* images "in memory of the collective aborted babies" there is a preference for the sale of small *Mizuko-Jizô* figures as opposed to the usage of inscribed *sotoba*. Personally I doubt whether it is possible to make such a clear-cut distinction.

Hasedera temple in Kamakura (www.hasedera.jp/kuyouannai.html, 2004), as part of its *mizuko kuyô*, offers an elaborate *sotoba* substitute, which is in fact a model pagoda carved in wood. It is called 'paradise pagoda' (*gokurakutô*) and can be bought for ¥3,000. Differently priced *Mizuko-Jizô* figurines are also provided: the smaller ones cost ¥10,000 apiece and the larger variety ¥20,000. In both instances the *mizuko kuyô* rites are included.

The price list includes an interesting explanation for the meaning of the figurines in the ritual. In order to establish a connection between the commemorated spirit and the *Mizuko-Jizô* statuette, the pamphlet says, the name of the supplicant is read aloud in front of the statuette after which a sutra chanting *kuyô* (*dokyô kuyô*) takes place. This act consecrates the *Mizuko-Jizô* and enables it to join the spiritual host of similar statuettes around the temple's *Jizô-dô*. Its proximity to this building will ensure that this *Mizuko-Jizô* is a beneficiary of the temple's daily sutra chanting rites. People are also encouraged to offer additional *kuyô* at those times of the year when memorial services customarily take place, i.e. death anniversaries, during Obon (the festival when ancestral spirits return to earth), and the yearly solstices.

In the same guidelines, Hasedera temple (*ibid:2004*) also informs the public that the *Mizuko-Jizô* thus purchased will be burnt after a period of two years. This provides a valuable clue about the way in which the nature of these *Mizuko-Jizô* is interpreted. Treating the *Mizuko-Jizô* like an object with spiritual or magical power of limited duration suggests that it is not considered as a religious figure *per se* since human hands should not willingly destroy religious icons. There may not be a universally accepted time frame for the burning of these *Mizuko-Jizô*, but the

statues are disposed of in a way that is similar to the treatment of magic charms that have become old and are believed to have lost their efficacy. The ritualistic burning of objects that have reached their use-by date is a common occurrence in Japan. These objects may have had a practical function, like needles, for instance, or they could have been ordinary toys, but amulets and talismanic cloth bags (o-mamori) are also dealt with in the same manner. Charms from the previous year are routinely burned when new ones are obtained from temples and shrines during the annual New Year visits. Enman-in even mentions the practical difficulty of maintaining large numbers of figurines so the Mizuko-Jizô burning may also solve some issues of space (www.izu.co.jp/~enman/ mizuko.htm, 2002). As a variant on the theme, Zimmerman (2002) reports that Zôjô-ji in Tokyo, another temple known for its mizuko kuyô, does not sell Mizuko-Jizô figurines outright: they are only rented for one year at a time.

2.3.2. Numbers of Mizuko-Jizô

Some of the most visible examples of *Mizuko-Jizô* figurines are to be found in urban temples where they often overwhelm the visitors by virtue of sheer quantity. But numerical inundation is not a temple prerogative. Several outdoor locations associated with the shadowy spirit world of dead infants also may operate as large-scale repositories for *Jizô* figurines. There is however a noticeable difference in the way in which the spatial placing is handled in the two locations. Established institutions tend to regulate and order the manner in which the small *Jizô* images are put up. They are usually placed in neat rows on tiered terraces or shelves. This practice is made easier by the fact that the statues purchased in temples usually come in uniform sizes. Once more the temple grounds of Hasedera are a case in point. Thousands of small *Mizuko-Jizô* are placed on the terraced steps around the temple's *Jizô* Hall but there are so many that 'One-thousand-Jizô' (*sentai jizô*), the general description for this kind of *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine congregation, appears like a contrived understatement.

Soon after entering the precincts of Hasedera, visitors will see a five-tiered terrace crowded with small figurines below which there is a large notice board with the full text of the *Jizô Sai-no-kawara Wasan*. Close by, there is a free-standing group of six *Jizô* figures symbolising the six realms of rebirth (*rokudô*; see above p.11)

carved out of a rock in high relief. This group is complemented by a much older and rare *Miroku*, *Jizô*, and *Shakamuni* triad a little further away which is carved in the same manner. Its arrangement gives plastic expression to a doctrinal point explained in the preface to the 'Jizô Sutra of Ten Wheels' (*Jizô-jyûrin-gyô*). According to this teaching, we live in an existential interval between two time frames, the past and the future. Standing in the middle, it is *Jizô's* task to look after all life forms in the present since the historical Buddha is no longer with us and the buddha of the future has yet to come (Iwano, 1978:18-9).

The large Jizô figure in the centre appears without his customary staff. Instead the palm of his right hand, extended outward, points to the ground in the *mudra* of giving (J. yogan-in or segan-in; S. varada-mudrâ) which signals the merciful aspect of *Jizô* and his "gift of truth" (Saunders, 1960:53; Matsushima, 1986:42-3). Shakamuni stands on his right and Miroku on his left side. The median position of Jizô emphasises his central role in the present, the 'buddha-less' interregnum, where he will assist all sentient beings until the ultimate arrival of Miroku, the symbol of the future, when all existence in its totality will obtain enlightenment. Incidentally, there is a large boulder in the Jûrin-ji temple in Nara with an identical triad in high relief. Freshly cut flowers in season are placed in front of most of the larger statues; the pathways are well swept; the many vigorously growing trees are carefully pruned. The surroundings would be pleasant were it not for the thousand little Mizuko-Jizô heads which lend the eye no rest. In one outdoor section of the temple a very large 'Longevity-Jizô' (Enmei Jizô) bronze figure with a halo is seated with its right leg resting on the left knee, the *âsana* prescribed by the *Enmei* Jizô Kyô ('Jizô Sutra of Longevity'). It towers over an area where the statues are thick on the ground. At first glance they all look alike but after a while it becomes evident that there are different representational styles. Identical types are grouped together in the same place where their regulated appearance almost resembles the formation of soldiers on parade (see Appendix I).

2.3.3. The Significance of Large Numbers

There is a long tradition in Buddhism of reproducing images and stupas on a grand scale and examples involving mind-boggling large numbers are very common. In the first chapter of 'Jizô Sutra of the Original Vow' (*Jizô hongan-kyô*), for in-

stance, the Buddha emits "hundreds of thousands of millions of great light clouds" (Hua, 1974:35). The 84,000 stupas erected by Ashoka in the third century BCE is an early example but later generations have only been more than willing to emulate this feat (Fowler, 1997:153). Today a million golden statues of the Buddha sheltered under a huge dome can be seen outside Bangkok in what is said to be the world's largest temple (Ishida, 1972:17; 21; Kohn, 2001). Hayashi (1988:77-96) describes several instances of individual paintings with a thousand figures of *Jizô* and we know that donors frequently deposited thousands of printed images inside statues, as part of their consecration. Fister further reminds us that the Lotus Sutra literally encourages the mass-production of religious objects with promises of enlightenment to those who take this exhortation to heart (Terata, 1973:72-82; Goepper, 1984:25; Fister, 2003:90).

It is therefore tempting to view the many *Mizuko-Jizô* as belonging to the same category and to classify them as an expression of the desire to achieve large numbers. But here one must make an important distinction. The many *mizuko* statues are not the result of the pious activity that is advocated in the Lotus Sutra's 'Expedient Device Chapter' (*hôben-bon*) where believers are encouraged to produce as many religious objects as possible. The effect of these devout acts is designed to hasten the course of the individual devotee towards enlightenment. But it is also important to remember that the merit (*kudoku*) accumulated as a result of these acts extends well beyond the individual; it benefits the *dharma* and all other sentient beings as well.

It is in this sense that the general dedication of religious images and the dedication of a *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine differ. Superficially, the *mizuko kuyô* may resemble the spectacular 'thousand lantern memorial service' (sentô kuyô) yearly performed in Adashino Nembutsu-ji temple in Kyoto (see section 5.4.2. below) because of the many statues involved in both ceremonies, yet *mizuko kuyô* is remarkable for its convergence and focus on a single being. Its purpose is the resolution of individual emotions and the mourning party is addressing grief on a personal level, not a universal one. There is nothing wrong with that but is a far cry from the famous 'Mustard Seed' parable with which the Buddha suggested to Kisagotami, a distraught mother, that grief is an ubiquitous condition which can only be overcome

by sharing one's pain and by accepting it as an integral part of the human condition (Humphreys, 1967:81-2).

2.3.4. Individual Memorialisation of Mizuko

The commercial aspect of the *mizuko* rites has attracted considerable interest among Japanese and foreign commentators alike. Their reaction in many instances has been very hostile (Werblowsky, 1991; Hardacre, 1997) but it must be stressed again that requesting or participating in a *mizuko kuyô* is a completely voluntary act and no legal or religious injunctions compel a person to do so. Even if the symbolic power of the ritual is meant to alleviate post-abortion grief, the extent to which people want to involve the religious establishment in their personal attempts to deal with a *mizuko* remains a personal decision. This subjectivity is the stuff that novels are made of and several Japanese writers have dealt with the personal conflicts that arise whenever decisions of this nature have to be made. Kawabata (1973) writes about this condition in his novel 'Utsukushisa to kanashimi to' where he details "the rich ambiguities of the *mizuko* concept and explored its oblique ...effects on the individual" (Bargen, 1992:338). The young protagonist in the novel sees no need for any *mizuko kuyô* at all after having had an abortion whereas her mother is convinced that some sort of religious ritual ought to take place. As the story develops, the material touches on the fundamental question of the rights of the individual versus the demands of custom and society.

Even among those who decide to deal with the event in a ritualistic manner, the degree of involvement is very much up to the individual and it is possible to choose a personal path independent of clerical participation. A *mizuko* may be commemorated in a private ritual by simply putting the palms of one's hands together (gasshô) in front of a religious image. In 'Kanashii yokan', Yoshiko Banana (1993:162) gives a good example of this kind of individual memorialisation:

A big statue of Jizô was concealed in the darkness of an old-looking temple. Inside one could see piled-up toys, garments and paper cranes *(senbazuru)*. My aunt stopped in front of the building and looked at the Jizô inside. Facing the statue, she gently closed her eyes and the hand buried in her pocket produced from a jingling heap of small change a

single coin, which she threw inside the building. With an apologetic gesture, she raised one hand in front of her face and walked on.

2.3.5. Sado Island, Mizuko-Jizô and Individualised Mizuko Kuyô

The name of *Sado-ga-shima*, an island in the Japan Sea, conjures up images of remoteness, stormy weather, inhospitable shores, the exile of emperors and religious reformers, slave workers and gold mines. The inhabitants have a long tradition of carving religious stone images, *Jizô* in particular, and one can only marvel at the great frequency with which he appears in both sacred and profane places. Locally these roughly hewn and unpretentious figures are called 'stone acolytes' (*ishi koboshi*) and although they come in many sizes, twenty centimetretall figures seem to be most common (Hirayama, 1978). Some are sold as souvenirs but others are used as votive figures in individual rites of memorialisation where people seem to favour the easily portable *ishi koboshi*.

Facing the ocean on the northern shore of the island, there is a large and damp cave named after the Japanese limbo for dead infants, *Sai-no-kawara*, which in popular belief is located on the banks of *Sanzu-no-kawa*, is the river that separates the under-world from the world of the living. The scenery attracts many visitors who come to view the jagged rocks formations in the sea. But it also draws scores of people all year round who seek out the *Sai-no-kawara* cave where they can say a prayer in memory of a *mizuko* and leave behind some concrete token which has a connection with the *mizuko*. For visual authenticity of the *mizuko* phenomenon, few places demonstrate as well as this cave the naked framework of unmediated *mizuko* memorialisation where worshippers individually address the emotional issues of loss, bad conscience, regrets, and death.

The cave can be reached either by a steep staircase leading down the face of the cliff or by walking along a narrow winding pathway from the fishing village of Negai with the ocean on one side and tall cliffs on the other. In summer wild jasmine and yellow lilies dominate the otherwise sparse vegetation. As one approaches the cave along the ocean pathway, small $Jiz\hat{o}$ figurines on the shelves and ledges on the rocks and low cairns built with pebbles start to appear in evergreater numbers. There is also a considerable number of pinwheels wedged into

fissures in the rocks. The local *ishi koboshi* variant is well represented but the throngs of *Jizô* figurines in burnt clay with a white glaze, no larger than five centimetres in height, were preponderant during my visits. Lately, small figures of haloed 'Baby-Jizô' (*Warabe-Jizô*) in darker materials, mostly burnt clay, have started to appear as well (Chinji Daidôjô, 2003). At one point the pathway leads between two boulders after which it opens up to a small rocky area with two caves. The smaller one is dedicated to the fierce-looking raja-king *Fudô-myô-ô* (Skt. Acalanâtha vidyâ-râja). In front of the other, the legend on a tall pillar of stone announced the name of the place to be 'Holy Grounds of Sai-no-kawara' (*Sai-no-kawara reijô*; see Appendix I). Hirano's (2005) website about the most important *Sai-no-kawara* locations in Japan notes that the registered caretaker is a local Shingon temple, Kannon-ji, but that everyday maintenance is carried out by the inhabitants of the nearby fishing hamlet of Negai.

In this spot the air currents were considerable and whenever a gust of wind came in from the sea, it would set the many pinwheels both inside and outside the cave spinning around with a noisy and almost dizzying effect and the sacred *shimenawa* (twisted rope of straw) which connected the two large pointed rocks rising out of the ocean in front of the larger cave would be swinging wildly back and forth. Some of the many hundred miniature figures, which dotted the surroundings, had been placed so close to the sea that they occasionally were washed away by the waves that constantly pounded the rocks. It would appear that people, at no insignificant danger to themselves, crawl out onto these exposed sites to tender their offerings right at the very edge where land meets the rolling waves of the ocean. These statuettes were obviously not meant to remain there but in a curious way they continued the *Jizô-nagashi* rites which used to take place here but had been discontinued since the late fifties (Hirano, 2005). Later we shall have occasion to observe these rites in other places where images of *Jizô*, usually printed on paper, are set afloat on rivers or sent out to sea (see p.180).

The cave had an untidy and disorderly appearance. It was a place which invited one to do as one pleased without having to worry about authorities and regulations. One reason for this was the careless manner - or so it seemed - in which the cave had been crammed with tiny white *Warabe-Jizô* figures. Some were standing

in isolation; others were clustered in groups, ranging from a few to several dozens. It looked as if every available shelf and niche in the rocks supported one or more of these *Warabe-Jizô*. But many had fallen down where they remained lying among the pebbles on the grimy floor.

Although there were quite a few of the locally made *ishi koboshi* figures, most of the figurines I saw in the late nineties inside the cave and on the surrounding rocks were of the same variety, i.e. a small, upright clay figure which holds a 'wishgiving jewel' (hôju) in front of his chest and fired with an off-white glaze. These inexpensive figures have been available in religious accessories shops for quite a while and can still be bought today. They come with a looped piece of string and a tiny bell attached so that they may be suspended from a hook. Normally there is also a small, reddish piece of cloth around the neck in an obvious imitation of the votive bib with which $Jiz\hat{o}$ is habitually seen. Characters written on the piece of red cloth pasted to the back of the figure explain that this $Jiz\hat{o}$ makes all one's wishes come true (onegai-kanau jizô-san). Once this piece of cloth comes off, four characters engraved in its back reveal that it is also a charm for warding off evil (yakuyoke omamori). But, as mentioned earlier, newer $Jiz\hat{o}$ figurines with different characteristics keep turning up.

Between the many *Jizô* figures, people had erected upright standing wooden mortuary tablets (*tôba*) that were supported by conical piles of pebbles and rocks but several of them had toppled over. These square *tôba* are usually erected after the final memorial service has taken place, thirty-three years after the passing away of a person (Ooms, 1976:66) but since most of them had become dirty grey through the exposure to the weather, it was often impossible to read the inscription. Yet some *tôba* were very new, almost sparkling in the freshness of their appearance, which enabled one to identify the posthumous name of person in whose memory the *tôba* has been made as well as the names of the people who had sponsored its dedication.

The presence of these large $t\hat{o}ba$ indicates that the cave is also a location for ancestral memorialisation ceremonies ($senzo~kuy\hat{o}$). Indeed, all the relevant deities who play a role in the thirteen memorial services that used to be performed for a

dead person can be found here (Shinno, 2002:456). This group of buddhas and bodhisattvas is arranged in a predetermined fashion on a neat, man-made shelf of stone, approximately one metre tall, which runs the full length of the cave, starting from the right with the raja-king $Fud\hat{o}$ - $my\hat{o}$ - \hat{o} , and finishing with $Kok\hat{u}z\hat{o}$ Bosatsu (Åkâshagarbha bodhisattva), the thirteenth and last figure related to the memorial services. Only the supreme judge of the underworld, King Yama $(Enma-\hat{o})$, positioned somewhere in the middle of the cave, is located outside this sequence.

The deities are all cast in bronze, as is a conspicuously tall *Mizuko-Jizô* who stands on a lotus plinth with an infant on his left arm and a large sistrum in his right hand. Several children cling to the folds of his robe. Like so many of the images placed here, this *Mizuko-Jizô* gazes across the wide expanses of water in front of the cave. There were also stands for votive candles, two large receptacles for incense and a wooden coffer for cash donation (saisen-bako).

2.3.6. Mizuko-Jizô Offerings

As in other places in Japan where the dead are commemorated, people had left behind the traditional offerings of small coins, water, incense, coins, boiled rice and rice-based comestibles. Like other buddhas and bodhisattvas, *Jizô*, too, is frequently given copies of the 'Heart Sutra' written by hand on a piece of white cloth which then is tied around the statue. But the assortments of things which people present to *Mizuko-Jizô* go far beyond these simple gifts. The bright red bibs around the neck of the statues are seen with such frequency that they have almost become the hallmark of a *Jizô* statue. The donation of woollen hats, usually red, is also very popular, so much so that many statues always seem to wear something on the head. One also finds infant clothing heaped on the arms and around the necks of the statues, school bags, shoes, rattles, pacifiers, dolls, cartoon characters in plastic, bottles with soft drinks, rosaries, strings of *origami* paper cranes in several colours, and a large variety of toys. I have even seen a tricycle. In fact, it seems that any-thing remotely connected with the world of an infant qualifies as a potential prestation to the deity or the spirit of a *mizuko*.

Most of these offerings have no doubt been made for sentimental reasons, motivated by a reluctance to throw away items that have been connected with a dead child. But such items can also be linked to the belief that immaterial things are not dead objects (Kretschmer, 2000) and by giving them to *Jizô* they not only become part of the general memorial service: the donor also gives expression to a sense of gratitude for the service the thing has provided to the infant in the past or, possibly, may give in the future. The connection between *Jizô* and toys has scriptural antecedent as well. There is a rather unexpected reference to toys in the 'Jizô Sutra of the Original Vow' (*Jizô Hongan-kyô*) where in Chapter XII, 'The Benefits from Hearing and Seeing' (*Kenmon riyakubonge*), toys are mentioned as offerings that are just as acceptable as incense, flowers, clothes, food and drink (Ohta, 1984:61).

Scheid (2002:3) speculates whether there are other reasons for the donation of toys and children's clothing to *Jizô*. Quoting some observations by Dr. Greve, a Buddhist nun and art historian living in Japan, he writes that women in the Edo period would neglect their duties as wives and workers if the period of grief for a dead infant or child went on for too long. Grieving mothers would normally be granted a seven-day period of mourning during which it was anticipated that they would come to terms with their loss. After this period, the mothers were expected to part with all the belongings of the deceased infant and hand them over to *Jizô*. This practice enabled them to make a clean break with the past and to go on with life in the present. Communal beliefs also acted as a strong antidote against excessive mourning. It was widely believed that for so long as a mother grieved for her dead child, it would be held back on the desolate shores of *Sai-no-kawara* and be prevented from moving on to a new existence.

Both inside as well as outside the *Sai-no-kawara* cave one may also observe the very widespread custom of piling up 'mourning stones' for the dead (tomurai-ishi), usually three to a stack. These spiritual middens can be seen all over Japan in places that are related to death and the afterlife. Although the customary number of stones in a tomurai-ishi cairn is three, there are many local variants. During the *Sai-no-kawara ishizumi gyôji* ('Sai-no-kawara Stone-piling Annual Event'), for instance, which takes place in several parts of the country in early August, children customarily pile up the same number of stones as their age. It is believed that the children by this act will relieve the infants spirits on the banks of *Sai-no-*

kawara from their onerous task of piling up stones (Hirano, 2005). Yet the aetiology does not end here. Ishikawa (1995:17) alerts us to the traditional answer as to why deceased children have to pile stones on the banks of *Sai-no-kawara*. Placing the children in this situation is in fact a punitive measure: the children were considered to be guilty of unfilial conduct since they had left this world before their parents who as a result had no one to look after them in their old age.

2.3.7. The Significance of the Colour Red

In Japanese culture the symbolism of the colour red is pervasive. In the garment of a bride, its usage is considered auspicious. But it is used in other contexts, too. The dominance of red in the apparel given to Jizô, for instance, is a reminder of the magical association once believed to exist between this particular colour and the kami of measles and smallpox. Both diseases were endemic in traditional society and a major cause of the prevailing high infant mortality rate. Takemi (1988:49) writes that close to fifty per cent of all children died before they reached the age of ten so it is not surprising that anxious parents resorted to whatever prophylactic means their society was capable of offering. Red was "ubiquitous in the magicotherapeutic treatment of small-pox" and there was an "insistence of having red present all around a patient...designed to repel the kami of smallpox" (Rotermund, 2001:376). People extended the employment of red to the clothing worn by children. This explains why the garment (mune-ate) which children traditionally wore around the chest, was red. Mothers used to tie new *mune-ate*, around the neck of *Jizô* images. After a while the garment would be replaced by a new one and the *mune-ate* that *Jizô* had just worn would be given to children. The idea was to bring the infants into direct contact with the deity so that they could absorb some of his divine energy (Ishikawa, 1995:15). What takes place today is in a way a reversal of the traditional exchange. The bibs, the current *mune-ate* substitute, that are given to *Mizuko-Jizô* today serve a much wider purpose than in the past. Judging from the inscriptions I have seen on these bibs myself, some have al-ready been worn by children before they were donated to the bodhisattva with words of thanks for having looked after the children. In other instances, unused bibs had been inscribed with a request for future protection and then attached to Jizô. But what is striking about them today is that their usage is not necessarily limited to matters concerning children. Their handy size, complete with two strings attached,

makes it easy to tie them around just about anything so they are often used for written petitions address to the Buddhist deities.

But to return to the colour red: toys, too, were influenced by this practice, which has continued to the present day. The self-righting *Daruma* doll *(okiagaridaruma)*, for instance, was and is almost always painted bright red. The positive image conveyed by this popular toy is reflected in the continuous use of the red colour, which has survived to the present in its symbolic role as an auspicious sign. Red, for instance, is invariably the colour used for the skirts *(hibakama, lit.:* 'scarlet skirt') worn by Shinto shrine maidens, and at least one of the bridal garments in a modern wedding ceremony is expected to be red. In fact, during special events, people will make an effort to employ this colour since "celebratory occasions in Japan are indicated by the colours red and white" (JTB, 1993:63).

2.3.8. Pinwheels and Infant Memorialisation

Bundles of pinwheels spinning in the wind adjacent to continuous rows of child-like *Jizô* figures appear to be just another toy which predisposes most spectators to think about children and infant games. Yet for centuries pinwheels have been intimately connected with infant burials in Japan. Appearing in conjunction with a *Mizuko-Jizô*, they symbolise the emotional pain felt after the loss of a child.

To illustrate just how far back this custom can be traced, Endô (1988:25-7) quotes a seventeenth century poem which says that a whirling pinwheel is the only keepsake to remind one of a dead child (midorigo no nakikatami no kazaguruma). This association of pinwheels with death can be seen in other contemporary texts. Other texts from the same period describe the pinwheel (kazaguruma or fûsen) as a symbol of the flowers that fell from heaven at the birth of the Buddha but which subsequently lost all their colours at his demise. Only the floral shape, which is retained in the propeller of the pinwheel, has remained (ibid).

IV. Variants on The Mizuko-Jizô Theme

2.4.0. Mizuko-Jizô Variants in Tsugaru

No treatment of *Mizuko-Jizô* would be complete without mentioning the painted *Jizô* statues (*Keshô-Jizô*) of Tsugaru peninsula in Aomori prefecture in Northern Japan.

Recently the prefectural government in Aomori has created new municipalities on the peninsula by amalgamating several villages and hamlets. However, for the sake of clarity, I shall use the old place names, rather than 'Tsugaru-shi' (Tsugaru City), the new collective term, whenever it is important to identify the precise location of a *Jizô-dô*. In this area local custom treats the idea of *kuyô* figures in a unique way, usually without any involvement by the Buddhist priesthood.

Although the practice is confined to Tsugaru, knowledge about these particular statues, all painted and dressed like home-made dolls, has spread across Japan and they have become some-thing of a tourist attraction for the visitors who, according to Tsugaru City's homepage, keep coming in ever increasing numbers to see the many clothed and painted *Jizô* figures in the region (www.city.tsugaru.aomori.jp). Painted icons are not unknown in other parts of Japan but what makes this place exceptional is that here it is the norm rather than the exception. A further attraction is the decidedly rustic appearance of the figures and the manner in which they are displayed. The projection of unsophisticated sincerity and untutored spontaneity is so strong that this is the first place many Japanese think of when folk religion is mentioned.

When an infant dies in this region, people have for generations made large doll-size figures of $Jiz\hat{o}$ either of wood or stone in order to commemorate the deceased. It is impossible to be specific since there are many variations but the average height is approximately between thirty to forty centimetres and their appearance leaves no one in doubt about their homemade provenance. The head is normally painted white. The eyes, mouth and other facial features are outlined with other colours. The dressed figure is placed in a special hall $(Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o})$, sporadically equipped with an identity tag around its neck. In this sheltered hall the figure joins the company of other $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues that likewise have been put there to commemo-

rate deceased children. Incidentally, the tags on the statues for record keeping have revealed that some of them are several hundred years old (Chiba & Ohtsu, 1983: 68; Chinji Daijôjô, 2004).

Normally a *Jizô-dô* is associated with a religious structure built according to traditional methods that lend the place a certain aura of solemnity. However, regional poverty is manifest in the appearance of the many local *Jizô-dô*. Here the word invariably signifies a primitive structure made up of three wooden or masonry brick walls topped with a roof of corrugated iron that gives the buildings a perfunctory exterior that resembles a tool shed more than a holy edifice. No two buildings are alike. Some may be equipped with sliding doors of glass, while others have makeshift grills or simple wooden doors, but many of these little shrines are completely open in front. Given the limited range of material used, it is surprising that so many of these shelter-like structures still succeed in maintaining an individual atmosphere.

The geographical location of these $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$ is just as varied as their individual size. Although there seems to be a preference for positioning the $d\hat{o}$ near a gravesite, there are so many exceptions to this that it is impossible to establish any rules about favourite locations. There are sometimes several $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$ within a short distance of each other in the same hamlet. They can be found at the side of the road, at intersections, next to people's houses, or in front of rural assembly halls. In short, chance and convenience more than anything else seem to dictate their location.

The actual inside of these shrines exhibits a surprising diversity which defies any easy classification but, generally speaking, inside each $d\hat{o}$ one will find a number of smallish statues together, not completely identical in size but at least of a similar height. Some are carved in the round whereas others are chiselled in high relief on the side of a rock. Occasionally two stones with faces painted on the surface have been placed on top of a single boulder which then serves as the body for both. In some places there may also be a bolder or a stone slab with a relief of six $Jiz\hat{o}$ images $(Roku-Jiz\hat{o})$, each figure symbolising one of the six possible worlds into which one may be reborn. The facial appearance of the figures also

differs from locality to locality, some preferring elongated profiles whereas others favour oval faces.

The dressing of *Keshô-Jizô* is also idiosyncratic. There is a general uniformity of appearance among the figures in the same *Jizô-dô* but different places follow different conventions. It is however possible to make a rough division between those figures that wear a breast piece with a symmetrical cross sewn on, and those who wear ordinary pinafores. The same distinction can be applied to the headgear: either the figures wear a soft hat, which resembles the traditional bulky hat of a Confucian scholar, or they are equipped with a traditional head scarf *(hôkaburi)* which sometimes is tied across the face rather than under the chin. Visitors to the region in winter report that many statues are given thick clothing to wear during the colder months of the year (http://www.geocities.jp/oyu web/alb/a6.html).

'Substitute Jizô' (Migawari-Jizô) images to which personal pain and calamities can be transferred are usually found together with the group of painted statues (Keshô-Jizô). Migawari-Jizô may be represented as an individual statue, in which case it is always masculine, or in pairs where the figures are dressed as man and wife. As a rule, the migawari statues are much larger than the other statues, which has the effect of making them look as caring parents surrounded by their painted Keshô-Jizô offspring. This out-ward appearance as a family is so striking that it is hard to believe that it is accidental. Judging from the many different places inside the shrines where people have placed the Migawari-Jizô, it would appear that there is no fixed position for these figures within the shrines and that physical presence is more important than position in relation to the other statues. Consequently, Migawari-Jizô can be in the middle of the dô, at its sides, or to the left or to the right of the Keshô-Jizô group. In some instances Migawari-Jizô have even been given a separate niche next to the section with the smaller statues.

The number of statues displayed in a *Jizô-dô* may range from a few to several hundred. In the village of Goshogawara there are some shrines with only two to three statues whereas in the village of Inagaki some shrines contain over a hundred. There is a paucity of readily available source material concerning this region but a booklet published by the local teaching committee called 'Folk

Beliefs in Inagaki' (*Inagaki Minzoku Shinkô*) gives an indication of the numbers we are dealing with. It reports that in and around Inagaki village, with a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants, there are more than 2,000 individual *Keshô-Jizô* and *Migawari-Jizô* distributed across several *Jizô-dô* ('Inagaki Kyôiku Iinkai' [Inagaki Teaching Committee] quoted on the Chinji Daidôjô website, 2004).

The maintenance of the $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$ shelter and the many statues takes place according to rules that are applied all over the district. The upkeep of the shelters is considered to be a communal obligation, which in practice means that the elderly members of the devotional association for $Jiz\hat{o}$ ($Jiz\hat{o}-k\hat{o}$) take care of that. Once a year between the twenty-third and twenty-sixth June, the traditional time for $Jiz\hat{o}$ related festivals, the same association will also clean the $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$, repaint the $Migawari-Jiz\hat{o}$, give them new clothes to wear, and provide the special offerings associate with memorial services for the dead: Rice, water, incense, etc. The smaller $Kesh\hat{o}-Jiz\hat{o}$ are regarded as an individual responsibility and they are looked after by those who initially placed them in the $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$.

2.4.1. Kawakura Sai-no-kawara in Goshogawara

In Goshogawara located in *Kanagi-chô* in the same region, the Tendai sect has a temple complex with several buildings, said to have been founded by priest Jikaku, a Buddhist cleric who reputedly has established many other temples in the region.

Here there are $Jiz\hat{o}$ figures everywhere. Their presence in this location has been linked with the frequent famines during the Edo period (1600-1868) that were particularly severe in this part of the country, claiming the lives of thousands of people. Famine victims have been buried on this site for a long time and tradition has it that the doll-like $Jiz\hat{o}$ figures have been erected by the survivors in an act of commemoration (Kawakita Shinpôsha, 1984:62-3).

Whether this practice in any way is related to the folk-art dolls, *kokeshi*, of Northern Japan and to infanticide in pre-modern society are topics for future research. Brooks (1981:130) writes that these wooden dolls "with a round head and cylindrical body" were prestations to *Jizô* "to secure a dead child's safety and

comfort in the afterlife". It has also been suggested that the *kokeshi* is a surrogate for the victim(s) of infanticide in the same manner that a present-day *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine can be seen as a symbolic representation of an aborted foetus (LaFleur, 1992:51).

Within the temple precinct there is a large Jizô-dô. A carving over the entrance depicts a dismal scene with demons, infants and Jizô. There is also as a 'doll hall' (ningyô-dô), and a Mizuko Kuyô-dô. The surrounding area with its many narrow pathways is named after the Buddhist limbo, Sai-no-kawara, here called Kawakura Sai-no-kawara, and is watched over by five Jizô icons enshrined in the Jizô-dô. The most important Jizô, however, the Kawakura Jizô, is hidden from the public gaze (hibutsu) and can only be seen on special occasions such as the great festival in June. Behind the statues there are many hundred of Keshô-Jizô, in their role as *Mizuko-Jizô*, arranged on tiered shelves along the walls inside the *Jizô-dô* in a manner which reminds one commentator of a sports stadium where the seats are arranged in continuous and layered rows (Chinji Daidôjô, 1997). Looking closely at the statues, one may see that tiny slices of apple have been tucked into the folds of the dress of some of them. Apart from the Keshô-Jizô statues themselves, clothing and other items, which presumably at one point belonged to the deceased child, have been left behind. Hirano (2004-5) explains that clothes worn by the statues are said to possess curative powers and wearing them during an illness will result in a speedy recovery. Alternatively, rubbing a sick person and then touching a *Kawakura Jizô* is also considered effective. Embracing the statue is believed to bring down the body temperature of feverish babies. Since statues and photographs take up most of the room on the shelves, the only remaining available space for other offerings is under the ceiling from where children's belongings are suspended from hooks. Hirano (sado.html.2004-5) notes that these items are replaced every year.

During the yearly *Jizô* festival between the twenty-second and twenty-fourth of June, the temple compound is crowded with visitors. Some will ask the female spirit mediums *(itako)*, who also gather here on this occasion, to contact their dead relatives in order to learn about their well-being. Here I only mention their presence; the Osore-zan section deals in greater detail with the regional techniques for

communicating with the dead. But more than anything else, infant spirits are central to the commemorations on the twenty-fourth, $Jiz\hat{o}$'s name day, and it is said that anyone who pays close attention will be able to hear their distant voices of children or see the footprints they leave behind when they walk unseen among the visitors (*ibid*).

2.4.2. Doll Halls (Ningyô-dô) and Spirit Marriages (Shiryô kekkon)

Apart from the interesting fact that the *Keshô-Jizô* statues of the Tsugaru region were originally dedicated to individuals in a manner that closely parallels modern *Mizuko-Jizô* practices elsewhere, the locality is also known for yet another ritual, namely the so-called marriages to dolls (*hanayome ningyô*), also known in the terminology preferred by Japanese anthropologists as 'deceased spirit marriages' (*shiryô kekkon*).

In the $ningy\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$ beside the $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$ a vivid display of photographs and dolls in glass cases speak volumes about local attitudes towards marriage. Based on the belief that the gods will provide a marital partner once the appropriate time for marriage has arrived, parents may here dedicate special dolls as marital partners to those of their children who had the misfortune to die before getting married. These dolls represent a spouse who married the spirit of a dead child at a time when it would normally have entered matrimony had the deceased survived into adulthood (Chinji Daidôjô, 1997).

Explaining the origin of this custom, Schattschneider (2001:856), writes that in the past it was possible for someone alive to marry the spirit of a dead person. On these occasions, the relatives of the deceased would provide a financial incentive for the living spouse. However, during the wars in China and the Pacific in the first half of the twentieth century, an escalating number of unmarried soldiers lost their lives. Following local custom, "framed photo-graphs of the dead were enshrined at the temple. Within a few years, families began to supplement these photographs with bride-doll figurines (hanayome ningyô) of the sort that is often given to Japanese girls as they approach adolescence. "This shift came about when the deceased young men let the living know through séances with *itako* mediums that they wanted a spouse to keep them company. At the same time *Jizô*, in his

substitute role (migawari), replaced the living person and became a "ritual spouse for the deceased" (ibid:857).

Originally the spirit marriages were limited to a union between a man and bridal puppets (hanayome ningyô) but today, women, who have died before marriage, and even a *mizuko*, can be married in the same fashion. In the case of *mizuko*, these 'puppet marriages' take place when the spirit of a dead infant or child reaches the age of nubility, approximately around the twentieth year. When the couple has reached the age of thirty, the end of a life cycle, the doll is burnt or set afloat and sent to sea (ibid:857, 868). The thirtieth year is also the time when a dead spirit is ultimately released from its earthly bonds after which it will join the rank of the buddhas (jôbutsu), the ultimate goal of all Buddhists (Hanayama, 1989:35). To keep track of these vital dates, the temple authorities note the biodata of the deceased on a label attached to the back of the glass case. To quote Schattschneider (2004:148) again, in a ritual which mimics "the soul's hoped-for passage through the six cosmic realms", the glass cases which house the marital spouse are moved around "in a clockwise pattern" on the shelves in the rooms where they are kept. Subsequent séances with the *itako* during the festival in June will tell whether the spirits of the deceased are happy with the new arrangements (see below section 3.8.).

The puppets used in this extraordinary marriage ritual are sold on the temple premises but supplicants are free to bring their own specimen. Normally $Jiz\hat{o}$ is the tangible link between those who have died before marriage and the *hanayome* $ningy\hat{o}$ where his active principle, as it were, confers an inner life to an otherwise lifeless doll. However in the area around Mt. Iwaki in the same region, Kannon bosatsu (Avalokiteshvara) may replace $Jiz\hat{o}$ (Greve, 1994:2; Setouchi et al., 1988). In all instances, however, a photograph of the deceased is placed next to the doll, whether it happens to be in a glass case or not.

2.4.3. Pear Tree Jizô (Nashi-no-ki Jizô)

The discussion above may give the impression that all smaller $Jiz\hat{o}$ figures commemorate a mizuko but that is not correct. $Jiz\hat{o}$ images are also left behind as offerings in other places considered sacred. Local inscriptions usually explain the

nature of the specific benefits one may obtain by addressing $Jiz\hat{o}$ in these locations.

At the Nihon-ji temple in Nokogiriyama, Chiba prefecture, otherwise famous for it's huge stone-cliff Buddha statue, worshippers and visitors may encounter a standing image in stone of a much smaller size called "Wish-Giving -Jizô' (Onegai-Jizô). Tiny images of Jizô in their hundreds, more or less identical to those encountered in the Sai-no-kawara caves on Sado Island, cover completely the ground around the statue. Here they are deposited as goodwill tokens when devotees ask the bodhisattva to grant them a wish. Schumacher (2007) has some impressive photos of this phenomenon online.

On Sado Island, just outside the township of Mano, famous for its 'Jizô Dance' (Jizô-odori) during Obon where "towns-people gently rock an image of Jizô Bosatsu on their backs while reciting the nembutsu and dancing" (Kinoshita & Pelevsky, 1990: 246), there is a grove with a small shrine which is referred to as 'Pear-Tree-Jizô' (Nashi-no-ki Jizô). The name obviously derives from the wild pear trees which thrive in these surroundings. Worshippers have literally deposited thousands of the locally made ishi koboshi ('stone acolyte', i.e. small Jizô image) under the branches of these trees. It is believed that the Nashi-no-ki Jizô has the power to cure sick children and for this purpose the main statue is the object of fervent prayers by parents worried about the health of their offspring. The structure of the therapeutic ritual practised here tells us that we are dealing with a 'Substitute-Jizô' (Migawari-Jizô): a small Jizô figure is left behind in the grove with the hope that the ailments and pain of a given child will be transferred to the donated statue and thus cure the child of its disease.

When the child has been healed, grateful parents will donate yet another *Jizô* figurine to express their gratitude for *Nashi-no-ki Jizô* 's benevolent inter-vention. When I visited the place, I estimated that the number of little *Jizô* figures scattered about in the area ran well into the thousands. Some figurines were nesting on the branches of the trees or leaned against the small *Jizô-dô* which enshrined *Nashi-no-ki Jizô*, but the majority was standing on the ground, supported by other statues or the roots of the trees.

The geographical isolation of Sado-ga-shima and the slow pace of urban development are no doubt responsible for the large numbers of Buddhist statues that still remain undisturbed in the open air of the island. Elsewhere in Japan, souvenir hunters and thoughtless travellers have often carried these figurines away with them. But the local stonemasons also play a role in maintaining the high number of statues found there as they continue to produce images of $Jiz\hat{o}$, both in his traditional appearance as well as in the distinct shapes for which the island is famous.

V. The Iconography of Mizuko-Jizô

2.5.0. The Iconography of Mizuko-Jizô: Prototypes

Manabe (1987:63) explains why imagery plays such a major role in *Jizô* worship by referring to the '*Jizô* Sutra of the Original Vow' (*Jizô hongan-kyô*), which encourages the making of religious icons while also providing guidelines for their worship. In the 'Thus Come One's Praises' chapter (*nyorai santan-bon*) it is written that:

if good men or good women paint, draw, use earth, stone, lacquer-ware, gold, silver, brass, or iron to make this Bodhisattva's image [i.e., $Jiz\hat{o}$), gaze at it, and bow to it but once, they will be reborn...and will eternally avoid falling into the Evil Paths. If their heavenly merit becomes exhausted and they are born below in the human world, they will be powerful kings (Hua, 1974:146; Iwano, 1988:235),

In order to carry out these recommendations, rules were needed for shaping the physical appearance of an icon. Based on the transmission of three-dimensional images and detailed catalogues of Buddhist texts from China (Nakamura, 1974:201-3), the relatively uncomplicated iconography of exoteric *Jizô* icons had more or less been settled around the Kamakura period (1185-1333 C.E.). Even the oldest extant *Jizô* statue in Japan, a ninth century seated image in Kôryû-ji temple in Kyoto, is easily recognised as a portrayal of *Jizô* (Matsushima, 1986:21; Manabe, 1987:62-72). However, the *Mizuko-Jizô* image is an exception. *Mizuko-Jizô* is neither mentioned in any of the traditional iconographic guides, nor does the authority of any scriptural canon sanction this particular icon. Further, there are many contemporary images with the *Mizuko-Jizô* appellation identical in appearance to the conventional *Jizô* statue, i.e. an image in the shape of a Buddhist

monk *(shômon*: Skt. Shrâvaka). For this reason, a *Mizuko-Jizô* image can be identified in two ways only: a written legend will name it as such, or the image will be a figure surrounded by small children.

According to the descriptions found in the 'Jizô Sutra of Ten Wheels' (*Jizô jyûrin-gyô*), the Kamakura period iconographic manual *Kakuzenshô*, and many other texts, *Jizô* has a completely shaven head. He is dressed as a mendicant monk in a garb which hangs from the shoulders in arched folds. He is frequently equipped with a *kesa* (a kind of a surplice) worn across the chest and he has bare feet. In his right hand he carries a pilgrim's staff (*shakujô*) and in the left he holds a 'wish-granting jewel' (*hôju*). In older images the ritual sign of the 'wish-granting mudra' (*segan-in*) takes the place of the *shakujô* (Iwano, 1978:12; Kanada & Yanagigawa, 1989:470-1; Manabe, 1975:113).

A detailed system of classification regulates the visual form of Japanese Buddhist images. A figure which cannot be identified on iconographical grounds runs the risk of being placed outside the traditional frame of reference with all the uncertainties, loss of authority and vagueness that this implies. Manuals with finely detailed descriptions of sacred imagery, supported by authoritative scriptural quotations, have for centuries assisted both the clergy and laypersons with the correct identification of religious icons. There is a very real and practical side to this. As Yiengpruksawan (1999:399-401) points out, worshippers need to know what statue they are looking at. This identification, which ultimately depends on physical appearance, is crucial since it gives information about the nature of the figure, what it can do, and how its powers are to be accessed. Yet there is no scriptural authority for *Mizuko-Jizô's* iconographical features, with whom he appears, what attributes he should display, or what powers he exercises.

This lack of a clearly identifiable historical prototype would strongly suggest that the *Mizuko-Jizô* image that we see today is of recent origin. I know of no explicit references to *Mizuko-Jizô* images before the late 1960s. This would indicate that he became popular as a cult figure around the same time as *mizuko kuyô* gained general acceptance. One may speculate whether the appearance of a *Mizuko-Jizô* at this time was determined by a desire to lend a specific focus to these rites whose

content and purpose would be symbolically enhanced with the presence of a meaningful visual image. Most rites have a solid object, a statue, a bell, a censer, etc., with which they are associated. The absence of an established image associated with the newly developed rituals of *mizuko-kuyô* might explain the 'invention' of an easily recognised figure with distinct iconographic features. The *raison-d'être* of *Mizuko-Jizô* lies in is his relationship with infants, and there is a *prima facie* case that a child-carrying image would generate the right correlations in a ritual that specifically involves foetuses, neonates, infants and babies (see Appendix I).

2.5.1. Possible Models for Mizuko-Jizô

It so happens that there exist several Buddhist icons connected with the protection of children. Kariteimo also known as Kishibojin (Skt. Hariti) together with Juntei Kannon (Skt. Cundi, the "mother of the Buddhas"), 'Kannon of Easy Childbirth' (Koyasu Kannon), and the Shinto Koyasu-sama, have been worshipped for centuries as protectors of motherhood and children (Frederic, 1995:178-180). According to Ishikawa (1976:40-1), the popularity of 'Child-rearing Jizô' (Kosodate-Jizô), which belongs to the same category, was already commonplace from the middle of the Edo period (1600-1868). Several extant stone statues from that epoch depict a seated Jizô image, either cradling an infant in his arms or with one tucked inside his cassock from where a small head peers out. I have seen some of these Jizô statues on the steep mountainside of the famous Yamadera temple (aka Risshaku-ji), one of the holy mountains in Northern Japan where dead spirits traditionally are said go. From a distance the infant's head, emerging from the upper part of Jizô's robe, resembles a lotus bud that rises above the left shoulder in a posture reminiscent of a lotus-carrying Kannon. Seated *Jizô* images carrying a lotus do exist but they usually belong to the esoteric tradition and are normally only seen in mandalas (de Visser, 1914:18-9). The cross-legged *Jizô* statue holding a lotus in the outdoor 'blood pool of hell' (chi-no-ike-jigoku) on Osorezan ('Mountain of Awe') is a very rare exception to the rule.

As for the origin of the child-carrying image, *Kishimojin* from the Lotus Sutra could have served as model. It would be going too far to describe her image in terms of a consciously constructed *pietà*, but she is usually depicted as breast-

feeding a baby or holding one very close to her bosom. In her lap or at her feet there may be a further addition of three or four more infants. According to Iwamoto (1988:173), the peak of her popularity was during the Edo period when she was asked for protection in all matters related to children. One recalls the vow she makes to protect babies after her conversion to Buddhism in the *Dharani* chapter and it is for this function that she has been worshipped for centuries. This Indian earth goddess has been known since the early Heian period (794 -1185) in Japan and she is still worshipped and celebrated in some well-known festivals, in particular among followers of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren sects (Kawano, 1988). The similarity between the benefits she provides and those of other deities has not gone unnoticed. Ochiai (1988) describes how indigenous Japanese kami of fertility and guarantors of easy childbirth have slowly merged with figures from the Buddhist pantheon, notably Kannon, *Jizô* and *Kishimojin*.

There is another point of similarity: like *Jizô*, *Kishimojin* also holds a roundish object in her hand: a pomegranate, the traditional symbol of fertility. As for the relationship between the two deities, Lafcadio Hearn, writing in 1894, mentions a visit to a temple where both deities were enshrined and revered in a manner familiar to us but with a different emphasis. From his description it appears that it was to *Kishimojin* rather than to *Jizô* that mothers directed their prayers for the health and well-being of their children. Another factor, which rings a familiar bell, was the children's clothing left behind as offerings, but this time to the female deity and not to *Jizô* as is the case today (Hearn, 1986:96-7).

Another possible source of inspiration for the iconography of *Kosodate-Jizô* may be found in the *Sai-no-kawara Jizô-wasan* text where the following lines appear:

With that he wraps the little ones/ Inside the folds of his priestly robes/...He draws them close to his own comforting merciful skin/...hugging and stroking them (LaFleur, 1992:64).

Children touching the hem of $Jiz\hat{o}$'s cassock are also a familiar motif in the 'Heaven and Hell' scrolls from the Edo period which we shall examine later (see p.148 below). But apart from the painted images of $Jiz\hat{o}$ and infants in a Sai-no-

kawara setting, there are other *Jizô* representations that could serve as possible models.

Ken (1976:324) writes that tombstones for children shaped in the form of a *Jizô* image became increasingly popular during the middle of the eighteenth century. Surveys also show that the figure most commonly encountered in Edo period graveyards was *Jizô*, followed by *Nyoirin Kannon (Cintâmani-cakra)*, the statue erected over women who died in labour, as a distant second. Occasionally 'Child-Rearing-Jizô' (*Kosodate Jizô*) would also be referred to as 'Jizô of Safe Delivery' (*Anzan Jizô* or *Koyasu Jizô*) but the term *Mizuko-Jizô* does not seem to have been in circulation then. The closest approximation to this lexical usage appears to be *Kogaeshi Jizô*, which literally means "child-returning-Jizô" (Visser, 1914:174). In the past, this *Jizô* was entrusted with infants who were "returned", the contemporary euphemism for abortion and infanticide. As a means of birth control, the latter was the more popular of the two since it did not endanger the mother's life in the same way as an induced abortion (Takemi, 1988:50).

To summarise the argument above: through a process which re-named and shifted the emphasis of pre-existing religious imagery, the concept of *mizuko* and the image of the protector of infants, i.e. *Jizô*, coalesced and evolved into a completely new image called *Mizuko-Jizô* who came to occupy a central role within the *mizuko* discourse.

2.5.2. The Mizuko-Jizô Figurines

Mizuko-Jizô, as we have seen earlier, may also refer to the figurines with child-like faces that people put up to commemorate a mizuko. There is a historical precedent for depicting Jizô as a youngster. Hayami (1975:158-9) reminds us that Jizô is also referred to as a 'young man' (shônen) in medieval texts. Together with the limbo-like realm of Sai-no-kawara, the youthful aspect of Jizô appears to be another Japanese addition since no passages from the traditional Buddhist canon scriptural warrant this interpretation. In the preface to the 'Sutra of the Ten Wheels' (Jûrin-kyô), Jizô appears in the shape of a shômon (Skt. Shrâvaka) which implies that he basically looked like a cleric with shaven head (Iwano, 1988:19). In the more commonly known 'Jizô Sutra of the Original Vow' (Jizô Hongan-kyô)

Jizô makes a spectacular appearance in the Bunshin shûe-bon chapter, which Hua (1974:90) translates as 'The Assembly of Reduplicated Bodies'. Here Jizô is described as having hundred thousands of million bodies (hyaku-sen-man-oku) that are unthinkable (fukashi), unimaginable (fukagi), inexplicable (fukasetsu), etc. But the text does not get any clearer than that (Iwano, 1988:224).

The young man image, on the other hand, appears frequently in the eleventh century collection of medieval tales, *Konjaku monogatari*. Here *Jizô Bosatsu* repeatedly reveals himself times in the shape of a young priest or acolyte (*kozô*). He is usually described as a correctly dressed figure with a solemn expression (*sono katachi tangon nari*) and when his age is mentioned, he is usually around fourteen or fifteen years old (Umauchi, 1972). Rowland (1968:60) interprets the making of Buddhist deities with a feminine "child-like countenance" as an attempt to convey the gentle principles of compassion and non-aggression. But other interpretations link the youthful appearance of *Jizô* with contemporary homoerotic practices in Buddhist temples (Faure, 1998a).

The size of *Mizuko-Jizô* figures can also be explained in terms of their ritualistic function, an interpretation which I find persuasive. Quoting Sylvain Lévi's analysis of Vedic sacrifices, Faure (1998b:787) draws attention to the importance of the correct measurements in ceremonial offerings because "[t]he size of an icon was one of the essential elements in the success of a ritual". From this perspective, the diminutive size of a *Mizuko-Jizô* seems both natural and appropriate in those instances when he represents an aborted foetus in the *mizuko kuyô* rituals.

Traditionally the buddhas and bodhisattvas are classified as 'sex-less' beings, yet of a manly build (Irie & Aoyama, 1974:113-4; Sunim, 1999:131). This poses a real challenge when making these images, as artists are required to create a figure in the mould of a male with a handsome appearance but transcending muscular masculinity. In reality, there is a tendency to settle for androgynous appearances. The youthful image (shônen) of Jizô, too, is another way of getting around the gender problem since the bodhisattva is then depicted on a developmental stage where clearly defined sexuality and gender attributes have yet to manifested themselves.

2.5.3. Common Appearance of Mizuko-Jizô Today

Jizô statues in the company of infant figures have become a very common sight today. Small children may hide in the folds of his cassock, as described in the Jizô-wasan quoted above, or he may carry them in the manner of a mother cradling her offspring. No other Buddhist deity among the few with male characteristics is shown in this manner so any priestly figure surrounded by children can safely be identified as Mizuko-Jizô (see Appendix I).

In the quest for a readily identifiable representation, however, it is difficult to upstage the *Mizuko-Jizô* in Adashino Nembutsu-ji temple in Northern Kyoto. After the customary consecration ceremony (*kaigen-shiki*), the temple in the early 1970s presented to the public a statue of *Jizô* which challenged all previous iconographic notions of *Jizô* representations. A *Jizô bosatsu* standing on a throne of upturned lotus leaves, surrounded by tiny infants clinging to his robes was common enough. The startling new element was what the bodhisattva now held in his left hand. The traditional treasure-gem (*hôju*) had been replaced with a bubble-like receptacle that contained the image of a foetus in its later stages. The event was widely reported in the media but less, I suspect, because of its new and innovative iconography as for the shock value and the uncompromising focus on abortion. It is not every day one is confronted with an image of a foetus floating about inside a uterus substitute (asahi/kuyo.htm, 2002).

This statue, as far as I know, has not been reproduced elsewhere and one can only speculate as to the reason why. Perhaps its realism is too coarse and confrontaional. From a historical point of view, however, it is interesting to speculate about the extent to which the form is indebted to the well-known nineteenth century painting of 'Merciful Mother Kannon' (*Hibo Kannon*) by Kanô Hôgai (Hosono, 1973:10-13). Werblowsky (1991: 335) conjectures that there probably was no original connection between the two images but it is almost impossible to avoid a *post hoc* mental link. The images, how-ever, do differ in one important aspect: in the first instance, the foetoid attribute carried by *Jizô* forces us to consider a negative event, namely the termination of a life-form and the concomitant breach of the Buddhist injunction against the taking of life. Hôgai's symbolic painting of creation, on the other hand, transmits a feeling of warmth and tenderness. The

infant figure inside the huge drop of water which flows from the narrow flask in Kannon's hand represents nascent life, emphasised and affirmed through the umbilical cord that unites Kannon with the baby from where the cord spirals downwards to link it with the earth below.

2.5.4. Interpretations of the Nature of Mizuko-Jizô

How the status of these figurines is to be regarded in buddhological terms can be gleaned from the *mizuko* related literature which is published by some of the temples conducting the *mizuko kuyô* rituals. The status of these figurines in buddhological terms can be gleaned from the *mizuko*-related literature published by the Buddhist establishment which concerns the nature of the *mizuko kuyô* rituals and the intrinsic meaning of the *Mizuko-Jizô* figurines. However, given the fragmented nature of institutional Buddhism in Japan, these explanations do not have the same binding power as an *ex cathedra* pronouncement by the Holy See in Rome.

I suggested earlier (see above p.53) that the destruction of a *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine after a fixed period of time indicates that the figurines are not regarded as being on the same level as other sacred imagery. They cannot be seen as general object of religious worship either because of the role they play in the *mizuko kuyô* ritual. What then is the relationship between *Jizô*, the bodhisattva, and the *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine? What do these figurines really represent? Are they an embodiment of the sacred because of their close association with *Jizô bosatsu* or are they only signs or a reflection of the divine power emanating from *Jizô*? Not surprisingly, the ambiguities of the *mizuko* concept are reiterated in the divergent interpretation of the nature of *Mizuko-Jizô* as well. Below I shall provide three different answers to the question.

The temple authorities of Hasedera in Kamakura, one of the country's largest *mizuko kuyô* providers, state emphatically that the consecration of *Mizuko-Jizô* figurines is done as an act of gratitude towards *Jizô*, nothing else. The figurines must not be regarded as an extension of the *mizuko* spirit (*mizuko shôrei no bunshin to shite de wa arimasen*). The ritual of the *mizuko-kuyô*, we are told, merely establishes a link (*kuyô no en o musubu*) between the *mizuko* and *Jizô*. This

sacred connection makes *Mizuko-Jizô* special and people are admonished not to regard the statuettes as decorative objects (www.hasedera.jp/kuyouannai. html). This injunction hints at the widespread tendency in Japanese society - and elsewhere, too - to aestheticise Buddhist cult objects and to regard them as artistic commodities rather than devices whose meaning is derived from the ritualistic context in which they are used (Faure, 1998b: 771).

A promotional brochure from Shiunzan *Jizô* Temple, translated by LaFleur (1992: 221), puts forward a different interpretation. It explicitly says that a *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine can do double-service. A *Jizô* figurine, the brochure explains, symbolises both the spirit of the *mizuko* as well as *Jizô* himself. The *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine is, in other words, "a stand-in for *both* the dead infant and the saviour figure" (*ibid:* 8). This may account for the great popularity of these diminutive figures since a *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine gives visual form to something that otherwise does not exist outside the recollection of the individual who has had an abortion and those who performed it. The lack of physical remains in the case of an aborted *mizuko* is compounded by the absence of official certificates and proofs that there ever was a foetus inside the womb. It is at this point that a *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine may provide a comforting focal point that gives shape to something as hazy as an emotional attachment to an aborted foetus.

In this regard I find it useful to return to the explanation of the internet flow chart of An'yô-ji (see p.46 & Appendix I). One recalls that once the online *mizuko kuyô* was over, a small *Mizuko-Jizô* would exit from the *Jizô-dô* and, according to the caption provided by the temple, this image would be filled with the spirit of the foetus or the dead infant who had been the beneficiary of the memorialisation ritual (An'yô-ji, 2004). In this interpretation we are no longer dealing with a symbolic representation but a ritualistic embodiment and animation of the *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine.

The reaction by some to the inscriptions on the back of the *Jizô* figurines placed inside temple compounds reveals an analogue way of thinking. In temples, *Mizuko-Jizô* statuettes with characters written on their bodies invariably carry the legend *mizuko bodai* on their backs, *bodai* being "the standard referent to the

repose of salvation of the dead" (Inagaki, 1992:13). In some instances the given name of a boy or a girl has been added. Purists generally object to any form of writing on religious icons. To them it is tantamount to writing on the body of the Buddha himself. Once a statue has been consecrated, they explain, it becomes one with the deity it represents (Fukuda, 1988:96). Nevertheless, writing on the *Jizô* figures seems to be a fairly widespread practice.

2.5.5. Posthumous Names (Kaimyô)

Another contentious issue is whether or not it is acceptable to grant a *kaimyô* (posthumous Buddhist name) to a *mizuko*. As is a part of the *mizuko* paradigm it should at least be mentioned here, if only because at times the practice may replace the consecration of a *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine.

The giving of *kaimyô* to dead infants was not wholly unknown in the Edo period. These posthumous names had a lyrically ring to them such as 'Dream of Spring' *(Shunmu)* and 'Summer Cloud' *(Kaun)*, setting them apart from the hierarchical titles and degrees awarded to deceased adults (www.ne.jp/asahi/time/saman/kuyo. htm). Granting a *kaimyô* is the prerogative of the Buddhist establishment and a significant source of income so "there are special manuals for priests giving detailed instructions in the matter of *kaimyô*" (Werblowsky, 1991:309).

Ooms (1976:65) shows how the Japanese fondness for classification does not stop at death:

Any human being who starts this earthly journey receives a new name at birth. In the same way, every soul who starts the other journey after his death, a new starting point, receives a new name. He receives his first name, (*zokumyô*), when he leaves his mother's womb and starts an independent existence: this revelation of a new power is consecrated by the new name. He receives his second name, (*kaimyô*), when his soul leaves the body'.

In the past one's age at the time of death was the criterion that traditionally determined whether the body of a dead infant was to receive a funeral or just be disposed of as an object. There was no consensus on the matter and attitudes varied considerably from region to region. It is as if the many different practices

seem to reflect the nature of the Japanese language where there exists a "wide diversity possible in the verbal responses to even the simplest situations" (Miller, 1970:290).

This contrasts starkly with current practices, which Fukuhara (1988:146) describes with considerable disapproval. While he can understand the feelings of a *mizuko's* 'mother', he says, the reason why stillbirths and foetuses were not given a *kaimyô* in the past is because it implies that the bearer will uphold the Buddhist precepts. For very obvious reasons, a *mizuko* is not in that position. It never developed to the point where it would have wanted to follow the Buddhist path thus making the whole idea of awarding a *kaimyô* redundant.

Miyake (1995:262-3) makes a distinction between postnatal deaths and the *mizuko* of an aborted foetus. Dead infants $(y\hat{o}ji)$ may have been 'returned' but they are reborn at a later stage. Their lives follow the same trajectory as adult lives: they are born, they die only to be reborn once more. *Mizuko*, on the other hand, join the spirit world of deceased adults directly thus by-passing forever the realm of the living. There is a strong theological plausibility to this argument but I am not convinced that this distinction is generally accepted. But, as pointed out earlier, any insistence on discovering a representative notion in this matter is bound to meet with frustration, a fact illuminated by the various theories discussed by the folklorists Chiba and Ohtsu (1983:168-178).

Just as the separate graves of men and women in the past eventually merged and became one common grave (Newell, 1976:24), so the separate graves of children, which formerly were located away from those of the adults, have now in many instances become unified with the graves of the adults. Until fairly recently only children who had lived beyond their seventh year would receive a regular burial, a practice reflected in the common saying *nanatsu made kami no ko* ([one is a] child of the kami until the age of seven). Today this century old age barrier between dead children and adults is weakening and spirits, whether young or old, are now regarded by many to have a similar nature. The ancient concept of ancestral lineage, the certainty as to who was an ancestor and who was not has been replaced by a system "which allows the family members the choice of whom to enshrine.

Empathy and personal feelings...have become primary criteria for enshrinement" (Reader, 1991:94).

This has produced a conceptual problem, as Hoshino and Takeda (1987:314-5) are quick to point out. There is no need to grieve excessively about the demise of a vague life form which may come back again at a more opportune moment in time, as it was believed in the past. However, when this life form is regarded as a finite, irreplaceable human being, as is sometimes the case today, then we may justifiably speak about a paradigm shift. This shift reflects the new reality of the post-war family system. The extent to which the abolition in 1947 of the inter-generational ie as a legal unit has changed the concept of self in Japan is still being debated. Hendry (1996:23) writes that although "Japanese social scientists have predicted its [i.e., the ie] total demise for many years [but] deeply held family values die hard, and the principles of the old family system have by no means disappeared". Creighton (1990:294) explains that "high cultural value is placed on grouporiented behaviour as opposed to the Western ideal of individualism and selfreliance", a view which is wholly endorsed by Nakamura (1974:409) who writes that "consciousness of the individual as an entity appears always in the wider sphere of consciousness of social relationships". However, writing decades later, Ochiai (1996:181) insists that "now it is a matter of observable fact that, whether we like it or not, the basic unit of the social system is already changing to the individual". This is a subject I treat in greater detail below (cf. section 2.6.5.).

VI. Mizuko Kuyô: Controversies

2.6.0. Jizô and Abortions before the 1960s

Jizô's historical connection with abortions per se has never been a matter of debate but the assessment of the mizuko kuyô ritual is far from uniform among buddhologists and other scholars in and outside Japan even if most seem to agree that it is complex and many-faceted issue.

Mochizuki et al. (1974:211-216) run a historico-moralist argument when discussing the origin of *mizuko* and the practice of infanticide (*mabiki*) in the past. In premodern Japan, the authors claim, people did not make a qualitative distinction between life-forms as they appeared inside and outside the female womb and they

did not attempt to rationalise away their "crime" (tsumi) of infanticide (eiji-satsujin) just because they were 'only' dealing with a foetus. Here tsumi appears to be used synonymously with 'immoral act' rather than in the buddhological sense of 'transgression'. Each of the many statues of Jizô we see on the roadside in rural Japan today, they write, is a clear testimony to the strong feelings of remorse and the awareness of guilt (tsumi no ishiki) that people felt in the past when they had engaged in infanticide. And, they continue, the tears and cries of remorse of those who terminated infant life still emanate from these statues today. That the practice of infanticide or, alternatively, abortion, was not universally accepted can further be gauged from the contents of some late nineteenth century paintings and ema votive pictures which depict women falling into hell because of their involvement in mabiki (Miya, 1988:80).

This accusatory and moralising interpretation does not sit well with Hoshino and Takeda (1993:183). They assert that such attitudes were far from being universal and that the "responsibility [for *mabiki*] was shared by the community in general ... there may not have been any sense of responsibility at all", a sentiment shared by Scheid (2002:2). Smith (1992:66-7) also raises the issue of shared responsibility. Takemi (1988:48) is not prepared to go so far as to say that infanticide in the pre-industrial age was an act of no consequence and she writes that although the practice of *mabiki* was considered morally reprehensible, it was not considered a crime. Chiba and Ohtsu (1983:42) make a strong case for poverty and famine as the determining factors. Infanticide or foeticide during this period, they say, was carried out in lieu of other alternatives. Hoshino and Takeda (1987:313) at one point even suggest that *mabiki* at times could be interpreted as "rebellion against the feudal order".

This accommodating attitude towards infanticide was brought to a halt soon after the Meiji Restoration (1868) when abortions were redefined as criminal acts in the new criminal code of 1880 (Takemi, 1978:48-50). It is still debated among scholars whether these new statues were promulgated with the aim of appearing modern and civilised in a Western sense or whether these attempts by the Meiji government to regulate the areas of female reproduction and abortion were motivated by "Confucian notions of ethicality, which made the continuity and

prosperity of the family essential to the social order" (Burns, 2006:37). What we do know from the discussions between the Japanese officials and Gustave Emile Boissonade, the French legal advisor to the government, is that although the Japanese did not look favourably on abortion, the practice was reluctantly accepted as a means of coping with financial adversity. The European advisor, on the other hand, condemned abortion in strong, moral terms and he recommended that it be punished severely. Eventually the Japanese attitude prevailed and only minor jail terms or the payment of fines were imposed on those found guilty of the new crime of abortion (*ibid*). This leniency, however, should not hide the fact that abortion had now become criminalised.

Official policies promoted female fertility with an ever-increasing vigour which culminated in the wartime slogan 'give birth [to more children] and increase [the population]' (umeyô - fuyaseyô). This wishful thinking did not influence the birth rate in any noticeable way, which rose significantly only after the World War II (Ochiai, 1996:39). After 1945 population growth gradually came to be regarded as problematic and the eighty-year-old statutes which had criminalised abortion were being reconsidered. "How to popularize family planning became no.1 policy in health care of post-war Japan and [with the promulgation of] the Eugenic Protection law in 1948...Japan became the second largest populated country after the Soviet Union in the semi-liberalization of induced abortion" (Shinagawa, 1996:1).

2.6.1. Attitudes Towards Abortion After World War II

There is an almost automatic assumption that abortion rates everywhere are linked to teenage sexuality so it comes as no surprise when for instance the Guttmacher Institute (2001:4) writes that the "US adolescent abortion rate remains one of the highest among developed countries". Yet it is not a universal phenomenon as the situation in Japan demonstrates. The figures from an earlier survey by Roth and Aoyama (1973:111-112) showed that the frequency of induced abortions was highest in the age group between thirty-five and forty-four years of age. In this group "Women...used abortion to assist in child spacing, to limit the number of children, or to achieve both". In other words, when the ideal number of two children has been reached, "self-image and social expectation", as Smith (1992: 71) explains, are much more likely to influence a Japanese woman's decision to

have an abortion than any other consideration. Hoshino and Takeda (1987:305, 311 & 1993:179-181) reject outright the often-heard claim that the number of foeticides in Japan is related to a decline in public morals and to increasing teenage promiscuity. They demonstrate that in the early 1980s the group below twenty years of age accounted for only 3.7 per cent of the total number of registered abortions, a figure which had changed only slightly when they revised their paper six years later. And, finally, with statistics from the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Ashino Yuriko, the deputy director of the Family Planning Federation of Japan, shows that in the year 2000, the abortion rate in the group between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-nine accounted for over fifty-five per cent of the national average (Ashino, 2002).

Resort to abortion as a method for spacing the birth of a desired number of children is a fact that does not get the attention it deserves. But many women in Japan rely on abortion, rather than contraception, as a family planning technique. This may have something to do with the limited range of contraceptive choices that traditionally were available. Low-dose oral contraceptives only became available as an "over-the counter" drug in Japan in 1999. Termination may also be related to an "inability to use contraceptive methods effectively" (Roth & Aoyama, 1973:112) which has resulted in an "overall contraceptive prevalence (less than 60 per cent [which] is among the lowest (sic) in the industrialised world" (Sato & Iwasawa, 2006:52). One can only speculate why this is so but I think that Ochiai (1996:43-4) presents us with a strong argument when she describes a general reluctance in Japan to speak openly about sexual matters of a private nature. This view is corroborated by Dales (2005:30) who reports a "reluctance to engage in discussions of sexuality and sex" in the target group of her research, a conclusion which was also reached by Anderson and Martin (1997:128), when assessing what their female informants in a Tokyo temple were willing to talk about.

In her book with the revealing title *Abortion before Birth Control*, Norgren pays special attention to the way in which Japan's policy makers have been positive about abortion but have followed restrictive policies in matters regarding contraception. In most other countries there is a tendency to combine the two factors so

that they are either treated in a restrictive or permissive fashion (Norgren, 2001:3). Taking the above factors into account, it comes as no surprise that the majority of Japanese women today view induced abortion with favour (Goto et al., 2000:301; Sato & Iwasawa, 2006:38). In the past, pregnancies were usually terminated because people's economic circumstances did not provide the wherewithal to feed an extra mouth. However, this is not the situation today.

Anderson and Martin (1997:136) make the important observation that most writers on the subject seem to take feelings of guilt for granted whenever a woman has had an abortion although it does not necessarily follow. Women cannot be regarded as a homogeneous category and it is an essentialist error to postulate that everyone will have the same reaction to a given event. That is not to say that feelings of unease or even guilt are totally absent. Roth and Aoyama (1973:111, 104) report that in their Japanese surveys "less induced abortion was reported through interviews than via self-administered recall questionnaires" and that "many women travel to neighbouring towns or use false names when they seek an abortion", which leads one to conclude that abortion is not a dispassionate subject.

Komatsu (2003:269) adds yet another perspective to this debate about attitudes by showing that some women influenced by New Age thinking, even tend to view abortion as a form of "life therapy" and character builder in that the event forces people to live with the results of own choices.

Many Japanese feminists are highly critical of those aspects of the *mizuko* narrative that are open to manipulation. In articles in *Josei*, a Japanese feminist website journal, the Buddhist scholars Igeta (1996) and Nakano (1997) describe how some members of the establishment attempt to dominate the lives of women by exploiting *mizuko kuyô* as a means for creating guilt. On doctrinal grounds, the charge goes, Buddhist institutions reject the practice of abortion but the same institutions are quick to profit financially from the very same act they have rejected as unethical by offering ceremonies to alleviate feelings of guilt once an abortion has taken place. These objections are not baseless. As LaFleur (1992:167) already pointed out in the early 1990s, the majority of active participants in the *mizuko* debate, whether for or against, is doubtlessly male which makes it difficult to

disagree with Anderson and Martin (1997:121) when they say that "women's voices...the voices of those most intimately involved in the memorial service, are largely absent". Tamanoi (1990:17-37) may have been overly optimistic about the pace with which women would discover that they have a voice of their own and that other women are willing to listen to them. However, there is no doubt that the gender imbalance is being corrected and that many women, young and old, have decided to speak for themselves. The previously mentioned chat room, 'Tears In Heaven', which has been accessed by people in the thousands, is a case in point (see below p.90).

The internet is one way in which women can make themselves heard. A certain degree of discernment is required but in cyberspace it is not difficult to obtain advice untainted by partisan interests. On the web it is possible to read in detail about the experiences of other women and what their feelings are about abortions and *mizuko kuyô*. The advisory website I introduced earlier, Kanashiikoto.com, is a case in point.

As a religious alternative the internet is ideal since virtual action does not necessarily compromise individual privacy. It bypasses the complicated structures of social expectations and norms that dominate in face-to-face situations. If one does not like the message on a given website, there is no need for embarrassed explanations to an absent "other" when exiting and accessing a more congenial site. One click of the mouse and a different ambience becomes a reality within seconds. Tamura's (1998) research into religious activities by the Japanese on the internet has shown how the internet removes social barriers and inhibitions and how the anonymity ensured by the electronic medium "offers an opportunity to people to speak about themselves free from social concern". The internet removes social pressures and creates an open communicative environment where involvement only goes as far as a given participant wants it to proceed. Fukamizu (2007: 7) in a much more recent study concurs and quotes Ms. I, a survey participant, who told him that: "On the internet, I can let it all out without hiding anything, because no one knows who anyone is. I don't know who the others are, but they all responded with great sincerity. I was very happy". In this sense the web can be seen as a source of liberation and empowerment, as an out-reach by those whose

voices are timid and who have a hard time being heard. This lack of repressive control gives the individual a host of interpretative possibilities and a personal freedom to do and think what is agreeable at the moment. But it also indicates a shift away from a shared communal experience to a conceptual world where everything is personalised in the same manner as the present-day secretive performances of *mizuko kuyô*.

From the thirteen links to chat rooms on kanashiikoto.com, I have chosen one with the evocative title 'Tears In Heaven' (http://yokohama.cool.ne.jp/tiheaven), managed by someone named 'Mirai' (future). She introduces herself as a thirty-year-old housewife who has had one abortion and who is the mother of two children. It was last updated on thirty-first of May, 2007. By that date it had registered over 130,000 'hits', making it a very popular site by any account. The homepage states that the purpose of the site is (was) to exchange information about contraception by those who are troubled by *(nayande iru)* abortion. It also announces in no unclear terms that it will not engage in any debate about the moral rights or wrongs of abortion.

For reasons of space, I shall paraphrase the long description of the events which led up to Mirai's abortion and the steps she took to deal with its consequences. There is nothing unusual about the course events took in Mirai's case. She writes that she initially did not bother about having a *mizuko kuyô* since she was afraid of the costs. However, after a while she would go to a temple on the name-day of the aborted child, put some money in the offertory box before a *Mizuko-Jizô* statue, light a candle, and put her hands together in a gesture of respect and prayer. But she still felt that this was not enough, so six years after the abortion had taken place, she went to Hasedera temple in Kamakura (see above pp.53-5) to request an institutional performance of a *mizuko kuyô*. After a consultation with a priest, she decided on the form of the *kuyô* to be performed, which included a *Mizuko-Jizô* figurine and paid \(\frac{1}{2}\)20,000 (approx. \(\frac{1}{2}\)200 AUD). She also arranged with the temple to notify her at Obon and the yearly equinoxes, the customary dates for memorial services. Even if she was not able to go to the temple on all these occasions, it gave her great comfort, she wrote, to know that 'her *Jizô' (jibun no Jizô-sama)*

was together with all the other figurines on the temple premises, connected through the memorial rites.

An instinctive reaction to religious activities on the net is to reject the whole notion as a misguided engagement with a false reality. One may see an image, hear a voice, or even read a text on a computer screen but they all appear to exist on a different plane. However, how far is a digital buddha removed from a solid, three-dimensional image? As Tamura (1998) points out in his research, it is not the physical properties of a religious icon that makes it sacred, it is "the mental distance to Buddha", the Buddha we have in our minds who determines whether the activity is meaningful or not. The role of symbols, which is so important in a Japanese context, is also well served with computer mediated images that can be shaped and transformed at will and not subject to the normal constraints of material objects in the real world. The structure of communal worship in Japan, i.e. worship with an officiating priest and with participants whose role is largely passive, is also easily transferred to a virtual situation. The ritual is still performed in front of one's eyes, but on a computer screen. The act of watching is still the same. The aura of 'being there' is obviously lost but, as pointed out above, there are advantages as well as losses.

2.6.2. The Causes for the Popularity of Mizuko Kuyô

From the inscription on *Jizô* statues and the use of votive plaques (*ema*), which are also used widely today, we know that dead infants have been memorialised in one way or another - as were all sentient beings - at least since the eighth century (Chiba & Ohtsu, 1983:67-80). According to Terauchi (1984:93), the term *mizuko*, which was used in the pre-war years but without its current hyphenated combination with *mizuko-kuyô* and *Mizuko-Jizô*, became almost obsolete in the immediate post-war era. Infant deaths, which previously had been recorded in temple files (*kakochô*), were now left undocumented, he says, as more and more people gave birth and received medical care in hospitals where stillbirths and dead foetuses were disposed of without any rites or registration.

We may also recall the century-old custom in the Tsuruga district of putting up little images of *Jizô* when an infant had died. Yet the way infants and foetuses

were buried, if at all, show how different the situation was in the past. It is instructive to compare the folklorist Chiba's (1983:15) account about the treatment of the remains of his stillborn elder brother with the attention given to *mizuko* at present. In Chiba's case the existence of a stillborn infant was hardly acknowledged and no one made a fuss about. Put away in a little box, "secretly buried in the corner of the family grave", it was remembered only by the woman who gave birth to it, i.e. Chiba's mother. To me this description illustrates more than anything else the chasm that exists between past and current attitudes and behaviour towards the dead. A very personal and private way of dealing with post-abortion grief or the loss of an infant has been replaced by semi-public rituals, frequently of a costly nature.

According to Brooks (1981:120-122), the starting point for the popularity of *mizuko kuyô* was a televised show that specialised in unusual customs and practices. A live broadcast of the memorialisation rites in 1975, she reckons, struck a sympathetic cord among the viewers. From that time onwards *mizuko kuyô* started to take on the character of a boom and the demand for the ceremony to be performed became so common, she says, that within a few years, scores of established Buddhist temples were conducting the ritual throughout Japan.

I am inclined to date the beginning from a few years earlier. The opening ceremony of the much-maligned Purple Cloud Jizô Temple (Shiunzan Jizô-ji), which right from its inception specialised in *mizuko kuyô*, took place in September, 1971. Harrison (1999:775) quotes from an interview she conducted with the founder's son in which he said that at the time "there wasn't any place in Japan to teach people that they should do *kuyô* for their *mizuko*". The importance of the occasion, as well as the contemporary attitude towards abortions and *mizuko kuyô*, can be gauged by the rank of the dignitaries who were invited to the dedication ceremony. The then Prime Minister Satô, other important representatives from the National Diet, the governor of the prefecture, and many more lent a certain dignity to the proceedings by their presence *(ibid)*. Another important provider of *mizuko kuyô*, the Enman-in Monzeki temple, began its activities even earlier. To celebrate the 1,000-year anniversary of the temple which was founded during the reign of Emperor Murakami (946-967 CE), abbot Miura embarked on a

large-scale campaign to raise the awareness for the need of *mizuko kuyô*, which he describes as follows:

We put advertisements in the papers. I gave lectures about the significance of mizugo (sic) memorial services in order to explain them in great detail. I appeared on radio and television to describe the importance of these mizugo services. The result was people in tears, people...travelling from faraway Hokkaido with a cutting of the newspaper in their wallet...As the campaign gathered momentum, temples all over the country gained a higher understanding of mizugo services, and there was a dramatic increase in the number of temples actually offering services. There were also temples that were using "mizugo prayer" as their catch phrase. From our point of view this was an extremely happy turn of events (www.izu.co.jp/~enman/7.htm - Dec. 18. 2002)

At this point the above quotation will have to serve as a necessary preliminary to my exploration of the fundamental causes for the popularity of *mizuko-kuyô*. Suffice it to say that people's individual reasons for requesting *mizuko kuyô* are probably as different and varied as are the opinions of scholars and commentators when they try to assess the meaning and benefits of the rites. Given the popularity of mizuko kuyô, it appears reasonable to assume that it fulfils a need for some kind of ceremony. This sentiment is echoed in the analysis by Smith (1992:77) who regards it as a "redressive ritual", assisting people to deal with a sense of "broken connections". Others see the rites as a therapeutic means of obtaining a form of catharsis, pointing to the public testimonies of remorse and guilt that have been alleviated with mizuko kuyô (LaFleur, 2002:197; Hoshino & Takeda, 1993:186; Igeta, 1996:291-6). It is also possible to find parallels between mizuko kuyô and other contemporary rituals where the participants expect a favourable outcome within the foreseeable future (genze-riyaku) as a result of the ritual performed. The desired result may not be of a material form yet the supplicants still want something they do not already possess, namely, peace of mind. We have also seen how some many organise their own rituals without any involvement by the clergy. Nevertheless, the most common *mizuko kuyô* appears to take place within the Buddhist establishment where many temples conduct the rites on a regular basis.

2.6.3. Dissident Voices

The many insecurities experienced by ordinary people when they are forced to arrange a burial and memorial services have been memorably depicted by Itami Jûzô in his satirical movie 'The Funeral' (Osôshiki). Several tragic-comic situations in the movie portray a loss of communal knowledge regarding funerals and a progressive commercialisation and commodification of death with a concomitant dependence on a new class of professional providers of funereal services (sôgiya). These scenes are not pure fantasy; they reflect a social reality. There now exists in Japan a funeral industry where professionals take care of practical matters such as dealing with the authorities, preparing the body of the deceased, providing coffins, and transport of the corpse (Rowe, 2000:352-3). The active involvement of priests will in most cases only occur after an introduction by the funeral company (ibid: 356). This late introduction is responsible for a new set of considerations since Buddhist mortuary rites are not uniform; different sects use different scriptures and have different requirements. The priest is expected to provide the customary funereal rites whereas the funeral company is responsible for the overall management of the funeral (Kenney & Gilday, 2000:167, 174). "The cost of a funeral is something which is not usually made public. It is a fact of life not to be openly discussed" (Nakamaki, 1986:180). The result is that many people regard funeral expenses as excessive and a pervasive suspicion of a supposedly greedy priesthood is only exacerbated by an ignorance of what really is happening.

In defence of the clergy it can be said that their means of making money is severely restricted by Japanese legislation. The complete withdrawal of financial support in the post-war period has forced the temples and shrines in Japan, as a matter of pure survival, to be responsive and "proactive of current and developing social realities" (Nelson, 1997:703). Confiscation of temple land and the strict separation of state and religion in Japan after the Pacific War have meant that the majority of temples are dependent on commercial activities such as the building of parking lots, renting out empty space and staging festivals (*ibid*). Today, funerals and other mortuary services account for close to two thirds of temples' income. It is true that costs are prohibitive and it is not unusual to spend several million Yen on a funeral but, as mentioned above, the religious establishment has to share the money with funeral companies and catering services (Horii, 2006:12-3). It is only

in the case of *mizuko kuyô*, when no burial or cremation as such takes place, that priests and their temples are not obliged to share the fees and subsequent financial benefits with others.

Under these circumstances it is understandable that *mizuko kuyô* are not always conducted in a world of compassion and unselfish sanctity. Crass commercialisation is evident in many instances and being a priest in itself does not provide immunity from pure financial greed, as is evident in the following tragic-comical exchange. A long-time Jesuit resident of Japan, reports an unexpected internal competition between different temples offering *mizuko kuyô*, unfortunately without any specific date. The 'Great Kannon Temple' in Sakakibara, Mie prefecture, he writes, had in newspaper advertisements put forward the claim that *Jizô* was not quite up to the job of taking care of so many *mizuko*. *Kannon*, on the other hand, the principal deity of this temple, was "really better equipped to...take care of the water-babies" (Zimmerman, 2002b).

Yet the sheer scale of the practice cannot be interpreted as 'nothing but' manipulation of gullible people and written off as such. Even if many of the memorial services may be requested out of a sense of guilt and fear, or even a genuine concern for the destiny of foetal spirits, it is also possible to see them as part of a larger cultural practice where $kuy\hat{o}$ rites are conducted for people, animals, dolls, needles and many other objects once they have reached their use-by-date. Given the wide range of divinities, people, and inanimate objects for whom or for which it is possible to perform $kuy\hat{o}$, the inclusion of mizuko as the beneficiary of a $kuy\hat{o}$ rites does not seem a strange choice. As Kretschmer (2000) demonstrates in her study of 'needle memorialisation rites' ($hari kuy\hat{o}$), almost anything or anyone can become the focus of a memorialisation rite as long as someone is willing to perform the ritual.

2.6.4. Tatari - Curses by Vengeful Spirits

Vengeful or avenging spirits (*tatari*) have a long history in Japan and the present-day fear of *tatari* is a belief with deep roots in the past.

[T]he concept and cultural role of tatari...is old and probably antedates all the written records we have...from early times in Japanese culture there was a deep sense that persons who had died "unnatural" deaths were virtually certain to feel tremendous resentment vis-à-vis the living and would, unless somehow pacified, wreck havoc on the living (LaFleur, 1992:172).

Many tales of the supernatural in the Edo period revolved around childbirth and the bringing up of children. These tales (shôdô setsuwa) were used in Buddhist sermons to illustrate how the laws of karma operate. They often featured a vengeful spirit who is reborn as the child of the person who had done it wrong (Tsutsumi, 2002). Today many believe that the *mizuko* is in a similar position to harm those who did not allow it to develop and live. Others find this idea both contentious and objectionable. Brooks (1981:136), for instance, outlines the official Buddhist position that does not accept the existence of spirits of vengeful infants, or even unborn foetuses, who wander about with the intent of harming those who did not want them initially. But whether the *tatari* concept belongs to the category of 'simple folk belief' or not, it is very much in the forefront of the mizuko debate. A popular reference book of social terms and trends (Jiyû Kokumin-sha, 1991:1075), to give but one example, defines *mizuko kuyô* as a ceremony in which the parents ask the spirit of the aborted foetus for forgiveness in order to avoid its grudge (urami). This is also the stance taken by Werblowsky (1991:301). The real objective of *mizuko kuyô*, he writes, is to pacify the spirits of the dead (shizume); it is in his opinion "neither a 'requiem mass' nor a 'memorial service' but a pacification rite". Enman-ji temple in Osaka is at pains to explain on its website that *mizuko-kuyô* is a memorialisation rite and not a rite of exorcism (www.enmanji.com/soudan/tatari.html. 2004). Watanabe (1984: 103), however, points out that the feelings towards dead spirits (shirei) are fraught with ambiguity where fear and respect towards the dead coexist side by side. This is clearly reflected in the taboos and concepts of pollution surrounding the burial customs and the yearly rituals for the dead.

Hardacre (1997:77-89) gives many examples of how weekly magazines try to grab the attention of their female readership with articles headed by captions such as "Are you aware of the true horror of *mizuko* spirits?", "Attack by *mizuko* spirits", etc. As a rule, these articles link individual problems directly to abortions and they

invariably advocate the need for *mizuko kuyô* on behalf of the aborted foetus. But, as Tanabe (1998) reminds us, it is problematic to accept articles of this nature at face value. Even if they happened to be true, they still cannot tell us how widespread the belief in *tatari* is. What is true, however, is that vengeful attacks by mizuko spirits or the possibility thereof is a topic that frequently appears in the media. And not just there; Enman-in temple seems to have constructed a worldview almost wholly determined by the *mizuko* discourse. On the one hand it explains that ancestral memorialisation (senzo kuyô) and mizuko kuyô are quite similar. The rites only differ in the sense that ancestral memorialisation deals with people who died of natural causes. Mizuko kuyô, on the other hand, addresses a transgression since the precept against the taking of life (sesshôkai) was violated (www.enmanin.jp/mizu/sub1.htm - 2005). Abbot Miura of the same temple wrote a small tract in the 1980s, *The Forgotten Child*, which dealt with various aspects of *mizuko*. Until recently it could be downloaded from the web in both Japanese and English language versions. Readers were informed that happiness is a state in the present that results from the performance of good acts in the past. In many passages, however, this traditional interpretation of karma was thrown to the wind and replaced by thinly veiled intimidation. Predicaments and misfortune, the abbot wrote, were directly connected with a disregard or light-hearted attitude towards mizuko kuyô and abortions. Neglecting mizuko kuyô, the reader was told, is an act which produces unfavourable karma, the effect of which will be felt in future lives. It is harmful, not only to the individual, but also to his or her next of kin (Miura, www. izu.co.jp/~enman/; 1989, chapters 6, 9,10).

This *tatari* argument is also pursued in other circles. Some of the newer religious sects seek to find the cause for individual adversity in the reaction of a 'slighted' or 'annoyed' *mizuko* who is dissatisfied with the way in which it is being commemorated. Some commentators go so far as to say that belief in the destructive existence of *tatari* is a characteristic of the newer sects (Tamura, 241:1969). Hardship and tribulation, they seem to assert, are directly linked to the phenomenon of ignored or neglected *mizuko* (Earhart, 1989:56-60). This argument is not without some inherent pitfalls. In the recent past several temples have been successfully sued by women who considered themselves to be victims of a mixture of scare tactics and chequebook religion. Because of the *tatari* fear caused by the

reckless preaching of certain individual clerics, these women had felt obliged to donate large sums of money to defray the costs for the performance of lavish *mizuko kuyô*. The court has found some of the methods employed highly objectionable and has ordered that the money be returned (Anderson & Martin, 1997:122).

2.6.5. The Social Origin of Mizuko-Kuyô

There are differences of opinion concerning the precise dating of *mizuko kuyô's* inception. What is most remarkable is the agreement that this infant memorialisation cult is so recent in origin and did not begin until the period between the late 1960s and early 1970s. The practice seems to have become a trend, like so many other movements, only when conspicuous in numerical terms.

To arrive at a reasonable explanation about the causes and the origin of *mizuko-kuyô*, requires the investigation of the social conditions that prevailed when the infant memorialisation rites first became popular. Since abortions and miscarriages are the *sine qua non* of *mizuko-kuyô*, it has been imperative to investigate changing Japanese attitudes over time towards fertility, contraceptive methods, and abortion even if such topics in themselves are not the main interest of this thesis.

I have already mentioned the ambiguous attitudes towards abortions and infanticide in the pre-industrial area. While not officially condoned, these acts were not regarded as crimes and for centuries they had been a popular means of birth control. The foetuses or infant bodies did not receive much attention and they were usually disposed of in an unceremonious manner. However, soon after the inauguration of the Meiji Restoration (1868), abortion as well as all acts promoting or assisting abortion were criminalised (Takemi, 1988:48-50). It took a military defeat of massive proportions to change official attitudes towards control of female fertility once again.

The defeat of Japan in World War II transformed the society almost beyond recognition. The devastated industries and cities were unable to revive a collapsed labour market after August 1945 and food shortages were endemic as was the black market (Gayn, 1976:145-149; Andô et al., 1968:60). The country was in

shambles, and the economic prospect very grim. It is hard to imagine today just how bad the outlook for Japan's future was in the first decade after the war. Edwin Reischauer, the renowned American scholar and later ambassador to Japan under the Kennedy administration, in the early 1950s assessed the nation's prospects in remarkably pessimistic terms. "[T]he economic future of Japan is at best doubtful. The population continues to grow at more than a million a year, making the problem of finding exports to balance imports even more acute." And on the same page, he forecasts that "the population may reach stability at something over 100,000,000. But even if this should happen, Japan will continue to face a very difficult situation" (Reischauer, 1953:263).

Such predictions by this historian proved of course to be erroneous and subsequent editions of the book replaced them with a more positive outlook, expressed in sentences that described Japan as having "the world's fastest growing economy" (Reischauer, 1972:295). I draw attention to these observations in order to emphasize how unfavourable the social conditions were to the raising of large families. In the light of the socio-economic situation, it comes as no surprise that a there was a reorientation in political attitudes towards population growth and an increase in efforts to change the laws regulating the citizens' access to abortions.

In 1948 Japan legalised induced abortion after the Diet passed the Eugenic Protection Law (yûsei hogo-hô), which was further amended in 1949 and in 1996. Abortions were made legal provided they were performed by a qualified physician and if the birth of a child would cause the prospective mother economic hardship, "a development which essentially made abortion available on demand" (Harrison, 1999:772; Roth & Aoyama, 1973:103-4). There is a requirement to report all abortions to the authorities but for a variety of reasons, physicians do not always comply with those regulations which means the actually number of abortions performed is higher than those statistically shown (Sato & Iwasawa, 2006:51).

Statistics on abortions became available after 1949 and they reveal a remarkable upward surge for the next six years. The "Summary of vital statistics" (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2006) shows that 246,104 abortions were performed during 1948, the first year after the introduction of the Eugenic Protection Law,

and in 1955 the number rose to 1,170,143. These totals have never been reached again. In fact, from that year onwards there has been a slow, but steady decline and the latest available figures from 2004 stand at 301,673.

Many commentators assume that the high abortion rate in the post-war era is directly related to the emergence of *mizuko kuyô* and that somehow this high rate precipitated a need for a set of ritualistic structures that on a formal level could alleviate the burden of post-abortion trauma. Werblowsky (1991:324) notes that "The association of mizuko and mizuko kuyô with artificial abortion...appears to be a phenomenon after the 1960s". LaFleur (1992:138) writes that "in response to rising abortion rates, un-affiliated institutions of a clearly entrepreneurial character jumped into the picture", offering the public the *mizuko* rites that older and more mainstream Buddhist institutions were reluctant to provide. Smith (1992:65) describes the same rites as "a reaction to the widespread modern phenomenon of abortion" in which "the primary response to this phenomenon is known as *mizuko kuyô*". Underwood (1999:740) is even more specific when she claims that "the number of abortions has soared with a corresponding increase in the performance of *mizuko kuyô*".

There are two flaws with this theory: if abortion rates were the trigger mechanism for the invention of a new ritual, why did it not happen during the previous decades when the number of induced abortions was at it highest with over a million recorded incidents? This theory also fails to explain why people abandoned old and tried methods for dealing with grief and instead had decided to 'invent' something new? After all, abortions and infanticides had been going on for centuries yet for all purposes people seemingly managed with the ritualistic means they had at their disposal.

My approach to these matters draws heavily on a body of literature that previous writers on the topic have ignored. I argue that a demographic shift combined with the emergence of an urbanised and isolated, white-collar middle class was greater than any other influence in the genesis of *mizuko kuyô*. In my judgment, the media only served as a catalyst and populariser of *mizuko kuyô*. The ritual was no more invented by journalists than created by a rapacious and venal priesthood. The

clergy was involved but only in its capacity as facilitator and provider of rituals. Initially the Buddhist priesthood only reacted to a demand; they did not create it.

The exodus of population from country to town is not a new phenomenon in Japan. It had already started with the industrialization around 1900, if not even earlier. But social expectations during the 1960s were different from today. People were brought up to think in terms of the stem family (ie) where a "duty of obedience to the house-head, however unreasonable his commands might be, was enforced as the cardinal virtue of filial piety, the axis of family morality" (Fukutake, 1989:41). This bond went beyond mere customary obedience; peasant households were expected to continue to look after their urban relatives and vice versa in times of sickness and unemployment (ibid:69). Geographical distance did not mean decreased responsibilities; it only made it more difficult to carry them out. However, with the revision of the Civil Code after World War II, the status of the ie and the legally guaranteed preferential position of the head of household were abolished. Land reforms also contributed to a disruption of the pre-war social ranking order so it comes as no surprise that the "decline in consciousness of family status is linked to the diminished authority of the house head, once the representative of the ie and leader of the family" (ibid:126).

Quoting Myrdal's original argument from the 1940s, Boling (1998:174) reminds us that "the fundamental force driving the transition from high to low fertility is economic and social development". This explains why in the 1960s, Japanese couples in an urban environment were reluctant to give birth to more than two, at the most, three children. This trend coincided with the emergence of a new kind of wage earner, the so-called 'salary man' (*sararii-man*), whose life-style in many ways differed from that of earlier generations. As mentioned above, the wage-earner was not a completely new phenomenon in Japan but in the post-war period the change assumed a massive incidence of unprecedented proportions because an "ever increasing scale of operations in the political, economic, and social spheres of life require[d] bureaucratized management with salaried, white collar personnel" (Befu, 1971:129; Fukutake, 1989:107).

This newly emergent class did not fit neatly into traditional urban structures. Many had moved into the new housing estates in the suburbs, the so-called 'bed-towns' that were rapidly built by the Japan Housing Corporation concurrently with the upward swing of the Japanese economy (Befu, 1971:131). Living in these apartment complexes meant much more than just putting a physical distance between oneself and one's former domicile. The new environment may have offered affordable housing but it was a community without tradition and much social cohesion as "the men tend to remain aloof from local social activities" because of their work commitments (ibid). Even in places where the family of a 'salary man' remained in a traditional community, his life-style, in particular the number of hours he spent away from home, set him apart from other people and he was "excluded de facto" from "participating in the social life [of the neighbour-hood]" (Bestor, 1992:28). This scholar is not alone in stressing the distinction between traditional occupations and those of the white-collar office worker. In his monograph Japan's New Middle Class, Vogel (1971) examines in great detail the lives of this social group. What is important in our context is the stress he puts on the loneliness of the 'salary man's' wife who is left at home to look after the children while the man spends long hours in the office. In addition to Vogel's observations, Nakane (1974:63-4; 131) writes about the absence of community feeling in these new suburbs and how difficult it is for women to form new friendships in these areas, having left "childhood and former school friends". Whereas there is a considerable amount of interaction among the housewives in matters of mutual interests such as education of children, for instance, issues of a private nature lie outside this area. Clammer (1995:49) associates this group with social deracination, calling it a congregation of "anomic individuals paying lip-service to a Japanese cultural tradition which they do not in fact express, at least in its sociological manifestations". The quotations above could be multiplied, but my point is that most sociologists are agreed on the isolated and difficult situation in which the wife of the 'salary man' finds herself in her new surroundings.

Ochiai (1996:62) makes the trenchant observation that it is exactly during the 1960s, the period which witnessed the breakdown of the *ie's* traditional role, that television viewers in Japan were treated to the "depiction of large, three-genera-

tional families [which] became staple home-drama fare". These comforting images of extended and emphatically happy families were absorbed by an audience which

was able to watch this inherently flawed image without being troubled by its contradictions, because the audience itself was made up of people who had created nuclear families for demographic reasons, without rejecting the *ie* system in principle (*ibid*).

The result of this urbanisation was the proliferation of nuclear families of the conjugal type, i.e. families with "fewer kinship ties with distant relatives and a greater emphasis on the 'nuclear' family unit of couple and children" (Goode, 1971:365) which lived outside the traditional supportive network that women in the past depended on for advice and emotional support. Vogel puts this change in very succinct terms.

In the stem family system, if the wife became sick, another woman was often available in the household, and if not, a female relative or friend would be called in to substitute. With the urban nuclear family relatively isolated from relatives, such substitutes are often not available (Vogel, 1971:184).

This quotation is reminiscent of Tönnies' Gemeinschaft / Gesellschaft dichotomy where people in the latter group can no longer rely on family ties when dealing with social predicaments. Goode (1971:372) makes an identical observation when he writes that a "couple cannot count on a large number of kinfolk for help, just as these kin cannot call upon the couple for services". The individual, in this case the suburban housewife, is for all purposes thrown back on her own devices. I argue that it is this situation which motivated the creation of a ritual that served as a substitute for the support of friends and relatives who were no longer there.

In a tale-telling chapter, *Women's Liberation and the Dissolution of the Family*, Ochiai (1996:85) introduces women's liberation movement *(uman ribu)* as an additional factor which, although difficult to quantify, needs to be considered in this context, in particular since "sexuality...became the central theme of women's lib" *(ibid:92)*. From around the early 1970s, newsletters and magazines such as 'Onna Erosu' were engaged in an awareness-raising campaign for women and although the circulation of these publications was small, the (negative) treatment of the movement in the mass media ensured that a large part of the population

became familiar with the movement's goals (*ibid:86-7*). The movement did not arise out of a vacuum: soon after the occupation of Japan in 1945, the censorship section of the *American Civil Information Service* (CIE) ensured that Japanese films promoted "individuality and freedom of expression" (Sharp, 2001:1). This does not sound significant but one has to bear in mind that "an incredible number of Japanese films are about women" (Iwamura, 1994:1) and it is instructive to recall that Japan's "first ever colour motion picture" was a "humorous take on post-war female emancipation" (Sharp, 2000:1).

The change in social realities did not alter the desire by the women in this group to control their fertility and to practice child spacing. Since pregnancies occurred with the same regularity in this group as in other segments of the Japanese society, abortions, as mentioned earlier, were used likewise as a means of birth control due to a low frequency in the use of contraceptives (Sato & Iwasawa, 2006:51). In the past these wives could have relied on other women within the stem family system for practical as well as emotional support, as described above. However, since this option was no longer available, the women had to cope individually. I am arguing that they did so through the traditional memorialisation ritual (kuyô), which was adapted to fit a changing set of circumstances. In times of crisis the mechanism of structured rituals may help to displace harmful or debilitating emotions. Rituals may even have a cathartic effect, helping the person(s) involved to redirect their feelings in more constructive directions (Howell & Willis, 1989:16-17). My contention is that mizuko kuyô became a ritual which replaced the supportive role of one's next of kin and a sympathetic community in performing that function.

Obviously, I do not believe that the ritual originated with a single individual. Rather, the many women who on an individual basis requested some form of ceremony for a mizuko gave the impetus to subsequent developments. Harrison (1999:785-789) presents a detailed analysis of the various forces that eventually converged to develop a ritualistic approach that could satisfactorily deal with women's concerns about dead infants. Hashimoto Tetsuma (*ibid*) of the Purple Cloud Jizô temple and Abbot Miura (www.izu.co.jp/~enman/7.htm - Dec. 18. 2002) of Enman-in temple were important initiators and providers of public *mizuko kuyô* facilities. At times their declarations appear self-serving, yet neither

claims that he "invented" or "created" the memorial services of his own volition. They unanimously state that the driving force behind the design of a ritual for post-abortion grief came from the women they were counselling, not themselves. Quoting people who came to him for advice, Miura is very clear on that point: "We don't know where to hold the memorial service. We don't know what form it should take. We don't know where to ask' *(ibid)*.

It is impossible to know if the emergence of small *Mizuko-Jizô* figures in any way is connected to the localized custom in Northern Japan of dedicating a small *Jizô* to the local roadside shrine at the time of an infant's death. It is possible that migrant workers brought this custom with them to the city and then incorporated it into the *mizuko kuyô* but further investigations are needed to substantiate, or reject, as the case might be, this suggestion (see above pp.68-9).

Some would perhaps object to my assertion about the origin of this memorialisation ritual by emphasizing that a large number of elderly women request *mizuko-kuyô* today for something which happened in the distant past and that this observation contradicts my theory.

After all, when they had the abortion the support structures, whose lack I ultimately hold responsible for the rise of the need for *mizuko kuyô*, were still intact. I think that Nakane (1974:155) makes a compelling counter-argument. She explains that much religious behaviour in Japan is a reaction to the deeds of other people and that behaviour is frequently

determined by contemporary trends. The feeling 'that I must do this because A and B also do it' or 'they will laugh at me unless I do such-and-such' rules the life of the individual with greater force than any other consideration and thus has a deep effect on decision-making.

To conclude: I see a close link between the rise of a new social class, the 'salary man' and his family, and the need to replace traditional behavioural patterns of dealing with grief because the support structure which consisted of friends and close relatives was no longer there. Because inexperienced individuals negotiated the change, *mizuko kuyô* was prone to exploitation and therefore held in low regard in many quarters. However, the unsavoury reputation of the practice should

not be allowed to obscure the widespread proliferates of the ritual which indicates the reality of a need for *mizuko kuyô* throughout Japanese society.

CHAPTER 3

Osore-Zan: Meeting Place of Jizô, The Living and The Dead 3.0. Introduction

This chapter investigates how the dead are memorialised on Osore-zan ('Mountain of Dread') in Northern Japan and how one may interpret the transformations which are believed to occur after a person's demise in that part of the country. It is possible to regard death itself as "a rite of passage in which the dying person becomes an ancestor who will continue to have a social personality" (Seymour-Smith, 1992:70). This implies that dying is not always regarded as a finite event, which terminates human existence completely. Rather, as I intend to show in this chapter, a deceased person's spirit survives in an animated state, albeit on a different existential plane. On Osore-zan it is further possible to witness mortuary rites which are peculiar to burials on sacred mountains, such as erecting wooden stupas (*tôba*) and leaving large sacred wands with white strips of paper (*gohei; bonden*) behind on the mountain after the celebration of death anniversaries (Sakurai, 1994:20).

One may well wonder about the relevance of Osore-zan to $Jiz\hat{o}$ worship and hence to this thesis, but the spiritual dimension of the place is such that the deity is more present here than in other locations where numerous displays of physical icons make him visible to the naked eye. There are some statues of $Jiz\hat{o}$ on the mountain but his essence and "true" identity is preserved in "phantasmagorical images" (Ivy, 1995:10). His present is assumed and subjectively connected to devotees in a strongly felt relationship, like the presence of a deceased person during his or her wake. In the same manner that the Buddha's footprint symbolises the presence of the Enlightened One, Osore-zan manifests the ubiquitous but frequently unseen nature of $Jiz\hat{o}$.

Osore-zan occupies a special position in the world of ancestor veneration since it is considered to be a mountain where the realms of the living and the dead intersect. Continued contact with the world of one's dead ancestors and next of kin have a special significance in Japanese religion and by virtue of its specific history it is believed that the location of Osore-zan is ideal for communicating with the

dead. The great popularity of Jizô can in part be explained by his central role in these rituals as a psycho-pomp, i.e. as someone who escorts and guides the newly dead in their afterlife through hell to their new existence (Yamaori, 1995:47-8; Eliade, 1964:93, 359). He also has the capacity to mediate between the separate existences of the living and the dead. Osore-zan's topography is further believed to reflect certain locations in Buddhist cosmology so that to ascend the mountain in some way parallels a cosmological journey that breaks through the barriers of time and space. The calm waters of the crater lake on the mountain, for instance, are likened to the peace of paradise and the rugged terrain, enveloped in illsmelling vapours, is named after specific hells. This metaphysical journey between different worlds is assisted by local spirit mediums known as itako who perform the appropriate rituals for those who want to contact the worlds beyond. They act as facilitators in a dialogue between the living and the dead. In these parts the mediums are always old women and they are usually blind. Their unusual attire, their eye-catching paraphernalia and the broad northern dialect (Tsugaru-ben) in which they conduct their business lend a colourful atmosphere to the place during the times they congregate on the mountain.

Itako have been the subject of much misunderstanding because many writers persist in calling them 'shamans', a technical term which immediately associates them with something which, after having seen them in action, I believe they are not. As Earhart (1976:179) said long ago, all too often scholars "avoid the labour of interpretation by merely labelling [certain individuals] as shamans or shamanistic figures without further explanation". Eliade (1964:462) also investigated the subject in his now famous monograph, *Shamanism*, where he wrote that "As documented today, Japanese shamanism is rather far from the shamanism proper of the North Asian and Siberian type". In this connection one recalls that this is the shamanic type par excellence. Suffice it to say that the *itako* are professional spirit mediums, almost exclusively elderly blind women who are "hired to transmit words of the dead" (Yanagita, 1988:165). It would appear that they were quite numerous in the pre-industrial era and Groemer's (2007:27-53) description of their modus operandi in the Edo period (1600-1868) demonstrates that they belong to an old tradition. Today the *itako* are mainly found in the Tsugaru region in Northern Honshu where apart from their original function as communicators with

the dead and absentees, they have become a draw card for the local tourism industry (see below p.129).

Apart from its importance as a sacred mountain, Osore-zan has since the late 1970s also played an important role in a remarkable nostalgic movement which uses rural settings and the past as representations of the "real Japan". This image of the past serves as an antidote to the dynamic modernisation and constantly changing urban environment brought about by industrialization. This nostalgia manifests itself as "pilgrimages and visits to historical temples and shrines...[in a] search for identity and renewal through contact with the past" (Reader, 1987:288). This yearning for contacts with the past can be viewed as critique and a certain unease with the urban life-style and attempts are made to solve contemporary problems by restating them in terms of traditional values. Furusato (lit. 'one's place of origin') is a very important and very frequently used word in this context. Apart from its lexical meaning, its connotations are wide. It not only indicates rural origins; it is a nostalgic confirmation of cultural values, implying a "cultural and emotional home intrinsic to the Japanese experience" (ibid: 290). Osore-zan fulfils all the requirements of the above mentioned yearning for a past where everything seemed stable and worthwhile: the mountain is located in a remote province where life apparently has stood still since people continue to carry out rituals and engage in religious practices that are redolent of a distant past. As a result, to many people, Japanese and foreigners alike, this particular mountain represents a 'spiritual homeland' (kokoro no furusato) with cultural memories, both mysterious and exotic. The considerable amount of popular writing about the place is in this idealised vein has prompted one scholar to write on her homepage that "there is a staggering amount of misinformation about Osore-zan on-line, many of these internet sources should be consulted with considerable scepticism" (Schattschneider, 2001).

3.1. Osore-zan as the Destination of Dead Spirits

The sacred mountains of Japan are more than just visually pleasing features of the landscape. *Taketori Monogatari*, a well-known tale from the ninth century, speaks of humanity's closeness to the gods on top of Mt. Fuji where potions can be obtained that will grant the recipient eternal life *(furô fushi)*. Because of their

elevated position, mountains were, and still are, viewed as magic points of contact between heaven and earth and between this life and another beyond (Earhart, 1976:182). The bodies of deceased persons were put there so as to make them closer to the other world and in this way certain mountains literally became inhabited by the dead and their spirits. It would appear that initially the spirits were considered to be on the mountains and only later, as a result of Sino-Buddhist influences, did they enter the mountains as well. The idea of mountains as the final destination of the dead is quite ancient. In *Kojiki*, an early eighth century mythographic chronicle, for instance, it is a mountain passage (yomo-tsuhira-saka) that connects the 'Land of the Dead' (yomi) with the world of the living (Philippi, 1977:643). This connection is also revealed in the traditional funereal vocabulary of which Hori gives some examples. Traditionally, the signal with which one started a funeral procession was the shout "going to the mountain" (yama-yuki). To make this association even more tangible, the deceased person would on this occasion have been fitted out with the white legging that one normally wore when going into the mountains. In the Tanabu region, where Osore-zan is located, Sakurai informs us that the expression "to go to Osore-zan" (Osore-zan e iku) basically means 'to die' (Hori, 1981:152-3; Sakurai, 1994:27). Several Japanese mountains are also active volcanoes whose frequent eruptions send powerful tremors through the crust of the earth. This display of raw natural forces has been interpreted as the manifestation of energy produced by the divinity that occupies the site from whence these forces come. In addition to being an extinct volcano, Osore-zan is also a mountain where topographical height has become a metaphor for spiritual elevation. Over the centuries the place has come to be regarded as the final destination of the spirits of the dead, a location where they will dwell in their afterlife following the physical death of the body. The eighth century Manyôshû poet, Hitomaro, expressed this concept in several elegies where he laments the death of his beloved wife. He describes how he has wandered about looking for her in the mountains of *Hagai* where she supposedly had gone, but all in vain. Eventually he gives up his search and returns to the human world in the valley below, leaving his wife behind in the mountains. Her memory lives on but her physical form is hidden from the gaze of ordinary mortals (Keene, 1961:37).

To the idea of mountains being the final destination of the dead one may add the long tradition in Japan of associating geographical locations with the sacred places mentioned in the Buddhist sutras. Mt. Mikasa, for example, has been equated with the wistful paradise of Kannon bosatsu (Skt. Avalokiteshvara), and Mt. Kôya in Wakayama prefecture has for centuries been regarded an earthly manifestation of Miroku's (Skt. Maitreya) Heaven (Tushita). Because of Jizô's association with the welfare of the spirits who in their after-life travel to Osore-zan, the identification of this mountain with the golden mountain of 'Jizô's Pure Land' (Kyaradasen) is not surprising in this context, as it follows a well-established conceptual pattern by which "the realm of the buddhas is identified with the realm of human beings" (ten Grotenhuis, 1999:3-5; Miyake, 1989:103). This conversion of a secular location into sacred geography helps believers to visualise the worlds of the buddhas, their retinue and the settings in which they dwelled. It is a practice that is encouraged and explained in the 'Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life Sutra' or the 'Meditation Sutra' for short. It is also known as the 'Sutra of Visualisation of the Buddha of Measureless Life' (Kanmuryôju-kyô).

With the acceptance of Buddhism and its worldview, the indigenous concept of mountains underwent some perceptual changes in order to accommodate the more expansive and elaborate Buddhist cosmology. The old beliefs were not abandoned but merely merged with the new. To the idea of a *post mortem* existence on mountains was added the moral concept of *karma*. The influence of this metaphysical force was henceforth to determine the quality of one's afterlife. An undifferentiated shadowy afterlife was augmented with numerous Buddhist hells. To counter-balance this, a lofty spiritual plane was added which promised to elevate devotees to a blissful state, superior to any-thing previously known (Blacker, 1975: 81-3).

Roughly speaking, there are two categories of sacred mountains *(reizan)*. They can be divided into those with common access where the spirits of the dead may gather as opposed to those where the mortuary aspects are subordinate to the quest for spiritual insight. The latter was and still is carried out according to a fixed regimen of rituals, meditation, prayers, some degree of self-mortification and wilful exposure to the harsh weather conditions of higher altitudes. This "mountain

religion" was traditionally a male preserve, practised by the "men who lie in the mountains" (yamabushi). This highly syncretic order is called shugendô, a religious pursuit "which combined elements of pre-Buddhist worship of mountains (sangaku shinkô) with the doctrine and ritual of esoteric Buddhism" (JAANUS, En no Gyouja, 2001; Earhart, 1982:87-8). The Three Dewa Mountains (Dewa Sanzan) in Yamagata Prefecture and Mt. Kôya in Wakayama Prefecture were and still are popular strongholds of this form of mountain asceticism and spiritual development.

Apart from their cosmological significance, the kami are said to descend on mountain peaks before they continue to their destination on earth. Mountains are also regarded as the winter abode of the 'kami of the mountain' (yama-no-kami) who becomes the 'kami of the rice field' (ta-no-kami) when he reappears in the rice paddies during the period of rice production. When he returns to the mountain at the onset of winter, he once more becomes 'kami of the mountain'. In fact, the two are interchangeable (Earhart, 1989:64; Gray, 1983-2006:2). It is possible to discern certain parallels between the reproductive cycle of the agricultural god of the rice field and Jizô. As the guardian of the living and the dead, he ensures human rebirth yet this involvement with the human life cycle cannot be considered identical to the reproductive function of ta-no-kami. In the 'Jizô Longevity Sutra' (Enmei Jizô-kyô) Jizô's believers are promised favourable conditions for agriculture but this is a natural part of the many boons that are conferred on devotees.

Until the forceful separation of Shintô and Buddhist establishments in the early 1870s after the Meiji Restoration (shinbutsu bunri), Buddhism and the indigenous kami existed side by side for centuries in a spirit of co-operation. The subsequent rise of the doctrine of 'Double Aspect Shinto' (ryôbu-shintô) can be seen as an attempt to harmonise and synthesise the two belief systems whereby Buddhism and Shintô were viewed as two different sides of an identical whole. Local deities were interpreted as partial manifestations (suijaku) of the cosmic divinities of Buddhism (honji) which in effect created an interrelated unity of two diverse phenomena (Matsunaga, 1969:220-8) but, as Anesaki (1968:137) points out, there was never any doubt as to the primacy of Buddhism in this relationship.

3.2. Discovery of Osore-zan and The Legendary Foundation of Local Jizô Worship

The traditional foundation legend of Osore-zan closely follows the outline traced by Eliade (1959:25) in his study of the sacred and the profane whereby the gods reveal a sacred dimension to human beings on mountains. According to the traditional foundation legend, Ennin, a Japanese monk studying in China during the T'ang dynasty (618-907 CE), once had a dream in which the divine intent of *Jizô* was revealed to him (*yumemakura*). Ennin was given to understand that after his return to Japan, he was to head north for thirty odd days after which he would arrive at a sacred mountain. The mountain would abound in curative springs but was located in a hellish environment spouting flames and poisonous vapours. On this very site a temple was to be established with a *Jizô* image as the main object of worship in order to spread the *dharma* in that region. When Ennin awoke from his dream, he noticed a mysterious fragrance in the air and next to his headrest he noticed a *Jizô* sutra that had not been there previously. Overcome with pious enthusiasm for having been chosen to spread the teachings of the Buddha, Ennin gave prayers of thanks to the bodhisattva for the revelation.

When he returned to Japan some years later, he endeavoured to carry out Jizô's request. In the process of searching for the place revealed to him in his dream, he established several temples until he eventually arrived in the province of Dewa in the far north of Japan. Sensing that his goal was near, he meditated and recited Buddhist scriptures day and night. This so impressed the local mountain deity that he decided to nourish the ascetic. One morning, the legend says, after having followed the flight of a cormorant, Ennin set his eyes on a peaceful lake surrounded by inhospitable mountains with gas emanating from the ground. At this moment he was convinced that he had finally arrived at the appointed site and on the very same location he founded a temple. Here he enshrined statue of Jizô in whose body he placed the sutra which so miraculously had appeared to him on the night of his dream. This at least is what we are told in the temple foundation legend (Ooshû Nambu Usorisan Kamabuseyama Bodai-ji Jizô Taishi Ryaku Engi). The historical facts are less colourful. The harsh climate and adverse weather conditions have obliterated most historical records and we know in fact very little about the temple before its re-establishment during the early Edo period which is

also the time when the existence of the foundation legend becomes known (Koike, 1989:85; Miyazaki and Williams, 2001:409-412; Mori, 1995:66-7).

The name of the temple appears in several versions. The pamphlet given to visitors calls the temple Osore-zan Bodai-ji, but Kichishôsan Entsû-ji and Kamabuse Bodai-ji can be heard as well. Entsû-ji is also the name of the Sôtô Zen temple in Mutsu city which looks after the practical side of running the temple on the mountain. I have decided to use the most common appellation Osore-zan ('Mountain of Awe' or 'Dread'). It is situated on an extinct volcano in Aomori Prefecture on the Shimokita Peninsular in the far north of Honshû island in an area which is made up of eight mountain peaks, surrounding a placid lake in a volcanic crater. The landscape around the lake abounds with oddly shaped pinnacles of petrified lava formations. The grounds are arid and sulphurous gases come through numerous fissures in the ground, producing a foul air reminiscent of rotten eggs. Its vegetation consists of a few pitiable bushes and tufts of scraggly grass. Revered by many as one of Japan's most sacred mountains, the place is said to mirror the eight major hells of Buddhism (see Appendix I). Today Osore-zan is a national park that combines an unusual topography with religious reverence and a long tradition of burials.

Normally the place is deserted. Yet in spite of its geographical isolation, the place becomes unexpectedly lively for a few brief periods during the year when worshippers from the northern parts of the country and even further away gather here to celebrate three festivals held in conjunction with the changing of the seasons. On these occasions one might witness colourful processions of priests in ceremonial robes and lay believers in traditional costumes, large-scale ceremonies, as well as individual prayers and offerings. The festivals are called 'spring worship' (haru-mairi), 'summer worship' (natsu-mairi), and 'autumn worship' (aki-mairi), which take place respectively on the eighth of May, on the twenty-fourth of July, and the first of September (Kawakita, 1984:38). The summer festival is dedicated to memorial services for the dead (shisha-kuyô), but not exclusively so since these services may also take place at other times on a private basis.

People also flock to the Osore-zan for other reasons: it is one of the few places left in Japan today where one can still observe the convention of talking to the dead in public through a spirit medium who here is called *itako*. These 'folk shamans' (fusha) are elderly blind women, who congregate during the festivals where they sell their skills, which among other things is to make contact with the spirits of the dead or people who are far away. Their appearance is characterised by the possession of a bow made from catalpa wood and a rosary made from enormous beads. On festival days they sit in rows in designated areas on the mountain, patiently waiting for custom. The *itako* phenomenon is so much associated with this place that the mere mentioning of Osore-zan immediately produces images of itako. However, the environment, which has supported the itako institution and many other traditional occupations, is rapidly changing. The dwindling number of itako is not related to people having lost faith the itako as spirit mediums who one sceptic described as women "making up information from the other world within the limits of their knowledge, imagination, and experience" (Yanagita, 1988:165). Rather, the primary reason is the depopulation of the rural area that traditionally supported the *itako*. This has meant that there are fewer blind girls and young women for whom becoming itako is an occupational option. Advances in ophthalmology have further reduced the number of visually impaired girls. These factors taken together with the compulsory schooling of the blind since 1948 mean that the pool for potential successors has almost dried up. Today the blind go to school instead of testing and developing a possible talent for spirit mediumship under the guidance of a professional *itako*; there are hardly any apprentices, no initiations, and no rites of succession (Kawamura, 1999:1-3).

3.3. A Personal Journey to Osore-zan

In the late nineties I went to observe the summer festival for myself. On my journey to the mountaintop, I happened to sit near an elderly and very talkative woman passenger on the bus that runs between the nearby town of Mutsu and Osore-zan itself, a trip that takes approximately forty minutes. Like so many other senior citizens from the region, she had volunteered to do occasional work on the mountain. From her conversation, I understood that part of her duties was to dispose of the offerings left behind by visiting pilgrims in front of the statues and stone memorials. Our casual dialogue made me see the customary votive rice balls

and tangerines in a slightly different and more prosaic light. The dead (hotoke-san), she said, advancing an argument that also appears in Mori (1995:10), would be just as pleased with an offering of stones as they are with traditional food. Perishable items, even when given with the best of intentions, serve as nests for bees that occasionally will sting other pilgrims and make their lives miserable. Ravens are also attracted by edible offerings. For this reason, she said, she hoped that my offerings (kuyô) consisted of something that would neither rot nor attract insects, a statement which made me realise that she did not regard me as a tourist. And in a way she was right: one does not associate sightseeing with Osore-zan.

Halfway up the mountain the bus stopped. The driver encouraged the passengers to alight as we now had reached 'Cold-Water-Pass' (*Hiyamizu-tôge*) where, true to its name, remarkably fresh water welled out of the ground. Everyone on the bus, including the driver and the old woman, who must have made the trip many times, had a sip from the supposedly rejuvenating spring water amidst some banter about getting younger and younger until one disappeared as the result of this biological reversal. This must have been a local joke for the same words are repeated almost verbatim in Mori (1995:53). One sip, he writes, will make a person ten years younger, two sips will rejuvenate the drinker by another ten years, and three sips will make you so young that you die. I also heard that drinking water from the well would ensure that one returned to the place, a statement with ambiguous and slightly ominous connotations since this spot marks the boundary between the secular world of the living and the sacred realm of the mountain where the spirits of the dead reside

Just before arriving at our destination, the bus driver expressed the pious wish over the loudspeakers that we, his passengers, would soon be able to talk to those we held dear but had lost over time. No other place in Japan was more conducive for making contact with the worlds beyond than Osore-zan, he said. This belief was already described in the twelfth century collection of popular tales (*Konjaku Monogatari, Vol.XIV:8*). Here the sacred mountains of northern-eastern Japan are referred to as places where the worlds of the living and the dead intersect in such a way that enables communication between the two. Under normal circumstances the dead can only reveal themselves and reach this world in people's dreams but

on the sacred grounds of a 'mountain of the dead' (*shide-no-yama*) more direct contacts can take place (Mabuchi, 1971:505-10).

3.4. Sanzu-no-Kawa and the Entrance to Osore-zan

The old entrance to Osore-zan used to be at a place where a stream from Usori Lake flows into the Pacific Ocean. In the past, carriages and draught animals went no further than here and from this point onwards the journey would continue on foot. Pilgrims used to walk to the other side on top of a row of logs that had been laid across the stream, graphically named Sanzu-no-kawa after the eponymous river in Buddhist mythology. It is believed that this river divides the lower regions of hell from the world of humans. The number 'three' (san) is a painful reminder of three different currents in the river as well as the three methods for inflicting pain in hell: fire, steel, and blood (Inagaki, 1992:278; Mori, 1995:223). The name of Sanzu-no-kawa epitomises the character of the area which one was about to enter. It not only served as a natural boundary between the sacred and the profane, but it also helped to focus people's minds on the real boundary between life and death. Beyond the stream lay the dwelling grounds of the spirits, the village of the dead (shisha no furusato) as the place was also known. Life as understood by most people existed on this side of the river. On the other side of the water time had merged with death in a union that had created a dimension that mortals can barely imagine, let alone comprehend.

Only people of moral rectitude would find the crossing of the stream uneventful. Those who had committed offences against the *dharma*, on the other hand, would see the logs on the crossing shrink to tiny sticks and, unable to use them, they were forced to get into the water and wade across the river while attempting to avoid various obstacles. The truly wicked, however, would have to struggle with all their might in order to get to the other side. At one point, the flow of the current would increase and the branches of the willow trees lining the banks of the river would turn into huge snakes which tried to devour the people in the water, sending them into a state of utter terror (Ohyama, 1995:224-5).

The name of the river still remains but the current is hardly noticed today as one now drives over an arched bridge that spans the river further upstream. The

building of the new bridge has removed the encounter with *Sanzu-no-kawa* and the symbolic crossing on foot which travellers and pilgrims had to endure has become a thing of the past. This convenient arrangement has come at a cost: by skirting the river which divides the two disjunctive areas of the numinous and the mundane, worshippers have been deprived of the opportunity to put themselves into a special frame of mind and the crossing from one area into the other has become wholly unremarkable.

Today's visitor is projected straight into the ambience of the sacred without much mental and spiritual preparation. The gradual adjustment and increased awareness of the changes in the surroundings, which were part and parcel of the pilgrim experience in the past, the knowledge that one was approaching a holy centre with four access roads, just like the highest mountain in Buddhist cosmology, *Shumisen* (Skt. Mt. Sumeru), are now gone (Mori, 1995:52; Inagaki, 1992:327). Motor vehicles transport contemporary devotees from the mundane directly into the world of the sacred.

3.5. Hot Springs and Purification

But before attempting to enter the world on the other side, people would perform ablutions in a building called 'midwife hall' (*ubadô*). Rustic looking bathhouses with wooden floors have been built over some of the spas and people can freely make use of these facilities.

The many hot springs on the mountain are divided into two categories, reflecting the fact that almost everything one encounters here operates on a concrete as well as on a symbolic plane. Outdoors one finds pools of hot, steaming water as well as springs surrounded by contorted formations of lava. These spots have been named after individual hells, inviting spectators to reflect on the repugnant conditions that reign in those regions. This group of unpleasant pools with their bubbling and putrid water is counterbalanced by the favourable aspect of sacred springs (reiyu). There are five in all, each with curative properties uniquely its own. The ubiquitous 'Medicine Master's Spa' (Yakushi-no-yu), named after the Buddha Yakushi nyorai (Skt. Bhaisajya-guru), who once upon a time made a vow to rid the worlds of disease, is a powerful reminder of the benefits people are looking for

when bathing and two of the other springs are said to heal eye diseases, a welcome relief in an area that used to have the highest incidence of trachoma and blindness in the country (Ikegami, 2000:15). The promise of finding a remedy for an ailing body in the sacred springs on the mountain no doubt has increased the attraction of Osore-zan. Miyazaki & Williams (2001:415) are convinced that the temple has achieved its present prominence partly because of the curative properties of its hot springs. They point out that in the eighteenth century the place was more commonly known as 'mountain of hot springs' (yama no yu) and that many written records make a link between the sanctity of the place and the existence of hot springs. To my mind this is yet another example of the ease with which many Japanese combine the sacred and the mundane.

Water is also vital for purifying the physical body. Water will cleanse and wash away the external impurities which obstruct the inner and, by definition, pure space of an individual from the beneficial contact with a holy place. For this reason ablutions are indispensable before entering a sacred area. "The prayers and rites performed...do not cleanse the self, which is inherently pure, but they are exorcistic, in that they eradicate the outer pollutions that cloud one's inner virtue and light" (Nadeau, 1996:111). Thus when the publications of Osore-zan promote bathing in the mountain spas as a healthy and spiritual activity (Mori, 1995:72), it has to be seen in the context of a culture which still thinks in terms of purification and pollution (*hare* and *kegare*). The adjunct concept to this is ritualistic bathing and cleansing of the body (*misogi*). Water will not only wash away the unwanted stains of the secular world when entering holy grounds, it also removes ritual pollution. *Kichû*, one recalls, the word used to describe the condition of bereaved persons, literally means 'to be in an abhorrent state'.

3.6. Osore-zan Bodai-ji Temple and Pilgrimage in Hell

Today one strolls directly to the temple whose entrance is only a few hundred metres away from the parking lot. In front of a fairly large temple gate protected by two fierce looking *Niô* guardians, one notices a standing figure of stone wrapped in red and white cloth with votive pebbles at its base. The statue is appropriately named 'Greeting-Jizô' (*Demukae-Jizô*) who from this position seems to bid visitors and pilgrims welcome. Tall banners on both sides of the

access road (sandô) to the temple spell out the name of Jizô's heavenly abode, Karadasen (Skt. Mt. Karada) - a variant of Kyaradasen - in bold calligraphy. The banners also praise Jizô as a great bodhisattva (daibosatsu) while proclaiming his status as 'King of Wishes' (gan-ô). As if to re-emphasize the association with Jizô's holy mountain, a horizontal banner immediately before the entrance displays the sacred name of Karadasen once more, this time in yellow and red colours. As so often is the case in Japan, the main access road (sandô) is lined with stone lanterns that believers have donated over the centuries. The official name of the temple is Osore-zan Bodai-ji, which consists of a few modestly sized buildings. The main building is called 'Jizô Hall' (Jizô-den), built in the conventional fashion of Edo period temples with a peaked roof, timber frame structure, whitewashed walls, banisters and posts based on the motive of inverted lotus flowers (sakarenge) and windows in the shape of a lotus (katômado). Since my last visit, the place has been renovated and, according to newer photographs on the temple's website, the previous grey appearance has been replaced by whitewashed bays and vermilion banisters.

The word 'bodai' (Skt. bodhi) in the temple's name indicates that the primary activity of the Osore-zan Bodai-ji is to conduct memorial services for the dead and to pray for the repose of people's ancestors and next of kin. The main object of worship, prayers and supplication (kigan kitô) in the central hall is a 'Longevity-Jizô' (Enmei-Jizô) who is flanked by his two boyish helpers, Shôzen and Shôaku. Ensembles of this triad are said to have been a common sight in the past but today one rarely has an opportunity to observe these three statues together. During my visit big piles of wooden slats (sotoba) were placed next to the offertory box in front of the deity. There are also many other Jizô figures in small boxes on the walls, though mostly in the shape of carved wooden figurines. In addition to the remnants of a large statue unearthed several centuries ago, which a notice identifies as the historical Buddha (Shakamuni), there is a collection of one thousand small buddhas (sentai butsu) displayed in glass cases.

Beyond the main temple the area opens up to a plateau with arrows indicating the direction to *Mt. Jizô*, the traditional burial grounds *(Oku-no-in)*, and the shores of paradise *(Gokuraku-hama)*, as well as locations, named after individual Buddhist

hells. One arrow-lined route is in fact called 'pilgrimage around hell' (jigoku-meguri). It leads through the foul smell of vapours oozing out from cracks in the barren landscape dotted with statues of $Jiz\hat{o}$, many of them larger than life. Almost without exception the statues have longish white pieces of cloth tied around their necks in a manner reminiscent of the Tibetan custom of giving white scarves to persons of religious authority. In many instances one can only surmise that the statue below represents $Jiz\hat{o}$, for the layers of cloth are often so numerous that they cover the figure completely from top to toe.

Nowhere else in Japan have I seen statues swathed in cloth in this manner, but given the inclemency of the weather in this region, one could be forgiven for seeing in the cloth something more than the customary exchange between human beings and the divine. The cloth may indicate a genuine human concern for the comfort of these anthropomorphic statues. The familiar tale about 'Straw Hat Jizô' (Kasa-Jizô-sama), known to all Japanese, actually addresses this kind of concern. It relates how an old man takes pity upon a group of Jizô statues standing outside in the freezing cold of winter. He covers their heads with straw hats in order to protect them from the snow, an act for which he is ultimately rewarded very handsomely (Fukushima, pp.50-60, n.d.).

The ground around the statues was covered with offerings of floral bouquets and heaps of rough pebbles. The latter were piled up at the base in such a way that it appeared as if the statues were standing at the top of a pyramid. Red pinwheels had been stuck into the ground in many places and they were spinning round and round in the wind with a slightly rattling, even eerie sound. Recalling the comments of Endô (1989:26) that in this part of the world the pinwheels are also called 'wheels to invoke Amida' (nembutsu-guruma), the effect was a synaesthetic recollection of children's toys and the doctrine of the ever-turning wheel of human existence (see above section 2.3.8).

Yet the overall impression of the place is one of desolation with repeated reminders of death and a bleak, even painful afterlife. This impression is enforced by the temple pamphlet according to which one-hundred-and-eight features in the landscape are reminiscent of specific hells. This symbolic number is both an

allusion to the marks on the Buddha's body, indicating his completeness and perfection, as well as a reminder of same number of human transgressions or evil desires (hyaku hachi no bonnô) which temple bells ring away every year with one-hundred-and-eight peals (joya no kane) on New Year's eve all over Japan (JTB, 1993:29).

3.7. Processions and Rituals

Every year on the twenty-fourth July, a solemn procession of priests and laymen headed by the abbot (jûshoku) from Entsû-ji temple winds it way around the whole area, praying for the repose of the dead and all sentient beings in the various hells. This procession is followed by groups of pilgrims who stop at the sacred places where all chant the *nembutsu* in unison. Apart from these devotional stops, many participants will also make a halt at other locations where they will add more stones to the piles of pebbles found there (Sakurai, 1994:26).

Square elongated wooden slats (*sotoba*), some several metres tall, inscribed with people's posthumous Buddhist names, stand in upright bundles like neatly arranged wooden poles in a lumberyard. The graphically named places, which serve to remind pilgrims of the eponymous counterparts in hell are a litany of human folly and weak-ness. There are even special hells reserved for gamblers (*tobaku-no-jigoku*) and hunters (*ryôshi-no-jigoku*), and perpetrators of serious crimes will pine in 'heavy punishment hell' (*jûzai jigoku*). The ominous sounding 'Blood Pool Hell' (*chi-no-ike jigoku*) is the specific preserve of women. The reason for the existence of this particular hell is to punish those who have caused pollution by parturient and menstrual blood.

The colour red normally has positive associations (see above section 2.3.7). However, when the colour is connected with blood it is regarded as a symbol of impurity. But, as Turner (1968:68) points out, "this duality, this ambivalence, this simultaneous possession of two contradictory values or qualities" exist elsewhere.

The Japanese traditionally distinguished between three kinds of pollution of which 'red pollution' (aka-fujô) is one. As the name implies, physical contact or any association with blood, in particular the blood resulting from birth and the monthly

female discharge, was regarded as spiritually unclean, and in the past women were segregated during these periods. They were prohibited from touching many objects and the sacred grounds of both temples and shrines were off-limit areas. Ikeda (1974:175-180) quotes an expression which was still used in the not so distant past which referred to this taboo: "Thou shall not pass under a Spirit Gate" (torii kugutte wa naranu), meaning that menstruating women should refrain from entering sacred grounds. Anyone associated with these perceived sources of pollution was excluded from community festivals. Even today there are still people who expect women to refrain from a range of activities if they are considered ritually impure in a traditional sense (Miyake, 1997:207).

The 'Menstruation Sutra' (*ketsubon-kyô*), which was in general circulation in the fifteenth century, explains the rationale for the predetermined destiny of women in terms of 'red pollution' (*aka-fujô*). It was believed that rites incorporating this sutra would ensure a favourable rebirth for women. It was also regarded as a powerful amulet that would protect its wearer against ritual pollution (Takemi, 1983; Abiko, 2003).

The existence of numerous 'Blood Pool Hell' around the country and the frequent reference in literature to this hell indicate a strong concern with the concept of female pollution as it is preached in *ketsubon-kyô*. Today many temples no longer perform the ceremonies based on the ketsubon-kyô, but in the not too distant past both men and women would congregate around the 'Blood Pool Hell' on Osorezan on the twenty-fourth of June (Jizô's name day) and chant the brief text of the ketsubon-kyô in order to alleviate the distress of those who had died in childbirth. These rituals, together with the 'hungry ghosts rites' (segaki-hôyô), were also meant to help women onto the path of buddha-hood. While beating small cymbals and chanting passages from the sacred canon, white pieces of cloth or paper with inscriptions from the 'Menstruation Sutra' would be thrown into the waters of the *chi-no-ike jigoku*. The names of the women on whose behalf these rites were conducted would also be written on the paper (Fujita, 1989:178-9; Hori, 1975: 229). Ketsubon-kyô amulets are still being sold in the temple and judging from recent photos where I saw these consecrated slips of paper floating about on the surface of the water in the 'Blood Pool Hell', the practice is still maintained.

For a place with such appalling associations, Osore-zan's 'Blood Pool Hell' is actually quite small. Its rocky circumference is no more than approximately thirty to forty metres long. It contains a seated statue on a lotus throne on top of a large, square stone pedestal in the middle of the pond. When I saw it last, the lips of the statue had been painted red. Passages from the ketsubon-kyô, barely discernible as such, have been chiselled into the base of the pedestal. In accordance with the text of the 'Menstruation Sutra' and normal practice, one would have expected the statue to be the bodhisattva Nyoirin Kannon. Takemi (1983:240) identifies the statue as Amida Nyorai but we are in fact dealing with an image of Jizô with the unusual 'lotus carrying mudra' (padmapâni mudra). The general outline of this statue is reproduced in the ketsubon-kyô amulets sold by the temple, and for a good reason: The lotus held in Jizô's hand is emblematic of all sentient beings. In this instance the closed bud points to the potential we all have for enlightenment. This state is symbolised by the open lotus throne on which Jizô is seated. All sentient beings will be reborn eventually in The Pure Land where they will sit on an open lotus in a state of bliss (Saunders, 1960:159-164). This powerful vision of hope, planted in the midst of an image of despair, gives comfort to the weak and reminds believers that they are not alone. However, compared to the complicated iconography in the 'Heaven and Hell' scrolls, which we shall examine later, the symbolic imagery in this location is on a fairly rudimentary level.

In passing it must be noted that *chi-no-ike jigoku* is no longer red in spite of Williams' and Miyazaki's claim to the contrary (2001:424). Occasionally the water is in fact so clear that one can see the many one yen coins that have been thrown into the shallow pool. Abbot Ohyama Jundô (1995:228) tries to explain this change in buddhological terms. He opines that the red colour might have disappeared when it no longer had the desired impact of arousing feelings of regret (*sange-gokoro*) in people. In the past, he writes, there used to be long strands of sea weed-like threads of undulating algae in the water, which everyone associated with female head hair. But now this sight has disappeared as well. Hair in this context undoubtedly refers to the practice mentioned in Hardacre (1997:169). According to one of her informants, women who died in childbirth in the past did not have their hair shaved off after death as custom otherwise dictated. It was

believed that this hair would give *Jizô* something to hold on to when he wanted to pull someone out of the misery of 'Blood Pool Hell'.

Sai-no-kawara, the dry riverbed where the spirits of dead infants gather, is located nearby. A sign identifies the place as such as do the many conspicuous heaps of piled up stones. This is where the defenceless spirits of deceased children are forced to pile up stone cairns, a metaphor which in these desolate surroundings produces an acute sense of the nature of infant misery (see below section 4.3).

Identical heaps of stones without any particular designation can be seen everywhere on the mountain. Even the 'Jizô-of-Welcome' (*Demukae-Jizô*), who stands at the entrance to the temple complex, is surrounded by heaps of pebbles piled up around the base he stands on. These individual stones are known as funereal or memorial stone (*tomurai-ishi*) and carry the same message as those that were piled up in the *Sai-no-kawara* cave on Sado Island. The heaps have originated as the result of the custom of leaving a pebble behind in localities that are associated with the dead.

The imagery of death continues with a 'Longevity-Jizô' (*Enmei-Jizô*) statue which stands out like a beacon in the landscape. Tall and weatherworn, it is visible from all sides. There is also a smoothly polished *Mizuko-Jizô* figure nearby, easily identified as such by the infant on his arm and two more clinging to the hem of his robe. He stands on a rock in the middle of a man-made pond which is edged with polished slabs of stone and long rows of pinwheels (see Appendix I). A sign asks people to set their o-satsu (thin memorial slats made of untreated wood approximately fifty centimetres long inscribed with the deceased infant's name) afloat on the water surrounding the statue as part of the commemorative service. In this manner the spirit of the de-ceased is symbolically entrusted to the compassion of Jizô. Alternatively, the o-satsu can be put next to the statue after which water is poured over it. From the manner in which the slat behaves after it has been put into the water, people will try to divine the nature of the destiny which awaits the deceased. If the *o-satsu* floats on the surface of the water, the spirit is ensured rebirth in a Pure Land. If, on the other hand, it sinks to the bottom, tradition has it that more rebirths are necessary before the final enlightenment. The water is also

meant to provide coolness and refreshment both for *Jizô* as well as for those sentient beings who in one form or another suffer in a non-human existence (Nihon Daihyakka Jiten, 1988:231; LaFleur, 1992:16).

3.8. Jizô-kô, Female Worshippers & Itako Séances

The number of elderly ladies among the visitors is remarkable. It is more than a personal impression because apart from the elderly *itako*, the majority of the pilgrims appearing in photos and publications about Osore-zan is decidedly female and advanced in years. It is almost as if there has been a communal effort to prove Smith (1974: 119-121) right when he speaks of the older generation of the women as being those with the closest ties to the ancestors since they very often personally knew the persons enshrined in the household altar or the family grave. Hori (1981:208) also makes a special reference to the age and gender of the worshippers who traditionally manage the everyday ancestral rituals, such as offerings on the household altar *(butsudan)* and visits to graves. Viewed from this perspective, the disproportionate number of elderly women starts to make sense, because what basically takes place on Osore-zan is ancestor memorialisation on a grand scale. It is grand in terms of the surroundings and also the extent to which it is enacted in a setting outside the circle of the individual family.

For the worshippers here, Koike (1989:90) writes, the perennial question about our destination after death has been answered already. In their part of the world, the dead go to the mountains, more specifically Osore-zan. The belief in $Jiz\hat{o}$ in these parts, he adds, is sustained by popular conviction and is not the result of any promotion initiated by the local temples. The very strength of $Jiz\hat{o}$ worship in the region may have its origin in the fact that there are comparatively few temples in this remote region. Formerly when someone died, it was not uncommon for the local 'devotional association for $Jiz\hat{o}$ ' ($Jiz\hat{o}-k\hat{o}$) to carry out the death rituals that normally are the prerogative of Buddhist priests. The members would conduct the appropriate memorial services ($tsuizen\ kuy\hat{o}$) and make sure that the spirit departed for the other world. Ritual proficiency was honed during the monthly meetings by the $Jiz\hat{o}-k\hat{o}$ on $Jiz\hat{o}$'s name day. On this occasion, the members would sing songs in his praise and chant the nembutsu in front of a $Jiz\hat{o}$ image. Once the religious

obligations of the meeting had been fulfilled, the group would socialise and invariably share a meal together (Mori, 1995:94).

It is ironic to think that the many female $Jiz\hat{o}-k\hat{o}$ which provide the largest number of worshippers today have not always been welcome on the mountain because of the perceived impurity of women. The $k\hat{o}$ traditionally responsible for the support of Osore-zan come mostly from the villages on the peninsular where one woman from each household customarily is a member. This role is largely carried out by the elderly who dominate these associations to such an extent that many outsiders refer to them as 'associations of hags' $(baba-k\hat{o})$. In recent years a certain element of business has entered the domain of the $k\hat{o}$, which used to be predominantly a religious association. With the increase in tourism, many tour operators have started to support these groups that voluntarily staff the service facilities and look after the grounds and statues in this remote place (Kawakita, 1984:73). But they do more than simple maintenance. The previously mentioned $Mizuko-Jiz\hat{o}$ as well as the conspicuous $Enmei-Jiz\hat{o}$ have been paid for with funds gathered by a $Jiz\hat{o}-k\hat{o}$ from Sendai. The curtain that decorates the $Jiz\hat{o}$ -dô on festival days is also a donation from this group (ibid:71).

Judging from people's daytime behaviour on the mountain, the pilgrimage in summer (*natsu-mairi*) is also looked upon as a social event. One could have been forgiven for thinking that these depressing surroundings would put pilgrims and visitors into a permanent state of gloom, but nothing could be further from the truth. Smiles and laughter characterise the various groups as they unhurriedly move about the place, pointing out items of interest to each other. It is on occasions like these that one is reminded of McFarland (1970:30) when he says that "devotion and diversion are not necessarily antithetical in Japan", a phenomenon also commented on by Graburn (1983:11) who notices "the very high frequency with which 'pilgrimage-like' and 'tourism-like' behaviour are parts of any one journey". Some groups are busily consuming their packed lunches while others can even be seen having a nap or be watching people from the shade. It is only when prayers are said that seriousness momentarily reasserts itself.

In the areas where the *itako* can be found, the devotees' numbers follow the rhythm of business cycles. Sometimes there are queues in front of the places where the *itako* sit on bits of vinyl sheet or the more traditional straw mats (*goza*). At other times there is hardly anyone waiting for a séance. The visitors' guide published by the city of Mutsu states that there are no fixed fees for the services of the *itako* but an amount in the vicinity of ¥3,000 (approx. \$30 AUD) for the spirit of each person summoned is considered appropriate (Itako Jôhô, n.d.).

Most of the *itako* appear a bit untidy, perhaps because of their inability to look after themselves. Many have unusual rosaries composed of beads of wood and stone, much larger than the traditional pea-sized beads, "strung together with several polished skulls and fangs of badger, fox, sable, bear...as well as old coins" (Czaja, 1974:189) but there are many variations (Hori, 1974:176-180). From their tents among impressive votive lanterns along the main entrance and around the edges of the lake, one can clearly hear the highly pitched voices of *itako* chanting sutras and alliterate mantras to the accompaniment of wooden prayer beads being rubbed and grated against each other.

Generally the *itako's* 'oral communication' (kuchi-yose) is divided into two categories, depending on whether the verbal exchange is with a living or a dead person. *Ikiguchi* (lit. 'live mouth') relates to the responses given to the *itako* by persons who are presumed to be alive but whose whereabouts are uncertain or unknown. There are further special techniques for contacting the spirits of those who have suffered a violent death, died as a spinster or in childbirth (ibid:183). As Sakurai (1994:28) points out, many persons from these isolated and needy communities are frequently forced to look for work outside the areas where they live. In this way families are broken up and many people live apart from each other during extended periods of time. Anxious to know how their children and relatives are getting on in their new surroundings, the older people who have stayed behind will often try to get additional information from the *itako* about the people away from home. The other category of contact, *shiniguchi* (lit. 'dead mouth'), is the verbal exchange via the *itako* medium that takes place between the living and the family members who have passed on. As in the Obon festivities, a distinction is made between those who have died recently and those who have

been dead for more than a year. *Shin-kuchiyose* refers to communication with those who died less than a year ago; *ko-kuchiyose* is used when talking about those who have been dead for a while (Yamaori, 1994:138).

Hori (1981:211 & 1974:174) is emphatic about the difference between the contemporary Japanese itako, and the shaman prototype with which we are familiar from Siberia and elsewhere. Although he concedes that certain practices of the *itako* could be called shamanistic, the decisive differences are the *itako* 's lack of trance and want of a mystic union with a tutelary deity during her séances. Neither is she a female shaman (*miko*) who within the framework of tradition has been 'called' after having suffered a mental trauma or breakdown, the so-called 'arctic hysteria'. One may recall that the subtitle of Eliade's (1964) authoritative work, Shamanism, was 'Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy', a mental condition that is absent from the *itako*'s repertoire. Since Hori largely follows Eliade's definition of shamanism, which he reproduces in his own book about Japanese shamanism, Hori prefers to called the *itako* 'kuchiyose-miko' to distinguish her from the *miko*, the 'real' female shaman (1974:174). Yet in spite of the conspicuous difference between the two, many sources, nevertheless, imprecisely refer to the itako as a 'female shaman'. The word 'spirit medium' identifies and defines her practices with much greater accuracy. If 'shaman' is to be used at all to describe the *itako*, "folk shaman" (fusha), a translation of the term used by Ikegami (2000), is the least objectionable (see also above p.109).

The contemporary *itako* obtains her title only after undertaking training for the position. It is a career choice which, apart from becoming a professional masseuse, is one of the few occupations traditionally available to the blind. Hori (1974:175-6) and Kawamura (1999:1) describe in great detail how the contemporary *itako* have prepared themselves for the profession. According to these scholars, the blind girls begin to train for the position under the tutelage of an established *itako* who only takes one pupil at the time, in a manner that "resembles the system of apprenticeship which is found in traditional crafts". The learning process is described as: "1) loss of eyesight in childhood; 2) entering apprenticeship; 3) initiation experience; and 4) completion of apprenticeship and entering independent business".

The *itako* summons the god or gods of the client she is dealing with at a given moment and she uses these specific deities for support. In the instances I personally witnessed, there was no pretence on part of the *itako* that she was speaking in a state of trance: the symptoms that are normally associated with this particular mental state were totally absent. They would apply themselves with pointed concentration to the matter at hand but without any display of convulsions or changes of character. Yamaori (1983:70) makes a note on the manner in which the *itako* verbally convey their spirit messages. The speech has a rhythmic quality all of its own but then the message she delivers is not of an everyday nature either. During her research in the seventies, Blacker (1975:160-2) made the same observation. She also commented on the clichés and stock phrases used by the *itako* when they responded to questions about the spirits.

In the eyes of the believers, and there appear to be many of them, the manner in which the spirit medium establishes contact with the spirits beyond appears to be acceptable, regardless of whether the itako falls into a trance or not. The words spoken by the *itako*, on the other hand, may require interpretation on several semantic levels. Apart from the meaning of the message itself, which in no way is straight forward, the *itako* are known to speak in a broad northern dialect which outsiders and visitors from other areas normally find difficult to understand. Mori (1995:28) mentions several instances where visitors from Tokyo required assistance with the meaning of what the *itako* has said. In spite of this linguistic handicap, the devotees seem to be consoled by the process of turning muttering and unusual phrases into meaningful statements in this post mortem dialogue between the living and the dead through the *itako*. In a fine simile, Yamaori (1995:200) writes that it is as if the blind *itako* have become female *Jizô* figures *(onna-jizô)* who verbalise the messages from beyond that the mute *Jizô* images cannot utter.

During my visit groups of women were clustered around the several *itako* who were sitting on the ground in the traditional Japanese manner. It was a noisy affair with chanting and the rattling sound of the large rosary beads. To my regret I could never fully make out what the *itako* were saying apart from individual phrases and the repetitive chanting of the *nembutsu*. Fortunately there exist several transcriptions of the verbal exchanges that take place on these occasions (Mori,

1995:23-30). They are striking in their simple candour and concern with practical and domestic matters. The believers usually ask how things are on the other side. Normally the response is positive and the spirits tend to be grateful for having been summoned and spoken to. Yet some spirits appear to have trouble adjusting to their new existence. Mori (1995: 23-30) relates an exchange in which the spirit of a departed schoolteacher complained of the cold on the mountain and asked that his slippers be placed in the main hall of the temple. The teacher was making good use of his dentures which his family had left behind on another occasion. But he missed the old slippers he used to wear in school so could the family please leave that pair behind on the mountain. The nature of these requests is no doubt responsible for the jumble-shop atmosphere which reigns in the octagonal pavilion (hakkaku enjô-dô), that part of the temple complex where worshippers leave behind the items requested by the spirits such as useable bicycles, spectacles, scarves, walking sticks, gloves, coats, and so on.

The impact of the *itako's* words on some of the participants was obvious. Although the Japanese in general are not given to emotional display in public, many of the women participating in the séances were visibly overcome by their feelings and wept openly as a result of what the *itako* had told them. In fact, some people even rate the effectiveness of an *itako* on her ability to make listeners cry, which often happens when there are inquiries about deceased children (Sakurai, 1994:29). I also noted that several women circulated from one *itako* to another as if they hesitated to break off the special connection that already had been established with the other world. It was obvious that they wanted to make sure that the messages from beyond had been exhausted so they asked different *itako* for a séance.

3.9. Osore-zan at Night During the Summer Festival

The summer festival on Osore-zan coincides with the early preparations for Obon, the yearly festival for commemorating one's ancestors. It is believed that during this period the dead are able to visit the living, who, among other things, will entertain their spirit visitors with the gentle and easily learnt 'Obon dance' (bon-odori) at night. The dance is performed in long lines around a narrow elevated scaffold (yagura), which is regarded as the temporary dwelling place for the

visiting spirits of the ancestors during the merriment. From this location they can listen to the traditional Obon music and otherwise observe and enjoy the festivities that in many places resemble a carnival with lots of bunting and a dazzling display of lanterns with coloured lights.

As I describe in the next chapters, elsewhere in Japan people will slowly prepare for the traditional *hayashi* music, dominated by drums, flutes and *shamisen* (small. banjo-like instrument with three strings), which is played at Obon. This music will fill the night air as people dressed in the cotton kimonos of summer engage in the gentle and easily learnt Obon dance (*Bon-odori*) around a narrow, elevated scaffold (*yagura*). This structure is regarded as the temporary dwelling place for the visiting spirits of the ancestors from where they can observe and enjoy the festivities.

But the carnival atmosphere with illuminated paper lanterns which seems to dominate the Obon dancing in other communities bears little resemblance to the wailing, chanting and singing by the groups of old women on the plateau of Osore-zan after dark. On this mountain there are no orchestras, no bunting or dazzling lanterns with coloured lights. In place of the cheerful carnival spectacles seen on urban show grounds, the women dance about on the nightly slopes of Osore-zan with artless steps to the accompaniment of their aged and feeble singing voices that are projected into the night as personal messages to the spirits out there. This location needs no *yagura*; the whole area is in itself a permanent abode of the spirits and the figures who with out-stretched arms slowly whirl and pivot about in the mountain night need no bunting or coloured lights in order to make the occasion special. To me, as a spectator, there was something truly otherworldly and strange about the spectacle that I observed from the side of temple's main hall.

Mori (1995:74) writes that the customary routine for these groups is to spend the day walking around the mountain, offering prayers for the repose of the dead. At nightfall the devotees will bathe in one of the curative springs after which, as mentioned above, many go out on the grounds of the mountain again in order to sing and dance and to establish some form of personal contact with the spirits of

the deceased who dwell here. On these occasions, he adds, it is not unusual for some of the participants to overindulge a little in alcohol. Later during the night the devotees will return to the makeshift resting places in one of the temple halls or the pilgrims' lodgings (*shukubô*), where they will continue to sing, eat and drink and tell stories into the early hours of the morning. This is the time when many claim to hear the tinkling sounds made by the metal rings on *Jizô*'s staff or the footsteps and familiar voices of departed relatives, young and old (Yanagita, 1966:1). It is believed that offerings of sandals will assist the gait of *Jizô* during his late diurnal rounds so as to ward off the demons that threaten the children caught in the time warp of *Sai-no-kawara*. For this reason footwear is a popular offering. Anecdotes about the discovery of pebbles or sand in recently offered footwear are very common and these findings are taken as proof of *Jizô* actually having accepted and used the donations of his followers (Sakurai, 1994:25).

The sombre shadows dancing in the dark are a spectacle that has the power to dispel the foul smell of the place, if only for a while. It also serves as an illustration of the different approaches adopted by the Japanese in their relation-ship with the dead and the usage of religious symbols. As I shall describe it in the following chapters, Obon celebrations, when ancestral spirits return to earth, are frequently a study in contrast between the city and the distant countryside. At Osore-zan natural geography is re-interpreted as an extension of the spirit world. In an urban environment people go to temples, man-made holy places, in order to created the same atmosphere.

3.10. Summary

Osore-zan unites several features of Japanese religious attitudes in general and folk religion in particular composed of both Buddhist as well as Shinto elements. It illustrates the way in which a landscape acquires meaning as part of a cultural process. The foundation legend of the temple, for instance, tells how the priest Ennin, who founded Osore-zan, was supported in his quest by the indigenous god of the mountain (myôjin). In this way the myôjin not only accepted the relevance of the religion which Ennin represented, but also ensured that Buddhism henceforth would be preached on Osore-zan.

This submission can also be interpreted in terms of social control.

[W]e are beginning to discover that the *honji suijaku* "doctrine" or 'theory", according to which native kami were regarded as local manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, not only served, on a conceptual level, as a hermeneutic reduction of local deities by a highly sophisticated philosophical system (Buddhism), but was also used, on the socio-political level, to legitimate the economic and administrative dominance of Buddhist temples over their associated "Shinto" shrines throughout Japan (Grapard, 1992:392)

We also observe the importance of the mountain as a dwelling place for the dead as well as a location which enhances communication between the living and the dead. The remoteness of the mountain has most likely played a role in preserving the ritualistic exchanges with the dead so that we today still may observe the *itako* performing their age-old craft, even if the spirit medium séances on the mountain are of a more recent date (Miyazaki & Williams, 2001:399).

A conspicuous element of the activities is the down-to-earth relationship with the dead. Here they are treated much in the same way as the living, but with the difference that they cannot be seen and that communication with the spirits of the dead must follow a prescribed pattern. A strong awareness of the spirit presence is reflected in the willingness of people to ascribe the occurrence of seemingly causeless events, frequently of a benevolent nature, to be a manifestation of the existence of dead spirits (Sakurai, 1995:27-8). Judging from the way people interact with the dead, they appear to occupy a universe parallel that of the living with similar needs, pleasures and discomfort. Death is not a puzzling disappearance but a shift to an analogue plane where the circumstances do not differ greatly from the world left behind. Death is thus considerably demystified and life after death is essentially a continuation of one's mundane existence. The similarity between the two existences explains the banality of the objects the spirits require from the living. As the dead spirits furthermore are believed to continue their existence on Osore-zan, a local mountain, the physical distance between the living and the dead has been diminished as well. The two spheres are only separated by an opaque wall that is transparent from one side. The dead can look into our world and on occasion they may even come over as a proof of their existence. But we

cannot see across the divide. This is where *itako* finds a role to perform because she makes a two-way communication possible. Through her, words materialise that have been spoken in a world which coexists alongside ours but which lies beyond our immediate senses. But more than anything else, it is the presence of *Jizô* with his ability to transcend the boundaries between physical matter and metaphysical worlds that reminds one of unseen dimensions and the belief in realms that exist parallel to ours. The physical landscape can be regarded as a manifestation of hell and the other worlds to be seen with the eyes. In the same way the *kuchiyose* of the *itako* is an echo of the beyond to be heard with our ears. In this context *Jizô* appears as an emblem of compassion setting our minds at rest even if our immediate surroundings strike terror in our hearts.

On Osore-zan one may further observe a pattern which is repeated all over Japan and which we shall see more examples of in the chapters to come: the number of elderly women far exceeds any other groups of worshippers. Other researchers have noticed this phenomenon, too. Miller (1992:212) presents statistics which indicate that "females are more likely than males to express belief in buddhas". He also draws attention to a study by Sasaki and Suzuki (1987), conducted over a period of thirty years, which "demonstrated a strong relationship between age and an increase in religious belief and behaviour" (*ibid:213*). Whether as individuals or as members of a devotional association ($k\delta$), these women make up the majority of the pilgrims, voluntary guides, helpers and cleaners. This work is so important that it is no exaggeration to say that they are the backbone and preservers of those customs and attitudes which ensure a continued existence of religious activities on the mountain.

CHAPTER 4

Heaven, Hell and Meditation Pictures on the Ten Worlds

4.0. The Origin and Historical Background of Heaven and Hell Pictures

In the previous chapter we saw how worshippers at Osore-zan literally carried out their rituals in the middle of sacred geography. The immediacy of the surrounding landscape structures the experience of the pilgrims whose activities are organised around the idea of the mountain being an expression of the sacred. Although the individually named hells are of a symbolic nature, the dismal ambience tends to overpower the symbol and the mountain itself seems to have taken on the character of the symbolised realm. Each step through the malodorous fumes produces a reaction of estrangement which ultimately supports the concept that Osore-zan is an unearthly place.

Sacred texts are as a rule important in literate societies but for Japanese laybelievers they are usually subordinate to the significance of rituals. The nature of the message preached in many sutras is not conducive to an in-depth study. Some texts even say that their meaning is impenetrable and beyond the understanding of the ordinary person. The 'Preaching' chapter in the Lotus Sutra, for instance, calls the sacred text a "sutra with innumerable meanings" (Katô, 1975:11-17). This may account for the fact that there is no general requirement to understand a sacred text. Their ritualistic usage is more important (Watanabe, 1974:15). Apart from this obstacle, there is another hindrance of equal importance, namely the fact that many Buddhist scriptures remain untranslated and can only be accessed in their classical Chinese versions which makes them the preserve of the specialists. The texts of those works that have been translated are often found obscure by the common reader since they teem with technical terms of a religious nature presented in a highly epistolary style. Taken together, these factors go a long way to explain the primacy of rituals and the visual arts over the mastery of scriptures in Japan. This also accords with Weber's (1963:78) characterisation of Mahayana Buddhism in its popular forms "that increasingly tend to approach...sacramental ritualism". On this background artistic expressions of religious themes take on an added significance.

In the following I shall describe the usage and meaning of a 'Heaven and Hell Painting' (*jigoku-gokuraku no zu*), which can be regarded as a pictorial alternative to the sacred geography on Osore-zan (see Appendix I). One of these scrolls is displayed every year in Chinnô-ji temple in Kyoto when the festivities that we saw on Osore-zan are celebrated in an urban environment, this time in accordance with the Gregorian calendar and not the lunar calendar that is still used on Osore-zan. The message is essentially identical to the ideas of heaven and hell as expressed on that mountain in its sacred geography. The radical difference is that the city-dwellers in this instance are looking at, indeed reading, painted scenes of sacred landscape instead of being physically located in them. This difference aside, the presence of this painted scroll with its commemoration of Obon and its intimate connection with life and death places it within a larger historical narrative. It also serves to remind participants that the festival and the rituals on behalf on the ancestral spirits have been sanctioned by Buddha.

Miyake (1995:286-299) has made a special study of these scrolls, and to a large extent I base my identification of the different figures that appear in the many scenes on his research and elucidation. There are however several variants in the extant copies, of which we know about forty two (JUDI Kansai, 2006), so each scroll requires independent scrutiny. Miyake, for instance, points outs the absence in some versions of the incense burner, candle stick holder and flower vase (*mittsu-gusoku*), the three most frequently used utensils on a Buddhist table of offerings, but they are present in the Chinnô-ji copy on which I base my analysis. However, the difference is in the detail, not in the essence.

The importance of *Jizô* can be gauged by the multiple roles he plays in these pictures. They show his special relationship with the dead and what happens in the afterlife since this is ultimately what these pictures are about. At the same time, the 'Heaven and Hell' paintings also place him firmly within the matrix of the important Obon rituals, the festival which celebrates the ancestral spirits' return to earth, thus establishing a connection between him and the other figures of significance in these celebrations. Everyone is aware of *Jizô* 's special relationship with the dead and his vow to liberate each and every spirit from hell and guide them to buddhahood is common knowledge (*rokudô bakku*: Kanada et al., 1989:470-476).

Those who are looking for ways of alleviating the pain of family members and ancestors in hell find in *Jizô* (Kshitigarbha) a useful ally and intermediary. Because of his vows, he has become:

associated in particular with rituals that can be performed by those who remain behind for the welfare of their ancestors - rituals such as reciting the *Ti-tsang pen-ying sutra* (Sutra on the Former Vows of Kshitigarbha) and bestowing the merit to the ancestors, or placing the name of an ancestor or an urn containing the ashes at regular intervals on a temple shrine to Kshitigarbha, prostrating, burning incense, and perhaps holding a short service (Williams, 1989:242).

During the late sixteenth century when many of these paintings were made, several texts written for popular entertainment reveal a certain "salvation-anxiety". Evil forces, it was believed, conspired to prevent believers from reaching paradise even if they had assiduously chanted the *nembutsu* mantra. These people turned to $Jiz\hat{o}$ since they were convinced that under his protection one could avoid being led astray and not suffer the fate of being reborn in a "Fake Pure Land" (Kimbrough, 2006a:274-276).

Painted images have played an important role in shaping people's ideas about the appearance of heaven and hell in the Japanese Buddhist tradition (Embree, 1972: 234). Preaching with pictures, however, was not only meant to instruct. To listen to a professional *etoki*, a person who deciphered and explained the underlying message of religious paintings, was not only to receive doctrinal instruction. The viewer cum listener would also benefit from an accumulation of spiritual merit (Ruch, 1971:603; Formanek, 1994:3). It was and still is believed that those who participate in an *etoki* session will enjoy special protection by the holy protagonist(s) in the pictures (Hashimoto, 1989:96-7).

The Chinese had a head start when it came to develop a useful underworld. Not that the Japanese lacked a nether world of their own, but it was less elaborate than continental versions (Philippi, 1977:61). Indian and possibly also Khotanese sutras translated into Chinese had endowed the concept of hell, which the Chinese with canonical sanctification developed and refined over the centuries. The Indians had created an underground ambience of terror, which they had animated with ghouls

and torturers. The Chinese, familiar with large-scale bureaucracies, organised hell as a subterranean government. The infernal regions were invested with their own ministerial administration, lackeys, keepers of records and bailiffs. The whole administrative machinery of hell became a distorted mirror image of the bureaucratic institutions on earth where division of labour had produced specialist sections to deal with particular transgressions. The similarity was not lost on the Chinese; in fact, hell was often explained by comparing it to the bureaucracy on earth (Teiser, 1988:188, Brandon, 1967:178-9).

When priests, monks and storytellers went about their proselytising and didactic missions, they had two powerful tools at their disposal: detailed texts, of which we know they would have committed long passages to memory, and paintings of vivid images with which they could concretise to and enliven their recitals. In the popular evolution of ancestral memorial rites in China and Japan, Mokuren (Skt. Maudgalyâyana), one of the Buddha's ten disciples, became a key figure. A narrative tradition developed around the exploits of his descent into hell to save his mother. Storytellers would again and again put on performances where they would illustrate the terrors of hell with picture scrolls while enacting the tale in the vernacular (Glassman, 2001:106). It is noteworthy that attending a pictorial interpretation was described as 'seeing and hearing an *etoki'* (*etoki o kenbun suru*). Although these "audio-visual" performances had a clearly defined religious goal, the *etoki* also had to survive on the income gene-rated by their storytelling and over time a fixed system of payment developed (Akai et al, 1990:230). This meant that the people listening to their performance were both an audience as well as a religious assembly. By necessity, a combination of entertainment and commercialization became part and parcel of the 'picture explainers' trade and it is difficult to judge where the sermons stopped and the diversion began (Formanek, 1994:1-3; Dix, 2006:2). A certain specialisation also took place. Some *etoki* directed their interpretative talents towards the wealthy and educated, while others focused on women and the lower classes. This is most clearly noticeable in the activities of the nuns from the temple complex of Kumano (Kumano bikuni) in western Japan. They operated in pairs all over the country, giving their listeners leaves from the *nagi* tree (*Podocarpus nagi*), believed to be conducive to marital harmony. But more importantly, they specialised in preaching the Buddhist view

of eschatology from a female perspective to female only audiences (onna ga katari, onna ga kiku). After a brief introduction to the pleasures of Heaven, they would draw attention to the painted sections of Hell reserved for women: 'Barren Women's Hell' (umazume jigoku), 'Blood Pool Hell' (chi-no-ike jigoku), and 'Jealous Women's Hell' (futame jigoku). It is said that their female audiences were frequent moved to tears of deep despair (Akai et al, 1990:234-36).

Taking these painted images for one's guide, it is still possible to journey through the ancient visions of heaven and hell although it must be said that "guided" tours of heaven were much less common than visits to hell. In fact, there is a long tradition in Japan for stories which describe how an individual makes a journey to hell and comes back to tell about it (jigoku henreki-dan). One of the first stories in this genre appears in an eighth century collection of miraculous tales (Nihon Ryôiki). Here a courtier named Fujiwara Hirotari goes to hell where he meets Emma-ô, the chief judge of hell, who tells him that he is identical with Jizô. Hirotari returns to earth and tells everyone what he has seen and heard (Tanaka, 1975:281-284). It was this type of sermonizing tale that in later centuries was replaced by painted illustrations which were interpreted for the public by professional 'picture explainers' who, so to say, went out on an imaginary journey together with the audience (Kimbrough, 2006b: 183-187).

The tradition whereby the didactic contents of these paintings are explained to a lay audience persists. In a similar fashion to the 'picture explainer' of the distant past, who with their pointers would direct spectators' attention to noteworthy scenes in the picture scrolls, temple visitors today can also enjoy the benefits of expert interpretation and knowledge. There is no factual information about the performance style of the pre-modern *etoki* so we cannot say that present day practice is identical with that of the past. However, judging from the rules laid down for preaching techniques in prosodic stylebooks, it seems that the sing-song style of Buddhist sermons (*fushidan sekkyô*) was used. During the period of Obon, many temples still display the scrolls that were used during these performances by itinerant storytellers. At fixed times during the festival, people are instructed by priests about the meaning of these intricately composed scrolls, how the indivi-

dual parts relate to the whole, and how the whole is related to contemporary life (Hashimoto, 1989:93-100).

Unfortunately, there is a lack of consensus about the nomenclature of the paintings. They are known variously as 'Kumano Mind Meditation Ten Worlds Mandala' (*Kumano kanjin jikkai-mandara*), 'Pictures of the Six Paths' (*rokudô-e*), or 'Heaven and Hell Picture' (*Jigoku-gokuraku no zu*). The numeral in the title of the Kumano Mandala refers to the ten worlds of Buddhist cosmology (*jikkai*) but the very same picture only refers to the six worlds of transmigration when it is called 'Picture of the Six Paths' (*rokudô-e*).

Ogurisu (2006:12-17) has identified the Chinnô-ji temple's painting as a protostandard Kumano Mandala. The prestigious dictionary of annual Buddhist festivals (Nishise, 1989:235) calls it a 'Picture of the Six Paths' (rokudô-e) and describes it as a picture genre which shows how human beings, as a result of their own actions, are reborn in the six realms of pain and illusion in the process of 'transmigration' (rokudô rinne). To escape from these painful existences and to enter the world of the Buddha (hotoke no sekai), it is necessary to 'take refuge in' the Buddhist doctrines (buppô ni kie suru). Nishise further writes that these pictures spread in tandem with the popularity of the Pure Land Sect and that they have been decisive in shaping the Japanese view of the afterlife. The temple itself, however, refers to the painting as a 'Heaven and Hell Painting' (jigoku gokuraku no zu) and this is the appellation that I shall be using as well.

During the Edo Period, this particular scroll was carried from place to place by the previously mentioned nuns from Kumano (Kumano etoki bikuni) in groups of four and five who used it as an integral part of their sermons and proselytising activities. Their twofold aim was to promote belief in Kumano as a sacred locality (reijô) and to solicit contributions for the maintenance of the huge temple complex located there. Frequently the nuns would unroll their scrolls and preach their message at crossroads or bridges where important traffic arteries met (JUDI Kansai, 2006). Sometimes their sermons would be addressed to an all-female audience. Some scholars take this fact to be the reason for the inclusion of 'Blood Pool Hell', 'Two-Wives Hell' (futame jigoku), where jealous wives go, and the analo-

gous 'Barren Women's Hell' (*umazu-jigoku*) in the scrolls since these hells carry special significance for women (Kôdate, 2001, Chap. III). Incidentally, these inclusions also serve to date the scrolls as we know of no other examples of this practice prior to the early seventeenth century, according to Miya (1988:77).

4.1. The Cosmology of the Heaven and Hell Scroll in Chinnô-ji Temple Every year during Obon, visitors to the Chinnô-ji Temple in Kyoto's Higashiyama Ward can see a magnificent 'Heaven and Hell Picture' (jigoku gokuraku no zu) hanging outdoors under the eaves of one of the temple buildings. It is of a rectangular shape, painted with a cheap pigment called *doro enogu* on paper, not silk, which is a far more expensive material (Kimbrough, 2006:180). It is a technique that resembles distemper whereby "powdered colours are mixed with glue-size" (Murray, 172:123). It measures approximately 150 by 110 centimetres. An informative note next to the scroll proudly announces it to be one of the temple's treasures from the Edo Period. It is a synthesis of pictorial theology and visualised cosmology with a strong emphasis on suffering and pain. The scroll conveys a dualistic vision of the paradisiacal Pure Land and its opposite, Hell, but the latter is given a far more elaborate treatment in terms of space and the number of separate areas it occupies within the scroll (Akai, 1990:232). The scroll content is nothing less than a pictorial explanation of the raison d'être for Obon. While showing how this life extends to other dimensions beyond visible boundaries, it simultaneously demonstrates how people and seemingly unrelated events are interconnected. In this sense it is also a guide to the structure of the Buddhist worldview and its perceptions of the afterlife.

This painting differs in many ways from the much older pictures of hell (jigoku sôshi) of the Heian (804-1185) and Kamakura (1185-1333) periods. That genre depicted in vivid detail the tortures of hell with the obvious intent of frightening the spectators. One recalls the reaction of Sei Shônagon, author of the famous 'Pillow Book' (Makura no sôshi), who describes these pictures as "terrifying beyond words", when displayed in the palace. Hiding behind some screens, she refused to cast a second glance at them (Morris, 1976:87). There were usually several scrolls, each devoted to the depiction of a specific hell with a strong emphasis on horror and pain. It is only later with the popularity of Pure Land

Buddhism that bypassing the tortures of hell and going straight to paradise becomes a distinct possibility. It is at this point that the figure of $Jiz\hat{o}$ enters the stage and appears in the pictures as special executor and guarantor of this soteriological promise (Miyake, 1995:219-20). The development is exemplified by various scrolls of heaven and hell ($jigoku\ gokuraku\ no\ zu$) painted in later centuries, starting in the Muromachi period (1338-1573).

The mode of execution of the large scroll in question is unmistakably Japanese. It is instructive to see how Indian doctrines and their Chinese interpretation are given a Japanese perspective. The chief judge in the nether world (*Emma-ô*), for instance, is decidedly outlandish in his appearance. His fellow judges, sitting on chairs in front of a tall writing desk, also contrast noticeably with the Japanese figures who squat on their heels directly on the ground. The shape and colour of the 'spirit gates' (*torii*), a traditional Shintô symbol, the apparel worn by various persons in the picture, their hairstyle and headgear are also unmistakably Japanese, as is the stylised treatment of the landscape in the background.

The use of the word 'mandala' rather than 'picture' for these paintings, not only classifies them as a pictorial representation of the various sentient beings that inhabit cosmos. It also summarises the complexity of the scroll's contents and the attempt to edify through the genre of visual narrative. The numerous scenes and figures crowd the surface and the absence of a unifying perspective initially makes one's eyes dart from one scene to the next in no systematic order. Yet once it becomes evident that the composition progresses in a spiralling movement from right to left, the structural relationship between the many scenes becomes significant. The spectator's gaze advances from one episode to the next, gradually adding substance to the story as it develops, each layer becoming denser and more meaningful with the addition of the previous scene. This cultural tradition of 'reading' images from right to left, rather than from the left to right as in Western style picture books, no doubt owes much to the technique of the Japanese picture scrolls where each individual scene is a link in a narrative chain which gradually unfolds as the scrolls are rolled open from right to left (Okudaira, 1972:98-9). The painted episodes are sequentially related and the events are meant to be read in a linear and progressive manner even if the scroll is not rolled up. This method of

reading contrasts noticeably with the "iconic" mode which until recently was favoured in Western narrative painting where the story of the picture is arranged around a central figure (Teiser, 1994:42).

Once the subject matter and the polyscenic structure are understood, certain affinities with the Tibetan 'wheel-of-life paintings' or 'wheel-of-becoming paintings' (tanka) become evident. Graphically expressed, the various stages of existence appear in a schematic form based on a vision which Buddha's disciple Mokuren is said to have had, according to the 'Urabon Sutra' (Lowenstein, 1996: 30-1). Yet nothing in the Japanese scroll corresponds to the fierce creature of time which in the Tibetan versions embraces the wheel of all existence in a vice-like hug as a poignant manifestation of karmic energy and new transformations in a never-ending cycle of impermanent conditions. Despite the uniformity of the underlying idea, the Japanese version of the same universe requires another interpretative approach since it is structured differently. Here seemingly unrelated events crowd the surface as opposed to the symmetrical regularity of the Tibetan representation where everything is divided into neatly delineated and defined panels. The symmetrical regularity has been replaced by a selective emphasis in the Japanese version. Interestingly, several Buddhist key symbols of faith such as Mt. Sumeru, for instance, the centre of the universe, are absent in the Japanese paintings. Also missing are the animals in the Tibetan *tanka*, emblems of human weakness and surrounded by the six levels of existence (rokudô), which in turn are circumferenced by all ten existences (jikkai).

Traditionally the ten existences in the Buddhist cosmology are subdivided into six 'worlds of desire and illusion' (meikai) and the 'heavenly worlds' (tenkai), of which there are four. The latter are existential realms far beyond the worlds of illusion and open only to those who have attained the prerequisites for spiritual enlightenment (Ono et al., 1986). The relentless progression and division within this cosmological design, so clearly depicted in the corresponding Tibetan versions, have not been taken up by the Japanese. The centre is gone. In its place, the painters have relied on a circular structure within the borders of the painting that encourages the eyes to move in a certain direction thus determining how the images are read. The exceptional life forms of the heavenly worlds (tenkai) are

beyond the realistically achievable and maybe even beyond the level of comprehension by the average human being, so it is perhaps inevitable that popular interest in Japan became focused on the lower existences in the greater scheme of things. Hell and its concomitant features which illuminate the potential directions of people's future and rebirth were singled out and this is what this 'Heaven and Hell' painting' seems to show us. It demonstrates how each individual life is related to the divine, how unseen cosmic principles operate, and how they shape the course of our destinies. Dealing with themes of this magnitude, it is no wonder that the painting is treated as a religious icon in its own right and regarded as something partaking of the divine. During its display, there is a tray for donations placed in front of it and smoke from consecrated incense sticks spiral towards the sky in the sort of hazy clouds that are customarily seen in front of religious images (Mochizuki et al., 1975:149-150).

From a bird's eye perspective visitors can observe how every step in life is intertwined with the moral order of the universe. They see how the direction in which we guide our steps will terminate in a self-created end, starting right from the moment of birth and continuing through the 'four great pains' of life, birth, aging, disease and death (daishiku). This path is known as 'the hilly road of life' (jinsei no sakamichi) where each change represents a specific turning point in a person's life with its own "narrative dimensions" (Jain and Daljeet, 2006:4). Physical existence commences on the right side of the picture where an infant enters life through a 'spirit gate' (torii). From here a path leads on to an arch that rainbow-like spans the sky in the upper part of the painting with the sun at one end and the moon at the other.

At the opposite side arch, where the exit is located, there is likewise a *torii*. This rainbow is divided into four parts with plants and trees corresponding to the four seasons and 'The Four Ages of Man'. We see an infant taking its first faltering steps in spring, followed by persons of gradually increasing ages approaching winter. The end of human life is reached when the arching 'hill of age' (oi no saka) has been crossed. At this point, the picture shows how a person bent under the weight of many years and only supported by a stick leaves the course of life and enters the metaphysical dimension of karmic retribution. Now is the time of

reckoning, a process which will lead the spirit through a burial ground and across a river (Nishise, 1989:235), the traditional metaphor for a boundary between different levels of consciousness. A couple still dressed in their white burial shrouds appears to be led across a bridge by *Jizô*, away from this unpleasant realm towards a new existence on the lower left side. The direction in which they are headed supports this interpretation. Another possibility is that the couple is representative of that small group of people whose trespasses are of such a minor nature that they can walk straight across the bridge to face judgement about their previous conduct and receive posthumous direction for their next lives. Whichever way it is, the current flowing under the bridge can only be *Sanzu-no-kawa*, the waters encircling the realm of judgement and reckoning.

4.2. The Conditions of Hell

Grotesque monsters armed with iron clubs and spears guard the riverbanks where the inevitable crossing will take place. The dramatic nature of this event has made it a popular *motif* and a considerable number of extant works deal with this scene (Nakano, 1992:9). Here the crossing is described in the same terms as in the legend from Osore-zan. We recall that the ease with which one crosses Sanzu-nokawa depends on the nature of one's individual karma. Many are forced to ford the river on foot or swim across in order to enter hell as the bridge will not support them because of the weight of their previous transgressions. These unfortunate creatures are swept away by the strong current, clobbered by demons and bitten and mauled by creatures in the water. Yet there is no turning back. After arriving on the other side of the banks of Sanzu-no-kawa, the spirits will encounter the 'hag who pulls off clothing' (Datsueba), who, as the name suggests, will remove the vestments of the dead once they step ashore (Teiser, 1994:33). She is easily recognisable, sitting close to a tree where the branches are hung with clothes. As the entrants are now to begin a new existence, it is only proper they start out as naked as they did at birth.

In the pre-industrial period a ceremony took place three days after the birth of a child during which it was ritually clothed in the 'putting the arms through [the sleeves] ceremony' (tetôshi). The dress worn on this occasion was called 'afterbirth dress' (enagi) and indicated a formal commitment by the parents to bring it

up, which in effect meant that they granted it life (Takemi, 1988:49). According to other sources, *Datsueba* at birth lends newly born infants "an item called the 'placenta cloth' *(enakin)*, [which] each person must return to her when they meet on the other side" (Glassman, 2001:148). When we recall that to this day many people are still buried with the remains of their umbilical cord, *Datsueba's* role becomes clearer in the web of birth, death, and return to a prenatal condition before the spirits' subsequent rebirth. A body, Sugimoto writes, is an item on loan and "it is proper courtesy to leave a borrowed article in the best condition", which in passing also used to include the return of hair and nails (Sugimoto, 1969:268-9).

Diagonally across from the spectacle of arriving figures, the nature of events to come is depicted in a scene where the weight of one's deeds being measured on a pair of scales. In this particular version the 'law courts' of hell are in full swing. Kneeling figures are being interrogated by the chief judge in hell (*Emma-ô*) while others wait their turn under the watchful eyes of a fierce-looking judge of a lower rank. The number of judges has been reduced, as if the idea of judgement is more important than the traditional procedure of reckoning with ten judges (Nakano, 1992:17-8). A huge, circular mirror (*jôhari-no-kagami*), one of the permanent fixtures of the court, helps *Emma-ô* in his judgement. It reflects the deeds of those being examined, indicating that all past acts are known to the court and that the individual is now confronted with the full extent of his or her karmic self. A bodyless head (*ninzudô*) lying in a bowl on top of a spear, announces the verdicts. Severe punishments are pronounced in an atmosphere of belching fires whereas virtuous conduct is articulated with white lotus blossoms flowing out of his mouth of the *ninzudô* (Shimbo, 2001:10-11).

4.3. Children and Sai-no-Kawara

A large *Jizô* figure, one of the most prominent in the painting, stands upright in the lower centre half of the picture. An elongated curved pattern of scalloped clouds and smoke surrounds this location, clearly separating it from other scenes. The sandy area, the small stupas, and crouching children piling up stones are sufficient clues for the identification of this place. It is *Sai-no-kawara*, children's limbo, which customarily is represented by a dry riverbed where the spirits of deceased children and infants are said to gather before their rebirth. One tradition puts the

time of their sojourn in this location within the first fourteen days after their demise. It will be recalled that it takes most people seven days to cross Sanzu-nokawa, a time frame which corresponds to the period it takes for the first judge of hell (Shinko-ô) to hand down a verdict about the karmic status of a deceased (Miya, 1988:58). But as the little ones are too weak to make the crossing on their own, they are stranded on its banks and in a way they are also stranded in time. Their further progress is wholly dependant on the intensity of the memorial services given on their behalf by their parents who in this way express parental love and forgiveness. The children require forgiveness because they have departed this world after causing their parents much pain and without the proper display of filial piety to which the parents are entitled. Under normal circumstances, parental kindness would have been repaid by supporting and looking after the parents in their old age in accordance with the "Confucian principles of loyalty and benevolence" (Hendry, 1998:25). The premature death of infants, on the other hand, upsets the normal course of events. It precludes children from showing their parents the expected gratitude for having been born, fed and clothed. Normally, parents should be the recipients of memorial rites. It should not be the other way round where parents sponsor memorial rites for their own progeny (Ishikawa, 1995:16). Ultimately, parental emotions and the proper offerings have the effect of mobilising the compassion of Jizô who then carries the little ones across the waters of Sanzu-no-kawa in order to prepare them for a new existence.

Like other culturally charged images, the little figures watched over by $Jiz\hat{o}$ evoke a host of associations that are not immediately discernible to outsiders. Memory and traditional knowledge combine to augment whatever element a given scroll may leave unsaid. If the demons are missing, cultural knowledge stored in the mind will intuitively add them to the scenery as unseen participants. According to the legend, these demons will daily topple the mounds of stones that the toddlers have piled up during the day, each stone in memory of the family which uncontrollable circumstances had forced the infants to leave. Watching this scene in the painting, spectators may recollect the performance of one of the many traditional plays that deals with the plight of children in Sai-no-kawara. Shinsen-en temple in Kyoto, otherwise famous for its extravagant tendoku reading (cf. section 6.2.3) of the 'Prajñâpâramitâ sûtra' $(Hannya-ky\hat{o})$, is also known for its performance of

humorous plays (*kyôgen*) in May. Here the river bed scenery of *Sai-no-kawara* is enacted in front of a live audience which views a spectacle of children harassed by demons only to be saved by the timely arrival of *Jizô* (Toshishima, 1989:104-112). Kôsai-ji in Sôsa-gun, Chiba Prefecture, a village temple belonging to the Shingon sect, upstages everyone else during Obon with its dramatic outdoor performances. Familiar scenes from the *Sai-no-kawara* ambience are enacted with orphaned spirits being taunted by fierce demons in the traditional colours of passion, red and blue (Halford, 1974:437). The infant actors walk around blindfolded, as if in a dream, waiting for the arrival of *Jizô* to release them from their misery. A symbolic closing of the cauldrons of hell is also performed on this occasion. The spectacle finishes with children born that year being touched by representatives of the demons and *Jizô* in an act which concludes the "yearly meeting between the living and the dead" (Kanda, 1989:50-58). Here we notice that not only does *Jizô* have the power to open up the gates and remove the lids from the cauldrons of hell; he can reverse the action and put the lids back on again.

It is of course difficult to assess how deeply the whole Sai-no-kawara discourse affects the spectators, yet the haunting nature of its message cannot be denied. It requires no great imagination to understand why 'the pain of separating from those one loves' (aibetsuri) is included in the eight pains (hakku) that according to Buddhist teachings are immanent in human existence (Hanayama, 1989:40). The agonising sentiments expressed in the lines of a medieval hymn in praise of Jizô (Jizô Sai-no-kawara wasan) reveal the profound sorrow felt by anyone who has lost a child. When this imaginary world is given form and shape through theatrical performance, we have a powerful and concrete image of desolation and helpless despair that is hard to forget. Few may be able to chant the wasan unaided from beginning to end, but everyone seems to be aware of the miserable state of the children on the banks of Sai-no-kawara. After the customary laudatory opening (kimyô chôrai), the beginning words of the hymn immediately project us into a world beyond this life, to a road in the foothills of the 'Mountain of Death' (shideno-yama). "Listen", the hymn says, "and you will know about the sorrows of this place", after which it proceeds to detail the plight of these unfortunate infants. There are several versions of the hymn, but they all refer to children gathering stones in order to pile them up in the form of lapidary stupas (tô). They do that

while counting the number of stones they lift up: "one for my father, two for my mother", and so on (Mochizuki, 1974:218-9; LaFleur, 1992:63-4).

The father of Japanese ethnography, Yanagita, had little regard for this hymn. In these lines he saw an attempt by the Buddhist establishment to exploit the sadness of grieving parents through the "literary use of a folk tradition" that in his opinion was much older than the imported continental belief systems. The numerous places throughout the islands of Japan with names that refer to hell, he seems to assert, have been appropriated by Buddhism in order to explain its own concepts of the afterlife at the expense of the indigenous tradition (Yanagita, 1988:152).

4.4. The Infinite Hell and Blood Pool Hell

Immediately below Sai-no-kawara there is a flaming pit with human figures writhing in pain while ox- and horse-headed demons gleefully poke them with prongs and spears. The abomination of this place makes one recall that the ultimate hell (abi-jigoku) is reserved for those whose crimes and transgressions are of a most heinous nature. This is where those who have committed crimes against the faith, perpetrators of matricide, and the murderers of holy persons are sent and where they will go straight into cauldrons filled with seething hot oil. Although there are many hells, both hot and cold, 'Avîci hell' (abi-jigoku), also known as the 'infinite hell' (mugen jigoku), is the most feared hell of them all. From the nature of the pictorial treatment, this was definitely it. To reach the bottom of this hell of all hells, sinners fall down-wards, head first, for two thousand years before they land on the next stage of torture, the 'forest of swords'. The tortures are varied and described in detail in many works, but suffice it to say that the mere mention of this place was formerly enough to strike terror in the hearts of believers (Ishigami, 1983:219-222). Regardless of the lack of a central perspective, the emphatic way in which this hell is depicted is mesmerising. The exaggerated size and the intensity of the colours with which the undulating flames are rendered make it difficult to focus on other aspects of the painting for long. One's gaze is repeatedly drawn to this scene of unmitigated pain and torture almost as if everything else in the painting has to be seen in relation to abi-jigoku.

A different scene in the bottom right corner resonates with similar cardinal red colours which envelope another group of human figures. A wave like pattern runs horizontally across the surface in the form of a red lake. Closer inspection reveals that the unfortunate ones immersed in this loathsome location are all women. There is only one place like this in all the hells: the 'Blood Pool Hell'. This is a painted version of the eponymous underground spring on Mt. Osore where we learnt about magic charms and cloth pieces being thrown into the water inscribed with the names of those who have died in childbirth (see also above pp.122-3). This place owes its existence to the previously mentioned 'Menstruation Sutra' (ketsu-bon-kyô), which arrived in Japan between the fourteenth and fifteenth century (Fujita, 1989).

This brief text explains the reason for women being predestined to a sojourn in hell. They are punished because of the pollution caused by menstrual blood as well as the bleeding which accompanies the act of childbirth. Pregnant women who die before giving birth and those who do so while in labour are certain to go to this uncanny place. At the same time the 'Menstruation Sutra' also shows how women can shorten their stay in 'Blood Pool Hell', or perhaps even avoid it all together. In this manner the same sutra is also instrumental in purifying women and setting them free. Active engagement with the text, chanting and copying its content will eventually remove the negative elements that cause the sojourn in hell. Takemi (1983:243) mentions ceremonies involving the chanting of the sutra in front of *Jizô* images and how women formerly fashioned protective charms against difficult childbirth with this sutra. During pregnancy, the text would be carried in the waistband (*iwata obi*), and after the delivery of the infant, the kanji characters which made up the syllables of the *Jizô* mantra were cut out from the sacred text and swallowed for the next seven days.

In the scroll's lower right corner, two women are seated on lotus petals high above the pool of menstrual blood. Having risen from an area of pollution, their elevated position on these emblematic flowers of faith symbolises a state of liberation and release from the anguish that the other women immersed in the pool are suffering (Miyake, 1995:295). An easily recognised 'Wish-fulfilling Kannon' (*Nyoirin Kannon*), inclined towards the two female figures, hovers above the crimson lake

of blood. This 'transformed body' (keshin) of Kannon (Avalokiteshvara) is always seated and has normally six arms but here the number cannot be ascertained (Nishise, 1989:225). The 'Wish-fulfilling Kannon' is handing an open scroll, variously been interpreted as the 'Menstruation Sutra' or the 'Heart Sutra', to a woman a white shroud who sits just below the lotus throne of the bodhisattva. The bounty of 'Wish-fulfilling Kannon's' compassion, which extends to all sentient beings, is represented by the wish-fulfilling jewel, an attribute this particular Kannon shares with *Jizô*. This jewel not only makes banal wishes come true but it also has the power to cut through the web of ignorance and illusions that hold ordinary people back from realising their inner potential for spiritual enlightenment (Mochizuki et al., 1974:178-9). Even if Nyoirin Kannon should overlook these poor creatures by some fluke of destiny, all is not lost:

Edo women did not cut their hair in case they died during childbirth. Such death condemned a woman to the Pool of Blood Hell, according to folk Buddhist notions. Their only hope for salvation from it was that Jizô would extend his staff into the blood, entwine their hair, and lift them out to a higher plane (Hardacre, 1997:169).

This passage is yet another reminder of the extent to which popular belief relied on this bodhisattva for dispensing compassion. *Jizô* is in a position to grant hope and ultimately to suspend the inevitable through the innate power of his vow and to change an unfavourable karmic direction for something better.

Bearing this promise in mind, the plight of a woman with a cumbersome cangue, also known as a 'neck-pillory' (*kubikase*), around her neck and extending her hand to a child, pitiful as it is, does not engender the same desperate notion of helplessness that infuses many other scenes, since the bodhisattva's proximity ensures that her torment is of a finite nature and that help is literally close at hand. The presence of *Jizô* is always a comforting reminder of his personal renunciation of enlightenment as long as even one single soul remains in hell. Thus the compassion which liberates people from the weight of their past transgressions, is juxtaposed with the shackles of mechanically administered karmic laws which restrain, confine and frequently cause horrendous pain. This pain may be self-inflicted as the result of individual failings and those vices which originally

kindled the flames of hell. To the average person, lacking the wisdom and insight of a bodhisattva, life is a constant invitation to transgress, yet this weakness is offset by the vows of buddhas and bodhisattvas who have pledged to liberate all sentient beings.

4.5. Release and The Way to the Pure Land

In the centre of the upper half of the scroll, right above a table with elaborate offerings of rice and nuts, there is a conspicuous lozenge like white sphere within which the kanji character for 'heart / mind' (*kokoro*) is written in gold. This written character emits narrow red rays, ten in all, to the ten different levels of existence which in this manner are interconnected with the word and hence its message. Miyake (1995:297-9) regards the 'heart' character as the key word for unlocking the deeper meaning of the mandala. We are not just dealing with a depiction of hell, a visual narrative which serves as an admonishing or threatening statement about the *post mortem* lives of those whose conduct was abominable when they were alive. It also teaches us what we should do in order to avoid a destiny similar to those pathetic creatures writhing in pain before our very own eyes.

In this way the mandala can be read both as threat about future punishments as well as an edifying narrative with a strategy for obtaining morally accepted aims. The 'heart', which stands for both emotions and mind, can take a given individual in any one direction. It may lead to a place of bliss or, as the case might be, to hell and torture. 'Right mindfulness or thinking' is a direct allusion to the 'Four Noble Truths' and the 'Noble Eightfold Path', the Buddhist principles which analyse the cause as well as the cure for pain in human existence. The only determinism involved is the consequence of one's actions: one reaps as one sows. It is possible to rise to one of the pure, paradisiacal lands presided over by a buddha if one is mindful of the precepts and follows them. If, on the other hand, a transgressor ignores the advice to lead a virtuous life (betsugedatsu ritsugi), one may be forced in the opposite direction. The outcome of reprehensible conduct can propel one into any one of the hells, hot or cold, whose demons will ensure that the net effect of each evil act, according to Genshin, will increase ten-fold in terms of pain (Ishikawa, 1995:212). Bredon manages to combine the symbolic meaning of Jizô's

name (Ti-tsang) with a statement redolent of evangelical triumphalism when she declares that whatever happens to us is ultimately dependent on how we respond to moral and existential challenges.

Each human being is himself the bearer of the staff that will break open the gates of hell, and the possessor of a jewel that will illuminate the darkness through which his own soul is groping. So long he is sunk in sensuous delusion...he will be encompassed by all the dangers that beset a blind man...but deep in his innermost nature (ti) is stored a treasure (tsang) which, if he will only clear away the dust and rubbish under which it lies concealed, will assuredly prove to be everlasting and incorruptible. Similarly, the only hell that man needs fear is the hell he creates for himself (Bredon, 1982:390).

But this eloquence may be speaking over the heads of the multitudes that, groping and struggling, are preoccupied with everyday worries about how to survive in a materialist world. The very difficulty of attaining the insight required for existential liberation is the stuff that faith in *Jizô* and the other bodhisattvas is made of and their proper *raison d-être*.

Depending on one's level of understanding of Buddhist doctrine, the 'heart' character may suggest other interpretations based on the Mahayana principle which states "that mind is the ultimate existence and all phenomena are its manifestations or transformations" (Inagaki, 1992:365).

Hovering on a cloud above the *kokoro* character, an Amida figure is standing on a lotus blossom with a retinue of four bodhisattva. This is a noteworthy departure from related Central Asian pictures, in particular Tibetan, where the Buddha is standing outside the 'wheel of existence', as an emblem of enlightenment. In Japan, the Buddha, in this instance Amida, is *in* the world not external to it. This golden group, brightened up by many-coloured haloes, provides an island of captivating tranquillity. It is a mesmerising invitation to join the group in Amida's Pure Land and relish the condition of peaceful enlightenment. As the scroll demonstrates, a rejection of this offer of salvation may lead to a dark and horribly painful existence the further down one goes through the hierarchical layers of the afterlife, until one arrives at the flaming pit at the bottom, the hell without end *(mugen jigoku)*.

Thus the visual and mental journey through the scroll comes to an end. Each progressive movement brings about its own effect, which the scroll describes in greater or lesser detail. No one is tempted to linger in any of the six realms where the living conditions are emphatically unfavourable. Everyone is encouraged to continue his or her journey until it culminates in a meeting with the retinue of welcome headed by Amida. From his purple cloud he reaches out to welcome all travellers thus putting an end to their peregrinations in the painful worlds of form and rebirth.

4.6. Mokuren and the First Obon Offerings

There is a section in the scroll about which I have delayed comment till now. The major function of this section seems to be to validate the content of the scroll and its usage during Obon. It consists of two independent, but related scenes. One depicts a small group of people and a Buddhist monk in the process of receiving instructions from a radiant buddha who towers over his listeners. The modest scale of the scene masks the key role that it plays in the formative process of Obon because the priest is none other than Mokuren. It was to him that Shakamuni revealed how the living can alleviate and even shorten the sufferings of all sentient beings trapped in unfavourable existences, be it as hungry spirits or tortured inmates in one of the many hells. In a nearby scene there is a visual demonstration of the Buddha's instructions: Mokuren kneeling in front of a table on which tall coloured cones of rice and nuts are displayed. They represent the offerings that Mokuren was told to make on behalf of the dead (preta). These two episodes illustrate the contents and objective of the 'Urabon Sutra' (Avalambana-sûtra). On the one hand it is about human suffering, in particular the suffering of one's nearest kin. On the other hand, it also explains the rituals required for securing their release from hell. The way in which the story relates the origin of Obon and the commencement of specific offerings has much in common with traditional temple foundation stories (engi). It shows the connection between the mundane and the divine, in particular divine sanction and the efficacy of religious rituals.

The 'Urabon Sutra' establishes the paradigm for the celebration of Obon that over time has become one of the most important events in the Japanese religious calendar with more than seventy percent of the population taking part in its celebration (Reader, 1991:10). The scholarly theories concerning the sutra's provenance, which most certainly is Chinese, and the arguments about the meaning of the title are of no importance here. What matters is what the sutra tries to say and how the Japanese through the centuries have reacted to this message. It does however reveal an interesting facet of popular Buddhism in Japan: sutras whose relationship to the corpus of officially recognised texts is tenuous have in many cases been a major force in shaping religious attitudes. Apocryphal texts have presumably met a religious and filial need that has been either overlooked or not addressed in the sacred canon. Eventually the popularity of these texts reached such levels that the official establishment could no long ignore them and in time their wide circulation made them metamorphose into 'true' texts (Teiser, 1988:60-6).

The story of the 'Urabon Sutra', its main protagonists, and the motivation for the actions of the people in this short scripture and other related texts can be summarised as follows: the priest, Mokuren (Chinese: Mu-lien; Sanskrit: Maudgalyâyana) is saddened by the discovery that his beloved mother has been reborn as a hungry demon (gaki), unable to eat and drink in spite of an unquenchable thirst and boundless hunger. Her rebirth as a hungry demon has come about as a consequence of actions in her former life for which she is now suffering. Mokuren's encounter with his mother after her death is the result of an extended journey through hell. The account of Mokuren's experiences in the nether world provides the various texts with a great opportunity to describe the interior of hell, which many do in great detail. Mair (1983:3) writes that the ultimate purpose of these texts was to provoke a spiritual change in their listeners for which reason they were called 'transformation' texts (henbun). When a painted illustration was used in conjunction with the reading and enactment of the transformation text, they were called a 'transformation tableau' (hensô).

The precise nature of the mother's wicked actions, which landed her in hell, varies over the centuries. Suffice it to say that Mokuren turns to the Buddha for guidance, wanting to know what needs to be done to help his mother. A text from the tenth century, which was used in public performances, makes the Buddha say that the mother "will obtain food to eat only if you [i.e. Mokuren] observe annually, on the

fifteenth day of the seventh month, the provision of a purgatorial feast on a large scale" (Mair, 1983:119).

This advice is interpreted to mean that dutiful children can extricate their loved ones from the terrors of hell and posthumously disperse the evil karma they may have accumulated by making special food offerings. The offerings should also include gifts to the Buddhist sangha. One's duty of filial devotion and pious support of the priest-hood could thus be carried out in one single act. Around August the fifteenth, during the period of the full moon, the monks would just have returned from their late summer retreat during which they were believed to have had obtained a special store of spiritual energy. It was customary at this time for the monks to receive donations (hyakumi no kuyô) from the laity whose spiritual merit as a result of this would greatly increase (Teiser, 1988:4; 1994:59). The merit accumulated through these exchanges would then, with the aid of the monks' supernatural powers, be directed towards the needs of one's ancestors. Many in fact consider this seasonal offering to the sangha to be the origin of Obon. The ecclesiastic intermediaries were bypassed little by little and over time Jizô replaced the priesthood while the dead spirits became the direct recipients of these offerings (kuyô). This process would have been completed around the fourteenth century during the late Kamakura and early Momoyama periods. Excluding the followers of the New Pure Land Sect (Shin-jôdo-shû), this festival became widely regarded as the specific occasion of the year when one paid respect to one's ancestors. The practice of visiting the graves of the deceased (hakamairi) also appears to have developed during the same period (Tanaka, 1999: 79).

The details of the *kuyô* ritual for the dead have changed little over the centuries. We already see it depicted in the twelfth century 'Hungry Demons' picture scrolls' (*gaki-sôshi*) and fourteenth century description of the rites are almost identical with the form of present-day rituals: the sprinkling of water on the tombstone in order to ease the thirst of the dead and an offering of rice, fruit and flowers accompanied by the reading and chanting of Buddhist scriptures. The same ritualistic pattern is also observed during Obon (Miya, 1988:14; Ukai, 1997:186).

It is interesting that the protagonist in the 'Urabon Sutra' is also the main character in the 'Menstruation Sutra'. There is a remarkable textual similarity between the two sutras. In both instances the story develops along similar lines. Mokuren asks the Buddha how it is possible to offer succour to someone suffering in hell. In the 'Menstruation Sutra' however, he is not concerned with the pains of an individual person, i.e. the physical distress of his mother, but with the posthumous plight of women in general. Indeed, the 'Menstruation Sutra' is so gender specific that its instructions are only relevant to women. But as Kôdate points out (2001, Chapt. III), both sutras start with the premise that Mokuren, as a filial son, is repaying a debt of gratitude to his mother.

This observation has other implications as well, in particular about the provenance of both the 'Menstruation Sutra' and 'Urabon Sutra'. Few have any doubt about the Chinese authorship of the former, but the 'Urabon Sutra' with it reconstructed Sanskrit title has for centuries masqueraded as the translation of a subcontinental work. Buswell (1990:19-24) writes in great detail about the genesis of apocryphal sutras in China. Whenever typical Chinese themes appear in a text, we have to be on our guard, he says, since "[t]he intrusion of such stereotypical Chinese notions as filial piety may sometimes be sufficient to warrant suspicion about the origins of a scripture' (Buswell, 1990:24).

For the majority of those celebrating Obon the specific origins of the sutra probably have little or no importance. McFarland (1970:29) notes that "much of Japanese Buddhist scholarship is very meticulous and highly specialized and often it is pursued without any regard to its possible relevance to everyday life". Moreover, for centuries critical study of the sutras has been discouraged and those who questioned their authority risked expulsion or worse from the religious establishment (Watanabe, 1994:4). The relevant texts are hardly ever read outside special circles and written copies are difficult to obtain. As it so often is the case in Japan, with a few exceptions, popular contact with the textual side of Buddhism is of a limited nature. Once a ritual has been extracted from a sutra and its beneficial effects have been understood, the sacred text is not revisited. As Kamei (1974:19) observed several decades ago, the Japanese seem to be more interested in rituals and the visual arts than involvement with metaphysics and sutra research.

4.7. Summary

We have seen how the festival of Obon has been contextualised with the aid of visual props, the so-called 'Heaven and Hell' picture scrolls, which in the past played an important role for the understanding of Buddhist cosmology among the general public. These picture scrolls, dating back to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, are still given place of prominence in Buddhist temples today. The scrolls establish the framework within which the important festival of Obon unfolds. They also explain how these ancestral rites are related to Buddhism. Mokuren (Maudgalyâyana), who according to the previously mentioned 'Obon Sutra' instigated the festival, is there for all to see while he is making the appropriate offerings for his deceased mother. Since his offerings are well received and beneficial for his mother's spirit, the scroll invites spectators to imitate Mokuren's behaviour and like him obtain the same boons and benefits on behalf of the dead for whom they are responsible.

Exhibiting these pictures today, however, begs the question about the contemporary significance and moral impact of the 'Heaven and Hell' picture scrolls. When writing about current beliefs, Smith (1974:50) states that "it is difficult to find much evidence ...that the Japanese really think of their ancestors as ever being in hell - or in paradise either, for that matter". The factual approach to the ancestors and other deceased per-sons, which we observed on Osore-zan, seems to bear out this assessment. Hanayama (1989:129-131) even goes so far as to say that hell and transmigration are needless concepts within the framework of Japanese Buddhism. In his opinion, two theories make the teaching of other forms of existence in the afterlife redundant. He refers to the teaching of either being reborn as a buddha, in particular in Amida's Pure Land (ôjô jôbutsu), or to the achievement of enlightenment in this life by realising one's inherent potential as a buddha (sokushin jôbutsu). The latter method is one of the essential doctrines of the Shingon sect (Inagaki, 1992:332), but is impractical for the average person because of its severe requirements and total commitment. The salvation of the former is available to all sentient beings as it is based on the power of the vows made by Amida (Amida buda no seigan no chikara). As long as one utters Amida's praise (namu amida butsu), the so-called nembutsu, one is assured rebirth and buddhahood in Amida's Pure Land. Hanayama adds that other sects have different doctrines but none are as influential at the two just mentioned.

To the efficacy of the *nembutsu*, which reputedly ensures a rapid transit to a Pure Land after death, one could add the frequently heard vow of *Jizô* to work tirelessly for the rebirth of everyone as long as even one single soul remains in hell. In fact, the four vows *(shigu seigan)* that all bodhisattvas make explicitly commit them to ensure the liberation of all sentient beings from the cycle of transmigration (Hanayama, 1989:142-3).

While this form of thinking about the other world is acceptable today, the fact remains that the 'Heaven and Hell' images are not individual fabrications. They are part of a collective narrative, visual and verbal, authenticated by sacred texts. Religious dogma was believed to mediate an existential reality that people tried to express in pictorial imagery. The images that became commonly known as a result of this widely used "visual alternative to scriptures" (Jain and Daljeet, 2006:4) remain with us today as part of a tradition that still survives, but with some limitations: They reflect values that many present-day Japanese may be familiar with, but the images are not necessarily interpreted in the same manner as people did in the past. Yet there is no doubt that the 'Heaven and Hell' narrative is still vibrant, albeit sometimes slightly removed from a genuine religious context. The narrative has been taken up by the world of entertainment, for instance, where it lives on in films and *anime*. It has retained its virtual character in that it continues to be a realm of the imagination but with the added advantage that in a world of computer graphics it is more easily reproduced today.

This attitudinal shift can be illustrated with two scenes from the discourse of hell in the 'Heaven and Hell' scroll that we have just examined. The *Sai-no-kawara* image exemplifies strategies for dealing with the loss of a child that are easily understood today. However, the picture scroll also reveals sentiments with which we are unfamiliar now. In the scene in the lower right quadrant we see a bare-breasted woman with a cangue around her neck, looking at a child. By virtue of its proximity to the animal realm, this seemingly innocuous image actually refers to the belief that parents will be reborn as beasts *(chikushô)* if their love for their

children becomes excessive (Kimbrough, 2006b:191). One has to look to Buddhist doctrine for an explanation. "Shâkyamuni taught that misery arises from desire and attachment and concluded that their eradication would lead to enlightenment" (Nakamura, 1973:63). Morris (1969:133) is less circumspect in his choice of words when analysing this doctrine. "Enlightenment", he writes, "was regarded as the best means of securing spiritual benefits for others. Yet for those who belong to different traditions there can be something curiously chilling and inhumane about the attitude it involves; and it was certainly the rejection of family bonds that most alienated Chinese Confucians from Buddhism".

The theme of rejection is clearly expressed in the well-known medieval tale about Ishidômaru, a boy who went out into the world to look for his father, Karukaya Dôshin, a samurai who has failed to return home. Although the boy eventually finds his father on Mt. Kôya, a vast complex of temples and monastic retreats, Karukaya Dôshin never reveals his true identity to his son because an affirmation of family ties would affect his renunciation of the world in a negative manner.

The view of the 'Blood Pool of Hell', which occupies such a dominant position within the Chinnô-ji temple picture scroll, is another reminder of how a narrative can change over time (see above p.124). In itself, the focus on the transgressions of women is not strange within the Buddhist discourse. "The Pure Land is depicted as a land without any women" and several sutras, among them, the Lotus Sutra, the 'Immeasurable Life Sutra' (Muryôju-kyô), and the 'Nirvana Sutra', are specific about the inferior status of women (Nakamura: 1973:70-1). But why was a misogynist doctrine such as the 'Blood Pool of Hell', which is unfavourable to women, to say the least, disseminated by women, in this case the Kumano nuns? One theory is that it was preached in a "confessional mode" from woman to woman as a way of commiserating with their mutual predicament and destiny (Kimbrough, 2006b:198). But others are not so sure. Takemi (1983:241-245) shows how the 'Menstruation Sutra', which posits the existence of the 'Blood Pool of Hell', was used in a constructive manner, either in the form of an amulet or as the means by which women hoped to effect their own salvation. In this way, a text with an apparently negative message was put to a positive use by manipulating the

narrative in such a way that the meaning became favourable and useful as a response to contemporary concerns.

I might conclude with another possible explanation: it is frequently the case that victims have incentives to promote theories and beliefs that confirm them in their role as victims. To do so is to justify their situation as these theories at the same time also may provide an answer and salvation to their plight, as has been described on p.123 and p.151.

CHAPTER 5 JIZÔ'S ROLE DURING OBON

I. Temple Visits in Kyoto during Obon

5.1.0. Festival Preparations - The Opening of the Doors of Hell

Because of the private nature of the majority of religious rituals in Japan, it is too easy to reach the conclusion that religion has a low priority, at least if religion is understood in the Western sense of the word. Yet if interpreted from a Japanese perspective, things look very differently (see above pp.25-6). Some indigenous scholars do not hesitate to call the Japanese "a very religious people" but they admit that "there exists a wide spectrum of different interpretations concerning the nature of the religious worship of the Japanese reflecting the differences in researchers' interest and/or training" (Koizumi, 1977:35).

In the following I intend to illustrate some important aspects of the diffuse nature of Japanese religion through an analysis of some of the most important religious festivals in the liturgical calendar. I hope to be able to justify my occasionally cursory treatment of doctrinal concepts by highlighting individual rather than institutional expression and by pointing out the strong experiential element in the performance of religious rituals I describe. People often appear to be guided by an unspoken principle which integrates seemingly contradictory values, where the overall emphasis is on performance and intuition and where individual "religiosity is not always restricted to, or coincident with, institutional expression" (Bloom, 1972:108-9).

Obon, the festival that celebrates the yearly journey to the world of the living by the spirits of the dead, provides an excellent opportunity to observe the position of the *mizuko* spirits in the realm occupied by the ancestors and other spirits. When they make their yearly visit to the world of the living, it is noteworthy that no sources link the *mizuko* with the spirit visitors' entourage. During this period memorialisation of the *mizuko* appear to be conducted parallel to, but not as part of the traditional Obon rites. One would have imagined that Obon provided the setting for an affirmation of the bonds between those alive and the *mizuko* spirits

as the existence of the living and the dead coalesce when the departed spirits return to visit the living. But this is apparently not the case.

The exact route taken by the spirit travellers is for obvious reasons not described in great detail but their points of entry and departure to and from this world are well established, as are the rituals that aim to facilitate their earth-bound journey. The ritual for the benefit of hungry ghosts (segaki-e), for instance, is conducted at this time of the year. It contains a special mantra from the 'Garland Sutra' (Kegon-kyô; Skt. Avatamsaka Sutra) which "breaks open the gates of hell" when said by the appropriate celebrant. This mantra is charged with the supernatural energy of Jizô as it is used in conjunction with praise to "the One of Kharâdîya Mountain", i.e. Jizô (Chûka Butten Hôko, http://www. fodian.net). Sakamoto (1988:203-4) mentions several additional spells as well as the existence of special mudras used by the Buddhist priesthood during the ceremony, which have the power to force open the same gates. Some magic spells (shingon darani; Skt. Mantra dharani) even enable human beings to gain access to hell.

The reason for opening the gates of hell is to release the ancestral spirits so they can journey back to earth and enjoy the hospitality of the living. The living bid the spirits welcome and accompany them to their original homes where special shelves with food offerings have been arranged. After a fixed period with entertainment and ritualistic observances, including nightly sessions with the traditional Obon dancing, the visit comes to an end. On the sixteenth of August the ancestors are now guided back to a predetermined place of departure, usually different from their point of arrival, from whence they will return to the place they originally came from. These festivities are an affectionate combination of good times for the family, public rituals and the opportunity to perform acts of filial piety and ancestor veneration. If one were to characterize the dominant mood of the festival, it would be one of solemn gaiety.

Other accounts tell how *Jizô* with his sistrum or 'jingle staff' (*shakujô*) knocks on the doors of hell and flings them open in order to liberate, if only temporarily, the imprisoned spirits from their ordeal (Saunders, 1960:179). This act, peripheral as it may seem, actually makes the festive event possible, something that should be

borne in mind when it appears as if *Jizô* has been relegated to the sidelines, when people are busy with other rituals. He both starts the festival and he also terminates it on his name day on the twenty-fourth. In passing it is worthwhile mentioning that the mudras and magic spells employed at the beginning of Obon are also used by some Buddhist sects at burials (Sakamoto, 1988:204).

In principle three types of spirits are greeted during the festival. Generally most people connect the ancestral spirits with Obon. But the spirits of those who have passed on recently, and those spirits (muenbotoke) who have no one alive to look after them make an appearance as well. This group is often referred to as 'ghosts' (gaki). Each category is treated differently: the ancestors will dwell in a place of honour in the house. It is frequently the household altar in front of which a 'spirit table' (shôryô-dana) has been set up. The newly dead are given separate offerings in a location away from the ancestors proper but usually within the house itself. These spirits are regarded with some apprehension since it is feared that they may not yet have accepted their new status. The unattached spirits, unrelated to any person living, are not invited to enter the house, yet they are still treated with hospitality and respect in order to pacify them. Their offerings are normally laid out on a 'ghost altar' (gaki-dan) in the garden or somewhere outside the house (Kanzaki, 2000:53). This act of kindness converts the offerings into a substance that is edible by the ghosts, who are reputed to have such small necks that they are unable to swallow normal food (Sakamoto, 1988:204). It is worth noting that there are no references to *mizuko* in this context.

Each year worshippers gather in the temples of Injô-ji and Chinnô-ji in Kyoto from the seventh to the tenth of August for the purpose of performing the rituals of 'the six-world pilgrimage of Obon welcome' (*mukaebon no rokudô-mairi*), a local forerunner to the more widely celebrated festival of Obon which today is observed between the thirteenth and sixteenth of August. In the following I shall use "Mukaebon" to indicate the former and "Obon" to refer to the latter. In 1916 Origuchi (1975:244) could write with a touch of irony that the guardians of the underworld in his lifetime only had to open the cauldrons of hell three times a year, namely during the two equinoxes and Obon. In pre-modern times they were obliged to do so on five separate occasions, most prominently during the time of

the new year with its various rites concerned with purity and new beginnings as opposed to the termination of the old and tarnished past. On the other hand, after the change from the lunar to the Gregorian calendar in 1873 had thrown the traditional dates for the Obon celebrations into confusion, however, the same guardians had to keep hell open much longer since people now celebrated on the traditional dates around June fifteen as well as on August fifteen.

Today there are few visible signs of the fear of the dead that Origuchi (1975:259) reasonably assumed to have been one of the motivating forces behind the genesis of Obon. That the visit by the spirits was not always an undiluted cause for joyous celebration might be inferred from certain customs that continue to this day. The straw hats, for instance, worn during the public Obon dancing are generally considered decorative accessories, but traditionally they were also worn as a preventive measure to protect one's anonymity. It was believed that the spirits (shôryô) were unable to take 'possession' of the dancers if they made themselves unrecognizable by hiding their faces. Remnants of this custom can still be observed in the dances in Nishimanai in Akita Prefecture where participants cover their faces with dark cloth while dancing. Taking similar precautions, men would in some places discard their normal attire and dress up in female clothing. These safeguards were only necessary in the dark. During the day the dancers would move about without headgear and in the clothes appropriate to their sex. Apart from these precautions, certain dance movements used to be further restricted by gender as well as marital state but these rules are not adhered to any longer (Kanasaki, 1999:10).

The structure of the Obon rites shows great variation and different regions engage in practices that are unknown elsewhere. We have seen how devotees on Mt. Osore interacted with the spirits on the mountain in a manner peculiar to that place. Yet the fundamental aims of the festival are essentially identical all over the country: the participants primarily want to meet and entertain their departed ancestors and close relatives. After this mutual encounter, which gives the living an opportunity to show their respect and gratitude to the departed family members, their spirits return to the other side. In some places the ancestors are met with lanterns, in other locations they are called to this world with the ringing of bells. In the Kansai region in Western Japan, the focus of the following discussion about

Jizô's role during Obon, the initial part of the festival is known as 'the six-world pilgrimage of Obon welcome' (mukaebon no rokudô-mairi) which merges with the Urabon-e festival, Obon for short. It is not altogether clear why the celebration of Mukaebon is mostly restricted to the Kansai region but it effectively means that the combination of Mukaebon and Obon produces a festive period much longer than elsewhere in Japan.

The lavish use of lanterns and candles during this time has also given rise to the name 'Festival of Light' (hi-matsuri). Although the many lanterns give the impression of being decorative in intent, the lights are also put up in graveyards and at house en-trances so as to guide the spirits back to their original home when they return to earth. Elsewhere lanterns may be hung up in temples so that their donors, whose names are prominently inscribed on the lamps, may benefit from the religious activities that are performed with particular fervour at this time of the year. Mibu-dera temple in Western Kyoto, a popular place for prayers during Obon, is well known for its "tribute of ten thousand lanterns" (mandô kuyô-e), which at night turns the summer darkness into dazzling luminosity. Many of the nightly visitors to the temple also avail themselves of the opportunity to pour water over a standing statue of Jizô (Mizukake-Jizô) in a ritual reminiscent of the one performed on the fourth of April, Buddha's birthday (Kanbutsu-e). On this occasion worshippers pour water or sweet tea over a small bronze effigy of the infant Shakamuni. Impressive as the arrangement of lanterns might be, equally magnificent sights can be seen in other temples as each strives to turn their contribution into a unique ceremonial display ('Kyôto', Aug. 1994).

5.1.1. The Activities and Layout of Injô-ji Temple

Normally Injô-ji temple in the Nishijin district presents itself to the outside world as collection of old buildings, with an unattended shop stocked with amulets and charms, a sleepy parking lot and a few banners with the name of the temple fluttering in the wind. A painted, life-size plywood figure in the garb of an ancient warrior monk with a hole in place of a face stands in front of the entrance. The idea is to provide tourists with a photo opportunity as they can put their own faces through the hole, thus making them appear in the guise of a warrior monk.

The humble appearance does not give any indication of the temple's age and well-established connection with the distant past. Many of the artefacts with which history has endowed the place, are now decrepit and beyond repair. The wooden walls of Injô-ji's main building, which reminds me of an Italian *loggia* but without the pillars, still carry the faint remnants of several large scale paintings, but all sadly faded and almost indiscernible. One can barely make out the traces of a 'Hell Picture' (*jigoku-e*) cycle, which once upon a time would have covered the walls in their entirety. Today there are a few barely visible *Jizô* figures and judges of hell and on the walls, but in their heyday, the scale of the paintings would no doubt have made spectators feel as if they were standing in the middle of hell.

During the length of Mukaebon, a wooden statue of a seated chief judge in hell (Emma-ô) is on display in Injô-ji's main hall whose doors are now open so that everyone may see the interior. The statue is normally hidden from the gaze of the profane because of its esoteric nature (hibutsu). I learned in a conversation with one of the temple's caretakers that it is the largest and oldest statue of Emma-ô in Kyoto. Here the chief judge is flanked by two equally fiercely looking figures. One holds a writing brush and a scroll and appears to be taking notes. The written legend next to the statue explains that this is the court scribe who notes down everything for the court records in much the same way that a stenographer notes down trial procedures today. The other figure (*Shimei*) represents the prosecutor. On the elevated dais where the chief judge was seated, worshippers had placed traditional food offerings and rolls of cloth in large elaborate arrangements. More sinister looking judges from his court are placed along the interior wall. Colourful Buddhist banners are raised in the corners from where they vie with large pendant picture scrolls on the walls, which detail the interior of the various hells (Jigokue). Since the chief judge in hell (Emma-ô) is the temple's main idol, these scenes appropriately express the spiritual orientation of Injô-ji. With cartoon-like enthusiasm the narrative of suffering is graphically and vigorously expressed. In the paintings, people writhe and twist under the physical torture by huge monsters that are painted with great gusto.

One of these scenes has found its way onto the pages of the pamphlet distributed by the temple. Its content reflects the traditional threat made to children by adults that liars will lose their tongue if caught lying: a grotesquely sized red demon is wielding an enormous pair of pincers with which he is pulling out the tongue of small, skinny person tied to a pole with a large rope. Behind him another monster was roasting a person skewered on a long spit over an open fire. Occasionally worshippers would stop and point out some details in the paintings that had caught their attention, but overall there was a general lack of a visible response to these vivid representations of physical pain. Their presence was barely acknowledged and many worshippers hardly gave them a second glance. It was as if the impression made on the spectators was no bigger than the thrill one gets from looking at an ordinary business calendar. Yagi (1989:89) opines that the frequent display of these scrolls has familiarised the citizens of Kyoto with the spectacle of gruesome scenes to such an extent that their original purpose has been lost. The scrolls have become part of the religious paraphernalia displayed during Obon; but they no longer instruct in their original sense. Their message has been transformed into colourful images, which in times of need can be used to assert that there is a moral dimension to all out actions. The narrative can also be used as a simile for life in general.

There are so many visitors to the temple in this period that they often have to queue up, in particular in the location where people strike the special 'bell of welcome' (mukae-gane) for the ancestral spirits. Formerly the worshippers would call out the name of each spirit they were inviting back to earth and then strike the bell, but in recent years ringing the bell only once has become the norm (Yagi, 2002:168). Other queues are waiting for the priests to write out the names of their deceased family members on narrow, wafer-thin wooden slats, called 'water pagoda' (mizu-tôba). Over the days to come, the number of these symbolic tombstones will swell to approximately 40,000 (Tanaka, 1959:23, 145). With writing brushes and ink slabs in front of them, several priests and assistants will do nothing for the duration of the festival but cover the pale surface of these mizu*tôba* with jet-black *kanji*. The inscribed slats are then carried outside where they are purified with the smoke rising from an incense burner. After this, worshippers will then walk along a passageway to a man-made pond at the back of the temple. Several sign identify this location as a 'memorialisation pond for floating tôba' (tôba nagashi kuyô-ike). A notice board bids everyone welcome and urges all

worshippers to set their *tôba* afloat on the pond. Another notice informs that statues of Jizô from the last thousand years excavated from the surrounding area have been gathered and consecrated here. And in fact, at the back of the pond several rows are tightly lined with Jizô figures in stone, old and new, large and small, some with white bibs around their necks and others with red ones. Several bibs have a written dedication on them but many have no inscription at all. There is usually an abundance of freshly cut floral offerings in front of many statues on this occasion. During one of my visits to the place, the resident priest explained that people were free to put any bib on the Jizô figures but that those sold by the temple were all red in colour. In the past, colour was used to indicate the gender of the body in a coffin, which in Japan was shaped in the form of a tub where the deceased sat in the foetus position. The coffins of dead girls used to be draped with red cloth or brocade; white was used for dead boys. The usage of bibs in these circumstances suggests a strong link with children (Sugimoto, 1969:105). Incidentally, the same gender specific colours are also used in the rather infrequent Buddhist wedding ceremonies where the groom is given a white and the bride a red rosary (Kokusai Nihongo Kenkyû-jo, 1992:66).

The busy crowds milling about on the temple grounds are in stark contrast to the soothing calmness emanating from the immobile statues in the water. The *mizutôba* is sprinkled with water from this basin after which it is left in special stands set up for this purpose. Small votive wooden pictures (ema) hang suspended from hooks on the pillars which support a bronze canopy covering the votive candles, *tôba* stands and incense burners. The faded appearance of some of the votive pictures indicated that they had been hanging there for a while and that they were not necessarily part of the Obon festival. They all depicted a large, seated image of Jizô in the centre with a mendicant staff and 'wish-granting jewel' (hôju), surrounded by several infants painted white, all naked save for a red bib, whose faces were focused on his meditative countenance. Some children were trying to sit in his lap or to hide in the folds of his surplice, while others attempted to get up and sit on his arms. The *Mizuko-Jizô bosatsu* legend on the right side of the votive plaque was unambiguous as to the purpose of the dedication: the spirit of an aborted foetus or stillborn child had been commemorated and entrusted to Jizô's care. Votive pictures with an identical *motif* can be seen all over Japan, indicating

both their popularity and the industrial scale on which they are produced. But fashion rules in the world of votive plaques, too. Recent developments seem to favour a *Jizô* figure with an infantile physiognomy on the votive plaque. This 'Baby-faced Jizô' (*Warabe-Jizô*) is depicted as a single child-like figure and it is difficult to make a distinction between this symbol of the infant assigned to *Jizô's* care and *Warabe-Jizô* himself. The protector and the protected infant are represented with the same image and have, for all purposes merged into one (see Appendix I).

In the late nineties, the temple put up a large painting of $Jiz\hat{o}$ in black, flowing robes on the left-side wall of the memorialisation pond. The babies on the bodhisattva's arm and the gathering of infants at his feet immediately distinguished the painted figure as a $Mizuko-Jiz\hat{o}$. In clear and easily understood kanji, visitors were urged to pay homage to $Jiz\hat{o}$ and, when doing so, to sprinkle water on the many statues assembled here. A separate poster with a neatly written price list for the various religious services stated that a memorialisation rite for a mizuko ($mizuko-kuy\hat{o}$), would assure individual salvation for the sponsor and peace and harmony in his or her home (kanai-anzen). It also proclaimed that a 'tôba memorialisation rite' ($t\hat{o}ba$ $kuy\hat{o}$) for the ancestors would keep the living healthy and cheerful. These 'stupa memorial services for the dead' ($t\hat{o}ba$ $kuy\hat{o}$ $h\hat{o}y\hat{o}$) were promoted as being particularly effective if they held within forty-nine days after the death of a person. The temple pamphlet (Senbon Emma-dô; n.d.) explains the benefits of this ritual by comparing the wooden stupa slat ($t\hat{o}ba$) to "a raft that conveys [believers] to rebirth in a Pure Land" ($t\hat{o}ba$ wa $j\hat{o}do$ $\hat{o}j\hat{o}$ e no $sh\hat{u}batsu$ nari).

During my first Mukaebon visit to Injô-ji temple, an elderly man took upon himself to take me around the place to explain the nature of the activities going on at the time. When he noticed my interest in the spectacle unfolding around me, he produced a pamphlet which he promised would answer most of my questions. Judging from his appearance he was no priest himself. Once we had exhausted the usual questions about my origins and intended length of stay in the Japan, he told me that the four days of Mukaebon were the busiest time of the year. So much so that the priests and their assistants worked late into the night. Already in the seventh century we read in the Nihongi how busy priests and scribes were with

copying the 'Urabon Sutra' this time of the year (Teiser, 1988:9). This sutra, which was discussed in the Heaven and Hell chapter, explains the origin of Obon and how to structure its rituals for maximum benefit. My newly found friend said he was lending a hand, something he had done for many years, because the priest in Injô-ji found it difficult to cope with the crowds during Mukaebon. The words used in this context, 'to render service' (*hôshi o suru*), implied that the assistance was considered to be religious in nature.

When asking about the reason for the large number of *Jizô* statues at the back, I was told that Injô-ji temple was especially good for petitioning *Jizô*. 'The Emma Hall with a Thousand Grave Markers' (*Senbon Emma-dô*), another name for the temple, was originally built by a Heian courtier, Ono-no-Takamura (808-852 CE), a man whose relationship with *Jizô* can only be described as exceptional. The merciful nature of this bodhisattva had been a personal inspiration and guide to the courtier when he was in charge of public welfare during difficult and troublesome times. In fact, my interlocutor said, echoing the temple pamphlet almost verbatim, some claim that this distant nobleman was none other than an incarnation of *Jizô* who had manifested himself in order to give comfort to the population of Kyoto during a period with series of natural disasters and devastating epidemics. As an expression of his personal veneration for *Jizô*, Ono-no-Takamura had caused several *Jizô* halls to be built where memorial services could be held for the repose of those who had lost their lives during local upheavals, and this temple was one of them.

Other temples, too, I was told, were closely connected with the same courtier and $Jiz\hat{o}$. There was for instance the old Yatadera temple in the Yamato province whose abbot, Mammai, had travelled to hell and back again at the instigation of Ono-no-Takamura. Upon Mammai's return, he had a statue made to the exact likeness of $Jiz\hat{o}$ whom he had met in hell. These events are famously described in a painted picture scroll (Yatadera $jiz\hat{o}$ engi emaki) from the Kamakura period with an exceptionally well-painted image of a merciful $Jiz\hat{o}$ in the realm of hell. In the midst of the deepest hell ($av\hat{i}ci$), he is shown standing on two lotuses hovering above the flames while bending down in order to pull out a penitent sinner from a seething cauldron (Toru, 2001:119). The very same motif was still popular in

votive pictures as demonstrated by the existence of several votive plaques (*ema*) at the back. Placing a votive plaque in this location would ensure that an individual prayer would become part of all the prayers said in the temple.

I was ultimately encouraged to witness the celebrations at another temple that like the present one was a very popular destination for Mukaebon worshippers. He wrote down the temple's name with the indispensable directions on how to get there, and as a parting gift I was given a small Buddhist rosary with wooden beads to wear around the wrist. Touched by his kindness I went away with great anticipations, looking for the place he had recommended so highly.

5.1.2. Chinnô-ji Temple, Ono-no-Takamura and the Beginning of Obon Under normal circumstances, visitors to the Matsubara district may be excused for not even noticing the existence of the Rokudô Chinnô-ji temple (also known as Chinkô-ji) for which I now searched in Higashiyama Ward. I have never seen it mentioned in popular tourist guides, and local guidebooks devote no more than a passing reference to the place. The temple is affectionately called 'Rokudô-san' by locals in an obvious reference to the name of the festival performed here. My own well-thumbed manual about what to see in Kyoto allocates to the temple no more than two lines (Arima, 1974:122). The contrast with the nearby Kennin-ji Zen temple with its spacious gardens, impressive gateways and large buildings cannot be more pronounced. Rokudô Chinnô-ji, sandwiched in between small apartments and shop houses, is accessed via two narrow roads leading into an open area of irregular proportions edged with various nondescript buildings. For eleven months of the year the temple does not evoke the slightest association with the sacred. Its buildings are actually boarded up, the various water basins for purifycation are put in storage, and the large incense burner is removed. Nothing draws one's attention to the fact that these precincts are in fact some of the oldest in the Kyoto, dating as far back as to the eighth century.

There are several theories about the identity of the founder. Ono-no-Takamura is mentioned as a possibility, but nothing is known for certain. On several occasions I had made shortcuts across the temple grounds without realizing what they actually were. When a commentator on the local scene once wryly wrote that one

of the more popular temple activities was to rent out parking space, he could have had this place in mind (Koma, 1993:22). Indeed, most of the year Chinnô-ji temple sublets the temple yard to motorists looking for an inner-city parking space.

Every year between the seventh and tenth day in August, Chinnô-ji undergoes a drastic transformation and the six-world pilgrimage of Obon welcome' (*mukaebon no rokudô-mairi*), which the locals call 'worship [at] the six realms' (*rokudô-mairi*) begins to unfold. The festivities that are about to begin are nothing but a local variant of Obon. Open market stalls spring up, converting the area into a hive of activity. Lining the narrow access roads to the temple, the stalls sell small evergreen twigs and branches from the *kôyamaki* (Sciadopitys verticillata) and *sakaki* (Clereya japonica) trees, both native to Japan and considered sacred. The stallholders have a good business as a steady stream of worshippers continues to make floral purchases. Special flowers (*bon-banal*) are also sold together with a curious item called 'ghost sweets' (*yûrei ame*). They are seen only at this time of the year and are very popular with children.

The place exudes a solid down to earth atmosphere, very distant from the intellectualism and confrontational aesthetics of the nearby Zen temples. It is a world of the common people whose relationship with heaven and hell is carried out in a straightforward manner and easily understood rituals. Worshippers from all sects and denominations conduct their prayers, purification, and ablutions in front of smouldering joss sticks. Priests, visitors and devotees are all confined to a small area where everything seems to be in constant state of flux, yet at the same time infused with the calmness that is peculiar to Japanese crowds. In spite of the large number of people, many more in fact than at the previous temple, the noise level is low and controlled and the smell of incense and the incessant peals from the 'bell of welcome' (mukae-gane) lend the place an atmosphere of gentle awe. It was only after the event itself, deprived of the site's olfactory and visual stimuli that I noticed how makeshift the place really is. At Mukae-bon, a heightened sense of 'being there' together with the crowds and their flowing movement through the heavy billows of incense had hides a fundamental greyness that was revealed only after I developed my snapshots of the place.

5.1.3. The Nature of the Mukaebon Ritual at Chinnô-ji

Once my senses had grown accustomed to the arrangement of the place, I noticed that worshippers basically adhered to the same routine as the one I had observed previously in Injô-ji temple. Devotees join a queue which for the first days of Mukaebon winds it way around the narrow lanes of the temple in order to wait for their turn to strike the temple bell which rings out a greeting note of welcome to the spirits of the ancestors. The bell itself is hidden in a wooden belfry and only the large horizontally suspended wooden beam used for striking the bell is visible. This is not just any bell. It has a story of origin which weaves it into a historical context with people, names and places, providing the curious with an answer as to why it is here today. A story in the collection of old tales, 'Konjaku Monogatari' (Vol. XXI:19), written over a thousand years ago, describes how the casting of this bell endowed it with magic properties: when struck, the sound of the bell is audible in other worlds, thus alerting the ancestors that the time has come for another visit to the world of the living.

After having rung the bell, worshippers bring their oblong and wafer-thin *mizu-tôba* in the perfunctory shape of five-tiered stupa (*gorin-no-tô*) to a row of priests ensconced under the temple roof where they will write the posthumous Buddhist names (*kaimyô*) of the deceased. The name(s) of those who are memorialised for the first time are given special attention because of the precarious state their spirits are said to be in. For other spirit groups the inscription '[to the] generations of ancestors' (*senzo daidai*) seem to predominate. Neighbourhood shops are selling blank *mizu-tôba* so that they can be prepared before the visit to the temple. In theory anyone is allowed to write these inscriptions as the kanji characters *per se* are not considered sacred but the writing should not be done by someone who is directly related to those whose names appear on the *mizu-tôba*. That is considered bad luck (Yagi, 2002:166). In reality, the officiating priests seem to do all the writing since by training they belong to the small minority who is able to crown the kanji inscriptions with the appropriate Sanskrit syllables. This writing is only used for religious purposes in Japan and ranks high on the scale of sacredness.

The *mizu-tôba* are then brought to a big, freestanding incense burner around which the many worshippers are jostling for space. Some have bundles of incense sticks

ready to be placed in the incense-burner while other individuals are purifying their *mizu-tôba* by waving it or them back and forth in the smoke. Many people also attempt to obtain physical benefit from the smoke from the many smouldering joss sticks, which in accordance with popular belief possess curative powers. Worshippers fan the smoke towards themselves and rub it onto those parts of the body that are afflicted by aches and pain.

After the purification, the *mizu-tôba* are carried over to a large water basin with several *Jizô* statues. Using a twig of the *kôyamaki* tree dipped in the water in which the *Jizô* images stand, water is sprinkled on the *mizu-tôba*. It is believed that this ritual (*mizu-ekô*) has the power to transfer personal merit to others, in particular to the dead, so that they may rest in peace (Inagaki, 1992:43). Customarily one proceeds from the top and works one's way down on the *mizu-tôba* slat in the same manner that one 'waters' tombstones or religious statues (Yagi, 1989:86).

People seemed to spend more time in prayer in one particular place on this occasion. Rather than just bowing and putting the palms of their hands together in respect, many worshippers stood quietly front of a large receptacle for incense with their heads bent in the direction of a man-sized figure of *Jizô* in stone situated in a large niche separated from the site of the other statues. Two very large red paper lanterns with white swastikas on either side of the statue proclaimed in black letters that here appeared in his role as *Mizuko-Jizô*, the guardian of all infant spirits. Here it may be useful to recall that the term *mizuko* covers all infant deaths so care should be exercised in order not to associate *mizuko* exclusively with induced abortions, a tendency which seems prominent in much Western writing on the topic (Hoshino & Takeda, 1993; Tanabe, 1992).

Before praying, worshippers would ring the 'crocodile mouth gong' (waniguchi) suspended under the eaves with a twisted string made of cloth in colours identical to the pieces cast around Jizô's shoulders. The many bibs tied around the neck of the bodhisattva concluded with a white bib on which neat rows of handwritten characters were faintly visible. It was no doubt a copy of the 'Heart Sutra'. Its brevity, combined with an awesome reputation for magical properties, has made it the sutra most frequently donated as a votive offering (Pye, 1977). The symbolic

colours of white and red were repeated again and again in the pieces of cloth placed around the necks of the other $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues in the temple as well. Befitting the special occasion, all bibs were conspicuously new, showing no sign of exposure to wind and weather. The absence of votive tablets (ema) in front of this $Mizuko-Jiz\hat{o}$ was in contrast to the large number of votive tablets in the Injô-ji temple I had visited previously. This is most likely because of the limited period that Chinnô-ji temple is open for religious activities.

Many would clap their hands before praying, ignoring the ritualistic etiquette advocated by scholars and members of the clergy. But it is a convention that was created by the Japanese government during the Meiji period (1869-1912) when attempts were made to standardise Shinto worship. Stated briefly, it says that clapping one's hands is only appropriate in front of Shinto gods. Kanzaki (2000:38) translates the contemporary slogan as "two bows, two claps, one act of worship". In front of the Buddhas, however, one should put one's palms together (gasshô) and bow. However, these regulatory attempts date no further back that the Meiji period (ibid; Reader, 1991:55). A long, rectangular wooden box in front of the statue, wet from constant splashing of water was crammed with standing *mizu-tôba*. Rather curiously, the legend 'merit transfer ritual' (*mizu ekô*) was written in the old way from right to left, hinting at a pre-war origin of the box. Lotuses, evergreens and freshly cut flowers were arranged on both sides of the statue, different perhaps from what one might have seen else-where at this time for, according to Hori (1981:157), the representative flowers of the period are bush clover, lilies, wild pink and other mountain flowers. Around its feet there was a generous scattering of one yen coins, which at the time impressed me as being the most popular votive offering. It is salutary to remember that it is the volition of giving that is important, rather than the value we habitually assign to money (Goodwin, 1994:43). The statue was fairly new as was the beautifully carved stone receptacle for joss sticks placed in front of it. This set it apart from the other statues, many of which appeared rather worn. Some no longer had any discernible features. Only the boat-shaped aureoles from which protruded some lumpy elements, where there once might have been a head and a face, hinted at a religious provenance. Statues in this state of decrepitude are call *nurikobe*. They are associated with an imagined and ideal form rather than a physically recognisable presence and, perhaps because they resemble teeth, they are said to have special curative powers in dental matters (Takemura, 1994:132)

One would have expected the women praying to *Mizuko-Jizô* to have been much younger. But, as mentioned earlier (pp.86-7), the National Survey on Family Planning has demonstrated that in Japan the largest number of terminated pregnancies is to be found among older women who feel they have had enough children, rather than among teenagers who have to deal with an accidental and unwanted pregnancy (Ashino, 2002).

From a purely technical point of view, the purification and merit transfer rites signify the formal end to the temple visit. The *mizu-tôba* are left behind in the purpose-built stands. They will be burnt a few days later in the 'sending-off fire' ritual (okuribi) when the spirits are guided back to their habitual dwelling places. Common belief has it that those leaving the temple after the memorial rituals should head directly for home without stopping anywhere on the way. The reason for this injunction is based on the belief that the ancestral spirits 'ride' on the twigs of the kôyamaki evergreen used in the lustration ritual in the temple, and the spirits might go astray if not brought home directly. After the 'ride' home, it is considered good luck to retain the pine twigs and let leaves from these twigs float about in one's tea during the festival (Miyake, 1995:299-30). In the home itself, surveys have shown that people no longer put the branches in a fixed place. In the past the leaves were suspended over the openings to water wells. Wells used to be regarded as places of danger, like swimming pools today, and they were thought of as the points of entry into the underworld. Today the evergreen branches are placed anywhere in the house, ranging from a place of honour on the Buddhist altar (butsudan), to an indifferent vase in the kitchen. Here the ancestral spirit (shorai-san, as it is called in Kyoto) will, in the opinion of Yagi (2002:174), spend three rather pointless days (amari imi no nai mikkakan) until the regular Obon festivities begin and the branches are shifted to the household altar.

Many people appear loath to leave immediately after the rituals in the temple.

They linger a little longer in the temple grounds before heading home, soaking up the atmosphere so full of bustling and purposeful activity. They might have a peek

into a modest hall, wide open on one side, with a statue of the legendary eighth century cultural hero and priest, Kôbô Daishi, and another wooden statue of a man in courtly attire flanked by lantern-carrying demons. The latter represents the poet, courtier and reputed founder of this temple, Ono-no-Takamura, whose existence and activities the kind helper in Injô-ji temple so respectfully had introduced in our conversation earlier in the day. This semi-legendary figure was notorious for his nightly journeys to hell where he assisted with the judging process of the dead in order to determine the nature of their next existence. Behind the same building, but not accessible to the general public, is the location of one of the wells he is said to have used as an entry point for his nocturnal descent into hell. Ono-no-Takamura is also credited with being the first human to come back to earth instructing its inhabitants about the physical appearance of a group Six Jizô since he had met them personally (De Visser, 1914:85; Tanaka, 1959:132). It is interesting to think that the life of Ono-no-Takamura can be read as a metaphor for the supernatural events that occur during Obon and it may explain why he still is considered relevant when the Obon narrative is being told: someone goes to hell, but returns and lives to tell about it.

5.1.4. The Official End of Obon

The sixteenth day of August, the traditional name day of the Chief Judge in Hell, marks the official end of the ancestral visit to earth. 'Seeing off fires' (okuribi) are lit to serve as beacons for the spirits who are now about to be returned to the beyond. It is worthwhile to note that the return route of the spirits differ from the one they took when the first came to visit (Yagi, 2002:174). In a lavish ritual, several bonfires in the form of Chinese characters are lit in the evening on five mountains strategically located around Kyoto (daimonji-gozan-okuribi). The firewood consists in part of mizu-tôba, which were purified at the beginning of Obon and dedicated to the memory of the ancestors. Small sticks for esoteric fire ceremonies (goma-ki) on which donors have their wishes written are also burnt on this occasion. The ashes from these fires are said to possess curative properties and will ward off evil. To emphasise the illumination on the mountains, the lights and neon advertisements of the city of Kyoto are normally turned off when these bonfires are aflame. Yagi (ibid) makes the interesting observation that it is only during the fire ritual with its rising smoke that one can sense a connection between

the ancestors and the heavens above. When the ancestors arrive, they do so from the interior of the earth, and when they return to their place of origin, they will in many instances do so in a boat.

The launching of small 'spirit boats' (shôryô-bune) with candles and lanterns from riverbanks or the seashores also takes place on the sixteenth of August. The inscriptions on the lanterns refer to the myriad spirits in the 'three realms' (sangai banryô), i.e. the three realms of transmigration: the world of desire, the world of form, and the world of non-form. The same words written on altars next to the place were the little boats are set adrift. The names of those memorialised may also be written on the lanterns. In some Kansai localities the final celebrations attract large crowds every year. In Arashiyama, for instance, the ritual of lantern floating unfolds on the banks of the Ooi river near the Togetsukyô bridge to the accompaniment of sutra chanting by priests dressed in the colours appropriate to their rank and groups of lay persons dressed in the white garb of the Buddhist laity (ubasoku; Skt. upâsaka). The constant tinkling of hand-held bells and the rhythmic voices, which penetrate the clouds of incessantly burning incense, are so powerful that they ring in one's ears hours after it is all over. Priests in yellow robes of silk rifle rapidly through stacks of sutras piled up in front of them in the *tendoku* style, which also was employed in *Togenuki-Jizô's* temple in Tokyo. According to this method, the sacred texts, which are folded in the manner of an accordion, are picked up and thrown open with a flick of the hand as if one were unfolding a fan. The priest then reads a line from the text in front of him before proceeding to the next sutra. In this way it is possible to 'read' vast numbers of sutra volumes, considered to be a meritorious activity, within a short period of time (Inagaki, 1992:264).

The ancient ritual of 'Jizô floating' (Jizô-nagashi) will also take place in some locations. It consists of setting afloat large bundles of paper strips that have been stamped individually with a vermilion figure of Jizô. These days the bundles come in numbers of twenty-four, alluding to the traditional date for Jizô worship on his name day. Sheets of paper with Jizô images printed thousand times (sentaibutsu) can also be seen but they are a far cry from the paper bundles with thousands of

imprinted *Jizô* pictures which formerly were set afloat (Satô 1989:41; Manabe, 1987:49).

At this time the various spirit offerings on the household altars are also discarded. In the past the same waters that took the ancestral spirits back to their world would have washed them away. For environmental reasons, the offerings are now collected and burnt on the seventeenth August under the supervision of priests from nearby temples rather than polluting rivers and other waterways with discarded objects. In other parts of the city a different ritual is carried out whereby straw effigies are burnt. From a ritualistic perspective, fire and water are two indispensable ingredients for disposing of religious articles that have exhausted their purpose: water carries away used and polluted paraphernalia, and fire converts material objects into a different form of matter that then is transported to the realm of the gods. Burning fires may not have been part of the original Obon celebration but today they are an integral part of the festivities (Yagi, 1989:89). In most parts of Japan the departure of the 'spirit boats' marks the official end of the festivities, but not so in the Kansai region. Still to come is the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' (Rokujizô-mairi), the Children's Festival (Jizô-bon), followed by the 'Thousand Lights Offering' (Sentô-kuyô) as the culminating event.

5.1.5. Summary

Since the eighth century there have been several burial grounds around the old imperial city of Kyoto. Toribeno, one of the locations where cremations and burials took place, became over time a metaphor for the transitory existence of human beings. All our efforts and the results of our desires literally end up in smoke as we die to be born again on our wandering through the various stages of being. This perception has been sustained by the lyrical description of Toribeno in a fourteenth century essay which likens the never-ending smoke rising from the funereal pyres of the site to the ephemeral nature of everything in this world. Contemporary Japanese are still familiar with this sentiment since this work is included in the national language syllabus.

Today the festival of 'the six-world pilgrimage of Obon welcome' (*mukaebon no rokudô-mairi*), is celebrated today in temples that for centuries were dedicated to

the disposal of the dead either through burials or cremation, the so-called 'grave-yard temples' (haka-dera). 'The Emma Hall with a Thousand Grave Markers' (Senbon Emma-dô), Injô-ji temple's more popular name, is a direct reference to the former function of the temple. Chinnô-ji temple played a similar role albeit in a different part of town. The graveyards next to the temples were literally regarded as being another world, which is why one would usually find a hall with images of Jizô and the Chief Judge of Hell here. The borderline between the 'graveyard temple' and the graveyard itself was, in the case of Kyoto, called 'the 'crossroad to the six realms' (rokudô no tsûji). From this vantage point it was possible to enter the worlds beyond so it is no coincidence that the well through which Ono-no-Takamura reputedly entered hell is located within Chinnô-ji temple's precincts.

The position of Injô-ji and Chinnô-ji on identical crossroads dividing this world from the next may account for the close resemblance of the rituals carried out in the two temples during Mukaebon. It is likewise understandable that people believe that the spirits of the dead will find it easy to re-enter the world in those locations where these crossroads still are deemed to exist. But that still does not explain why the inhabitants of Kyoto invite their ancestors back this way while the people in the rest of the country do so at the actual burial site of their ancestors. Suffice it to say, there is no monistic account since "there is a remarkable variety of forms for such a small country as Japan. The same applies to annual observances, rites of passage, popular beliefs and ceremonies...even within the same domain" (Ito, 1997:14).

Yagi (2002:175-180) makes a plausible case for a conflation of another celebration with the Obon festivities. The festival he has in mind celebrated the water spirits (suijin matsuri) that coincided with the traditional dates of Obon in July. He cites the lavish employment of water in the 'transfer of merit water ritual' (mizu-ekô) and the fact that Jizô statues are placed in artificial ponds of water in support of his theory. These ritualistic components are absent from Obon celebrations elsewhere. The earliest references to the custom are from the eighth century and the duration of the festival used to be two days only. Today people come from afar to participate in the Mukaebon rituals and the temple authorities in both places have been forced to extend the length of the festival (ibid, 1989:87-9;

2002:169). The result is that Mukaebon and Obon are now overlapping and the rituals of the two festivals have become mixed. This is probably less important to the participants today because the festival themselves serve to connect the people of the present with the distant past through the important link of shared rituals and history.

The connection between the perennial visits of the ancestors during Obon and the Buddhist teachings of transmigration, or even contemporary rebirth in the Pure Land, is never made explicit. What is clear, though, is that two separate worldviews are represented simultaneously during the festival. The local term for the festival, 'Journey to the six realms', can hardly be more Buddhist than it already is. The 'Urabon Sutra' also validates the festival of Obon in written form. The Heaven and Hell scrolls eloquently expressed in visual terms the same story, namely that Mokuren descends into the nether regions, makes a round trip in hell where he meets his mother, who had been reborn as a 'hungry ghost (gaki). He subsequently returns to earth where he learns what to do in order to alleviate the torment of his mother. This is one of the reasons why ghosts figure so prominently during Obon. Yet the return journey of the dead to earth where they are warmly welcomed and entertained, only to return to the other world for another year, has no parallel in Buddhist doctrine. It even contradicts the idea of transmigration. This dichotomy hints at the mixture of different concepts about the nature of the spirits of the dead. An analysis of this question is outside the scope of this paper but suffice it to say that it is believed that we are dealing with an indigenous notion of the dead that gradually was absorbed by Buddhist tradition as it developed in Japan (Kanzaki, 2000:52).

II. Rokujizô-Mairi - 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage'

5.2.0. The Rokujizô Pilgrimage

In the following, I shall address the practice of a specific pilgrimage during the end of the Obon period (*(Urabon* or *Shimai-bon)* which is devoted exclusively to *Jizô* veneration. Every year the twenty-first of August inaugurates the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' *(rokujizô-mairi)*, which ends on the twenty-fourth. In the Edo period (1600-1868), however, the pilgrimage could only be carried out on the twenty-

fourth, which is Jizô's name day (Yamatani, 1989:129). It is a multiple-site pilgrimage focused on six separate temples in and around Kyoto. Since the deity worshipped on all occasions is *Jizô*, the Japanese refer to this form of worship as *honzon-junrei*, a 'one [main] deity pilgrimage' (Reader & Swanson, 1997:253).

This annual peregrination involves six ancient temples that were positioned at six different points of entry to the imperial city of Heian-kyô, today's Kyoto, more than a thousand years ago. Some call it 'Six-Jizô Circumambulation' (Rokujizô-mawari or Rokujizô-meguri) in an obvious reference to the circularity of the predetermined circuit (Ishihara, 1995:179). The idea of a sacred enclosure is stressed in the posters published by the 'Six-Jizô Association' (Rokujizô-kai) in Kyoto, in particular those of an older date. Maps show how the Jizô temples of the pilgrimage are placed in a circular position in relation to each other, in a conscious attempt to construct a charmed area (Manabe, 1987:19).

Apart from the normal benefits obtained from worshipping a bodhisattva, the liturgical calendar promises that a pilgrimage to Jizô performed at this juncture is particularly beneficial. It is considered important to make special offerings (kuyô) at this time since the end of Obon is fast approaching. Prayers, too, should be said for those who have died recently in order to assist them on their spiritual journey. The reason being that it is only after Obon that the recently dead (shinbutsu) no longer pose a threat to the living (Yagi, 2002:200; Smith, 1974:41). It is generally believed that the newly dead may find it difficult to settle into their new existence. 'Unfinished business' may attract them to the world where they used to live and thus deter them from letting go of their former lives. As mentioned in the previous section, to prevent these spirits from causing harm or putting a curse (tatari) on the living, special altars (bon-dana) with select offerings are set up for them, separate from the other altars likewise erected during Obon. They will remain in place until the twenty-third of August. The pamphlet published jointly by the six temples involved in the pilgrimage recommends a 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' for the next three years for these spirits. This rite will ensure that the spirits of the recently dead achieve stability in their new existence and that they will avoid the pain of transmigration through the six existences (rokudô no ku o nogareru). It also urges worshippers to perform the same rites recommended by Injô-ji temple (mizu-tôbakuyô) which involves a memorialisation ritual where the splashing of water on a small wooden stupa image, here called 'kyôgi sotoba', is an important element (Rokujizô Association, n.d.). For this reason many people also bring along these characteristic wafer-thin stupa symbols on the pilgrimage and perform the same lustration and merit transferring ritual (mizu-ekô) as they did during the first days of Mukae-bon between the seventh and tenth of August when their ancestral spirits arrived in the Chinnô-ji and Injô-ji temples.

Urabon (lit. 'the back of Obon') is also the period when the lids that cover the cauldrons of hell will be prepared. During the Obon festival, the doors to hell remained open so that the spirits could go back to earth to visit the living. They will soon be closed again and prevent all access to the earth for another year. The closure will happen exactly on the twenty-fourth on *Jizô's* name day, the last day of the *Jizô-bon* festival, which is a celebration by and for children. In the following section this festival will be described in greater detail.

During the same period it is also customary to replace the set of six *Jizô* paper amulets that were obtained the previous year with a series of new ones. These charms are all in the colour and shape of traditional Buddhist banners (hata). They are specific to this pilgrimage where each temple on the circuit sells one with a printed image of the Jizô statue it has enshrined as its main object of worship (see Appendix I). Their inscriptions promise good health, harmony in the household, easy childbirth, happiness, prosperity, a long life, and so on. As Ishikawa (1995: 179) aptly notes, that the very nature of these boons reveals the expectations and demands of *Jizô* devotees. In a multilayered symbolism, the different colours represent the petals on the five-coloured lotus flowers in paradise. They are also associated with the four points of the compass, as well as up and down. The 'banner charms' are further connected with the five fundamental elements of Taoism: earth, water, fire, soil, and metal, to which ether has been added. These elements are also linked individually to a specific colour. The sixth charm, for instance, is produced in a neutral colour, indicating the colourless nature of ether (Nakamura, 1988:542; Yamatani, 1989:129; Kumar, 2000).

According to the priest in Daizen-ji, the first temple on the circuit, the procedure connected with the amulets is as follows: each year after the pilgrimage, the six charms are tied together in a bundle and put on a lintel or somewhere behind the entrance to a devotee's residence. From this position the charms will protect the occupants from external evil in the year to come. The possession of these amulets can also be seen as proof of having visited the sacred sites (reijô). In this sense they replace the customary autograph or official vermilion stamp in the special ledger that pilgrims carry with them as a testimony and proof of their stopovers at holy places.

As in so many other pilgrimages around the world, the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' was formerly performed by progressing in a 'sunwise direction' which imitated the movement of the sun (Westwood, 1997:72). This clockwise circumambulation "is a ritual process that relates to such things as sanctity, purity, and happiness" (Hoshino, 1997:281). Today the order of visiting the temples does not seem to matter greatly and buses depart from different vantage points in the city to the designated pilgrim sites. Travel by bus or car puts certain constraints on the possible routes one may follow so ultimately convenience rather than custom determines the sequence in which the temples are visited today (Ishikawa, 1995:178). In the past, serious pilgrims would start out in the evening around sunset, which according to the old time reckoning was when the next day began (Yanagita, 1962a:277; Kanzaki, 2000:56). In this manner they would avoid the stifling heat of the day. Letting the light of lanterns guide their steps in the dark, the circuit would be completed twelve hours later at six o'clock in the morning. Older advertisements for the pilgrimage reflect this practice and the records show that the temples remained open all night between the twenty-second and twentythird (Manabe, 1987:19). Since the sacred journey was made on foot, the distance to be travelled played an important role and older guidebooks never fail to point out that the length between the six temples is twelve Japanese miles, approximately fifty kilometres (Yamatani, 1989:127). This is not noteworthy in itself; however, the insistent use of this number makes me suspect an attempt to establish an analogy, however tenuous, between the time spent on the road, the distance travelled, and the number of deities visited.

These days the motorcar is the favoured means of transport and the number of visitors in a given temple tends to go up and down in conjunction with the arrival or departure of buses. One moment a given temple precinct may be empty but a few minutes later the same place can be a beehive of activity, crowded with people when the buses have disgorged their pilgrim passengers.

In the following I shall trace the route of the pilgrimage in the clockwise fashion $(uny\hat{o})$. This was the mode of progress favoured by pilgrims in the past and this "circumambulation is a style of veneration widely used in Japan" (Hosino, 1997:281).

The sequence used to be referred to in a slightly cryptic manner as a circuit where one goes from the younger sister towards the older (Ishikawa, 1995:178). It is a verbal conceit, which only makes sense if one knows that these kinship terms allude to the epithets of two statues which one encounters on the pilgrimage. It also needs to be pointed out that there is more than one 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' in the country. Ukai (1997:182) mentions eight in the Kansai region and Momoyama (1988:323-329) lists several additional circuits in other parts of the country. Over time some of the holy destinations have been replaced with new ones (Manabe, 1975:101). Here I propose to deal with the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' in Kyoto (rakugai rokujizô-meguri). It appears to be the most established and well known of these sacred journeys and this is the one generally referred to when the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' is mentioned.

5.2.1. The First Temple: Daizen-ji at Fushimi Rokujizô

The 'Six-Jizô Temple of Great Virtue' (*Rokujizô Daizen-ji*) is where the pilgrims' route begins. It is located in a suburb of Kyoto with the auspicious sounding name of Rokujizô, eponymous with the pilgrimage itself. There were few visitors when I first arrived there on the twenty-second of August. My early arrival gave me the opportunity to explore the precincts and engage in unhurried conversation with those I encountered who were willing to talk to strangers. A verbal exchange with the local priest resulted in the gift of a detailed and very useful guide for worshippers that in popular terms explained the historical background of the pilgrimage. Apart from the obvious promise of special benefits to those doing the pilgrimage.

age, the guide also provided practical information about the location of the six temples involved, how to get to them, and other places of interest in the vicinity.

According to the pilgrimage guide, Jizô would reward prayers at Rokujizô Daizenji temple with happiness and a long life (fukutoku jumyô). Each temple has a unique hymn of praise (wasan) for its Jizô. That of Daizen-ji temple celebrated Jizô's movements through the 'six realms of existence' (rokudô) where the suffering he saw produced so many tears that "his sleeves of compassion were never dry" (daihi no sode no kawaku hima nashi) (Ishikawa, 195:179-80).

The priest also drew my attention to the similarity between the life-sized Jizô statue, the temple's main icon, and the Jizô image on the white paper charm sold here. The heads in both instances were covered with something that from a distance was vaguely reminiscent of the Afro-hairstyle fashionable in the 1960s. The 'banner charm' from Jôzen-ji, the fifth pilgrim temple, depicts Jizô in a similar fashion. On the charm, however, its resemblance is closer to the cowl worn by high-ranking clerics. It was, in fact, a special head cover, resembling a long headscarf several centimetres thick and made of floss silk (mawata). It must be a popular donation because it adorns the head of many $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues, not only in the Kyoto region but also throughout the country. Yet the name and even the meaning of the donation appear to be in the process of being lost. All the people I asked about the significance of the *mawata* professed they did not know. The priest in Sekizô-ji temple (see below p.234) quite frankly said during an interview that he had never given a second thought to the head cover on the Jizô statue in his temple. It had always been there and he had accepted its existence as a given without ever thinking about its symbolism. Yet it is in fact a piece of oldfashioned head gear which already appears in the twelfth century as an offering by women to keep the deity warm during winter. This, at least, is one theory. Another explanation likewise implies that women were the donors but this time in their capacity as caretakers of silkworms. During the process of silk making, the worms have to be killed, and as penance for having taken the lives of other living beings, the women would bring a 'silken shawl' to Jizô and cover his head with it. Kyoto was one of the more important silk producing regions in the past so mawata offerings used to be quite common here (Manabe, 1987:53-4).

Ever so often a bus would arrive, discharging crowds of mostly elderly people. Usually, they went straight to the counter in the temple where the paper charms were sold. After the purchase, many would light an incense stick or a candle, say a prayer in front of one of the *Jizô* statues, or even chant the brief 'Heart Sutra', sometimes alone and sometimes in unison with other pilgrims. Within half an hour they would all be back on the bus, presumably heading for the next destination of the pilgrimage.

I spent some time observing a standing statue of wood inside a smallish hexagonal pavilion. Well-proportioned and executed with agreeable realism, it to my mind successfully captured the demeanour of everything one associates with a beautiful Jizô image. Yet in spite of its obvious age, it showed unmistakable signs of being an actively used icon and not just an artistic object of art exhibited to please the eye of the odd traveller or spectator in search of an aesthetic experience. The face, the chest and those parts of the statue not covered by the monkish surplice, had very recently been painted white while the eyes, eyebrows and the mouth had been touched up with black and red colours. I would see this application of make-up over and over again during the next few days of the pilgrimage and the related child-oriented festival (*Jizô-bon*) that also bears some connection with this pilgrimage. This active handling of the statue reminded me of a slogan I saw posted in several of the larger temples that year: "you are not looking at works of art; you are looking at religious icons" (butsuzô). The slogan, I suppose, was a reaction to the large crowds of tourists, foreign and domestic, who come as sightseers to take snapshots, but obviously not to pray.

To the uninitiated, many of the activities during the pilgrimage appeared to be largely *ad hoc* and arbitrary. But in fact they follow a fixed set of rules that prescribe how people are to interact with the objects in a sacred environment. Whitewashing the face of the deity is done with no room for individual touches and improvisation and the colour never varies. This treatment reflects the belief that white is the symbol of purity. It also refers to the fundamental doctrine that the 'buddha nature' (*bodai-shin*; Skt. *bodhicitta*) is inherent in all sentient beings. *Bodhicitta* is the striving for enlightenment, the discovery of the divine element

(the Buddha-nature), which we share with all sentient beings. The difference is that the Enlightened Ones have realised their potential nature whereas ours is still latent. White is moreover believed to be the foundation of all colours in the same way as the essence of *Jizô's* nature is the fountain of all virtue (Visser, 1914:16).

5.2.2. The Second Temple: Toba-Jizô in Jôzen-ji

The second temple on the pilgrimage (Jôzen-ji) is situated where an important artery once connected Western Japan to the city of Kyoto. The transcription of the homophonous Japanese characters into the Roman alphabet makes the name look identical to the fifth temple destination on the pilgrimage, also called Jôzen-ji, but it is in fact very different. In this instance the characters with which the name of the former is written mean 'Temple of Pure Meditation'. Formerly all goods and traffic going to and from the prosperous commercial city of Osaka had to pass this way, making this location one of the liveliest and most important ones on the *Six-Jizô* pilgrim circuit (Takemura, 1994:124).

Apart from its local fame as one of the 'Six-Jizô' temples, Jôzen-ji is also known for being the final resting place of Kesa Gozen, a medieval noblewoman of exceptional courage and devotion. Until recently she was a household name in Japan and considered a paragon of female virtue. According to two medieval tales of war, Gempei Seisuiki and Heike Monogatari (*Gunki monogatari*), she sacrificed her own life in order to save the life and honour of her husband. In a carefully groomed garden with old cypress trees and pebbles raked in symmetrical patterns, a solid, commemorative stupa of stone stands on top of a 'head mound' (*kubizuka*) where her head is buried. It is also known as 'mound of love' (*koizuka*), an appellation that euphemistically diverts the attention away from her murder and directs it towards her sacrifice of love (Jôzen-ji Information Pamphlet, n.d.).

Here it was possible to see the main icon of the temple close up. It was a large lifesize, $Jiz\hat{o}$ figure exhibiting all the traits associated with sculptures carved during the late fourteenth century. Its face combined an exaggerated roundness with a smooth appearance and the body displayed extensive colouring and intricate patterns of gold inlay (*kirigane*). It was enshrined in a newly looking building together with a gilded, eleven-headed Kannon statue. The solemn appearance of the two upright statues inside the darkness of the pavilion was enhanced whenever their golden surfaces reflected the glinting touch of an occasional ray of light. The temple legend suggests that the captivating demeanour of the Kannon statue is a reflection of Kesa Gozen whose beauty ultimately became her undoing (Takemura, 1994:123-125).

The priest offered me a drink of cold water and started to talk about the temple's past. Once it used to enjoy the patronage of noblemen and illustrious families whose retainers and followers in times gone by would have thronged the temple grounds, he said. The arrival of a large group of pilgrims cut short our conversation. Instead I got to hear the newcomers chant a hymn (*wasan*) in praise of the *Six-Jizô* in which the short epistolary lines were made awesome by the elevated language and mode of presentation.

The 'Six-Jizô hymn' (Rokujizô wasan) relevant to this temple was displayed for all to see. A large perpendicular wooden panel, which hung at an angle from the eaves under the temple roof, spelled out in a confident and expansive flowing writing style (gyôsho) the names of the donors and the text of the hymn. "Paying heed to neither wind nor rain", it said, "I cross the road to Toba, etc." (amekaze mo itowade watasu toba no dô...). As so often is the case with Japanese verses, the text can be read in several ways because of a deliberate incorporation of puns. The part where 'crossing' is referred to can also be understood as the striving for salvation regardless of adverse conditions. 'Toba', the name of the location, is further reminiscent of the word for 'tôba' (stupa). Earlier we saw how a 'tôba' was also regarded as a metaphorical means of transport. The pamphlet from Injô-ji temple, for instance, referred to it as a 'raft' for making the crossing to the beyond. The hymn exploits this ambiguity by finishing with a line which says that the worshipper should "entrust the course of the boat to its rudder" (minori no fune no kaji ni makasete).

Elsewhere a group of older women were engaged in a devotional chant in front of the pavilion with *Jizô* (*Jizô-dô*). Here one could directly observe a Japanese parallel to the Hindu *jawapam*, "the practice of repeating God's name" (Smith, 1994:29). To the beating of a large hand-held drum, the words of the Amida

mantra, i.e. the *nembutsu* (*namu amida butsu*), were rhythmically repeated over and over again; not in a devotional frenzy but in an insistent and very focused manner. On one level this setting could be seen as a microcosm of the Buddhist worldview. The octagonal or hexagonal hall (*endô*) represents the 'dharma-world' of life and death (Nakamura, 1988:112). Here *Jizô*, the bodhisattva who guides and leads all sentient beings through their various existential forms, is enshrined in a roomy and accommodating space with strong associations of a womb. This world is crowned, as it were, by the precious jewel (*hôju*) of the *dharma*, which in spherical rotundity is placed on top of the hall's roof, symbolically representing the buddha fields and the worlds of the buddhas, pointing upwards in metaphysical sweep away from the various worlds below. The combination of the *Jizô* pavilion with its emphasis on the inner connectedness of all life forms, as well as and the devotional worship enacted in front, produced a powerful image of the strong yearnings of the inhabitants in this world for the Pure Lands beyond.

In the past all six temples engaged jugglers and dancers and put on various forms of entertainment during the period of the pilgrimage. Today *Toba-Jizô* temple still carries on this practice which otherwise has been discontinued by the other places of worship on the pilgrim trail. The lion dance in particular is very popular and it always attracts large crowds, but traditional acrobats are also very much in demand (Tominaga, 1994:142-3).

5.2.3. The Third Temple: Katsura Jizô-ji

The Jizô-ji temple in Katsura is named after the geographical location where the once important Sanin highway led into the provinces of the interior. As had been the case in the previously visited temples, people were busily exchanging their paper charms from last year for newer, and more potent ones. Katsura Jizô-ji was no doubt the most crowded of the pilgrimage temples I had been to so far. The atmosphere was very similar to the mood I had experienced during the recent Mukaebon festivities. Profuse clouds of smouldering incense fumes hung over the place and worshippers were busily placing their inscribed *mizu-tôba* in a basin of water. Prayer after prayer was directed to a 'Longevity-Jizô' (*Enmei-Jizô*), sheltered at the back of the temple's main hall (*hondô*) behind big offerings of white and orange coloured circular rice cakes (*kagami mochi*), neatly stacked with

the larger ones at the bottom and the smaller ones on top. Their round shape "is based on that of the human heart and therefore symbolizes renewal of life-forces" (Kanzaki, 2000:46).

An abundance of paper flowers on strings was suspended from the ceiling of the main hall in imitation of the celestial blossoms that the heavens, according to Buddhist legend, shower on the Enlightened Ones. To the right and left of the main idol, which appeared to be the largest *Jizô* sculpture on the pilgrimage, niches on the walls were completely packed with the tiny effigies of *Jizô* that temples sell as part of their *mizuko kuyô* services in memory of dead infants. With rapid brush strokes, a couple of priests were busily writing on the thin wooden memorial 'tôba' slats (*kyôgi sotoba*) that people had brought with them. Once the inscription procedure was completed, the slats were set afloat in a deep trough full of water placed in front of six standing *Jizô* statues, each with an object and distinct mudra which identified him and the realm he was in charge of. This was the first temple on the pilgrimage with a numerically complete group of the *Six-Jizô* (*Roku-Jizô*), a cluster of six statues that specifically represent the six realms of existence.

There had been a large number of *Jizô* statues in the previous temples but most of them had been of a generic nature with *Jizô* represented in the traditional posture of a monk with shaven head, carrying a sistrum in his right hand and a precious jewel in his left. Here it was different: one statue carried a sistrum, symbolising hell; another a rosary for converting the beasts *(chikushô)*; and a third one held the 'wish-fulfilling gem' which has the power to convert the hungry demons *(gaki)*. A fourth figure had its hands clasped together in a gesture of prayer for converting the fighting titans *(ashura)*; and the *Jizô* in charge of assisting and converting human beings held the handle of a small incense burner. The sixth *Jizô* held a budding lotus flower, the symbol of the realm of celestial beings (Motoyama et al, 1988:323-4; Akiyama, 1960:309-314).

A pair of scrolls hanging inside a modestly sized structure next to the main hall gave artistic shape to the traditional visions of heaven and hell, alerting the spectator to the buddhological doctrines underpinning the pilgrimage that was now in

progress. The scrolls did not show any signs of great age and as their subject matter differed little from those described earlier, I passed them by.

The number of $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues assembled in this temple was large. Apart from the group of Six- $Jiz\hat{o}$, which on this day was the focus of particular attention, there was a Mizuko- $Jiz\hat{o}$ as well as a Koyasu- $Jiz\hat{o}$, the icon pregnant women supplicate for an easy childbirth. Written notifications alerted the public to consecration ceremonies of 'rock field belly bands' $(iwata\ obi)$ traditionally worn by Japanese women during the later stages of their pregnancy. This age-old custom aims at protecting the prospective mother and the child she is carrying in her womb. The auspicious characters on the band are meant to ensure an easy delivery. The word for 'dog' may be written on these bands as it is believed that these canines are not unduly affected by the process of labour (Hendry, 1987:121; Ooto 1982:51). Thus the temple helps expecting mothers with promises of an easy childbirth and, in the form of mizuko- $kuy\hat{o}$, it also provides religious succour if the lives of these infants are cut short.

This temple is further credited with being the place where the widespread custom of floating paper strips with imprinted $Jiz\hat{o}$ images $(Jiz\hat{o}-nagashi)$ originated. It is said that once upon a time, Jigaku Taishi, a renowned monk, made some images of $Jiz\hat{o}$ into which he magically transferred the evil forces of an epidemic that was raging in the city at the time. These images he subsequently set adrift on the Katsura River and in the most wondrous manner they carried the disease away with them and released the city from the grips of pestilence. This miracle is said to account for the popularity of the $Jiz\hat{o}$ -nagashi ceremony when thousands of paper slips with printed $Jiz\hat{o}$ images are set afloat on Katsura River (Tominaga, 1994: 108-9).

Whereas jugglers and acrobats entertain the public at Toba, this temple is known for its *rokusai-nembutsu* dance in the evening, a dance of such antiquity that it has been officially designated as an important part of Japan's cultural heritage (jûyô bunkazai). While beating gongs and hand-held drums, groups of people will dance about in the temple, chanting the *nembutsu* in praise of the various deities enshrined (Takemura, 1994:51). Originally, 'Rokusai' (six fasts) referred to the

eighth, fourteenth, fifteenth, twenty-second, twenty-ninth and thirtieth days of the month. Since it was believed that demons preyed on peoples' minds on these days, it was common to attempt to gene-rate a morally elevated state of mind by afternoon fasting. At one point in the eleventh century, the fasting was combined with dancing and *nembutsu* chanting (Inagaki, 1992:250).

5.2.4. The Fourth Temple: Genkô-ji at Tokiwa

A vertical sign at the temple entrance announced that the 'Source of Light temple' (Genkô-ji) is the main seat of all Jizô worship in Japan. An unusual colour scheme of white wooden grills flanked by gilded pillars and large notices in yellow kanji are the first impressions to greet the visitor. Larger areas of the temple structures were painted in the vermilion colour one normally observes in Shinto shrines. This association was surely by design since the legend on a large notice board proclaimed that the nature of Japan's indigenous kami and the buddhas was identical. There is "one religion and the buddhas and kami are one" (isshû ichi shinbutsu), the signpost said, a slogan totally new to me. This union of the buddhas and the Japanese kami in one body, the inscription went on to say, was a manifestation of their universal compassion. Now compassion mentioned in the context of the Japanese kami is surprising. This virtuous sentiment is normally associated with Mahayana Buddhism. The kami, on the other hand, are usually connected with rites of pollution and purification as well as charging the seasonal activities related to agriculture with divine and auspicious energy.

Comments by Tominaga (1994:86-7) shed a light on these puzzling statements. The religious ideas advocated by the incumbent priest, he writes, have over the years taken an increasingly syncretic and idiosyncratic turn. The temple has been redesignated by the priest as a centre of $Jiz\hat{o}$ veneration, universal in scope and above other belief systems, unrelated to and unconnected with other religious sects. It was as if the priest had attempted to redefine the nature of $Jiz\hat{o}$ worship, divorcing the bodhisattva from his Buddhist origins and assimilating him into the world of the indigenous kami.

A text on the wall of the red hexagonal hall where $Jiz\hat{o}$ was enshrined reflected this position. In most places this building is referred to as 'Jizô Hall' ($Jiz\hat{o}$ - $d\hat{o}$) but

here it was called 'Hall of the Red Heart' (*sekishin-dô*). Freely translated, the notice asserted that the 'Hall of the Red Heart' was a sacred location. Like the rays of the sun it casts its light all over the world in order to dispel illusions. On its hallowed grounds all human beings would combine with the divine principle; the many and the one [principle], and heaven and earth would merge and become one. The *Jizô* statue itself was not visible but it is known as the 'Last born male Jizô' (*Otoko-Jizô*), a reference to its modest size (Takemura, 1994:43).

Most pilgrims halted briefly in front of the 'Hall of the Red Heart' where the position of a beautiful stone bowl with smouldering incense indicated the location from where they were supposed to address the deity. Looking up they would see two rather large rectangular and diagonally inclined wooden panels under the eaves, displaying scenes with the same kind of imagery I discussed in the Heaven and Hell section. One panel combined an enlarged vision of Amida's Pure Land with images of the infant limbo, Sai-no-kawara. The panel with death, judgement and hell showed agitated scenes of people in various stages of physical affliction as well as other images with which visitors and pilgrims during this festival would be thoroughly familiar. Framed by scenes of demons in their customary pursuit of tormenting people, a ferocious looking chief judge (Emma-ô) stared directly at the spectator. A large figure of Jizô painted in golden colours seemed wholly unperturbed by the commotion around him. A half-naked female figure (Sôzu-nobaba) dressed in blue was sitting next to the river that separates this world from the next (Sanzu-no-gawa). An account of her behaviour has already been given in the Heaven and Hell Picture section. According to some interpretations, this hag demands an entrance fee from all who arrive at the banks of 'the river of three roads' (Sanzu-no-gawa). If one is unable to pay, she will snatch away people's clothing one and put it on the branches of one of trees on the river bank, hence her other name 'clothes snatching hag' (datsueba). The garments hanging in the trees around her reminded spectators of the need to include 'six realms coins' (rokudôzen) in the coffin when they launched the dead on their journey to judgement. These coins are used as entrance fee into the world of the dead in the same manner as the ancient Greeks paid Charon. Even today the Buddhist burial outfit contains a small bag of white cloth with six coins (Uehara & Miya, 1989:24; Gorai, 1997:423).

The other panel was a study in contrast. Here calmness reigned as opposed to the ferocious and vibrant energy in the panel of Hell. A large scene with dozen of small children surrounding a towering Jizô, this time rendered with a white skin colour which made him appear almost androgynous, dominated the foreground. Two bodhisattva beckoned spectators towards a place in the sky where winged celestial figures, the so-called 'sky-dancers' (apsarases), floated about. In the far distance, a calm landscape with fields and mountains peopled by tiny figures completed the remaining part of the picture's background. The bright and freshly painted oil colours and the rendition of the figures in a cartoon-like fashion would indicate that the pictures had been executed in the twentieth century and that the latest coat of paint would have been applied not long ago. Yet the scenery and overall layout as well as the provenance of the subject matter were from a different century altogether. Here we were once more back in the remote past. As I mention in Chapter IV, these pairs of Heaven and Hell images, in particular those depicting Jizô and Sai-no-kawara, were very popular during the Edo period (1600-1868). Although the number of hells in this instance had been reduced, these two wooden frames belonged to the same genre. There were no figures to symbolise the four ages of human existence, but a powerful death-bed scene with grieving relatives as well as the symbolic *yin-yang* depiction of the sun and moon, so integral to the complementary visions of heaven and hell, made up for that.

For a temple so small in area an extraordinary amount of written exhortations were pasted onto walls and pillars. The ungraceful manner in which they were executed was conspicuous and a little disconcerting. Writing in Japan has always been more than mere communication with lettered words. Ever since its introduction to the country, the medium of writing has represented a sum greater than its parts and it has been and still is considered an important art form in its own right. The appearance of written characters (*kanji*) is not only judged aesthetically; writing is also believed to reflect the moral stance of the writer (Miller, 1967:120). Because of the great public demand on temples for inscriptions on amulets, devotional scrolls, and autographs in the ledgers of pilgrims as proof of their visit, Buddhist priests generally write a lot by hand and they are usually associated with skilful and agreeable calligraphy. For this reason, the functional and rather artless form of these notices was all the more surprising.

This indifferent attitude to writing also came to the fore in the inscription on the temple's Jizô banner charm (hata). Normally care is taken when writing on sacred objects in order to marry the beautiful with the profound. But here the characters on the amulet were written in the reverse in the manner of a mirror image. When asking the priest who sold me the amulet why this was so, I was curtly told that this was a ruse to increase the potency of the amulet. In an impatient and hectoring tone, he explained that the forces of evil (mamono) would not be able to decipher the text when it was written back to front, thus the amulet would retain its powers undiminished for a long time. This explanation was delivered in a manner that brooked no contradiction or additional questioning. Later when I mentioned the odd appearance of Genkô-ji temple's 'banner charms' during my purchase of the obligatory paper charm at another of the temple, I must have touched a sore point. The priest shook his head in a gesture of despair. "You have noticed, too," he sighed. In spite of several meetings with the Genkô-ji abbot, he went on to say, the abbots from the other temples on the pilgrim circuit had not been able to alter the design of the charm in accordance with a more traditional appearance. Perhaps it was age, he added, that had made the other abbot so stubborn.

5.2.5. The Fifth Temple: Jôzen-ji at Kurama

The 'Temple of Superior Goodness' (Jôzen-ji) in the Kurama district is difficult to find since there are two temples in the same neighbourhood with this name. Moreover, the exterior of the temple itself is void of any eye-catching features. Looking through the lattice doors of the main hall, one can catch a faint glimpse of a wooden Jizô figure about two meters tall, a size which seemed to be most common among the main icons on this circuit. This one, too, had been coloured recently, but its narrow elongated face and very long ears gave it an unusual appearance that did not fit into any known stylistic categories. Its epithet, 'Female Jizô' (Anego-Jizô), was unusual as well. Several clusters of old stone statues were assembled here and there without any discernible plan.

The most conspicuous feature of the place had to be the way in which the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' paper charms had been strung across the temple grounds. A thick piece of string, which was referred to as 'rope of goodness' (zen-no-tsuna), was at one end tied to a beam of the modest main hall above the customary 'crocodile

mouth gong' (wani-guchi). At the other end it was fastened to the branch of a large bush in the temple yard. People were tying their old paper charms to this overhead rope and by the time of my visit hundreds of charms had been strung up in this manner. The confined space of the yard had made it necessary to put the charms close together and like cheerful bunting they hung suspended over the heads of the worshippers. It was as if the customary 'five coloured threads' (goshiki no ito), the strings with which mankind attempts to connect the mundane with the abstract and divine, had been given a new interpretative twist. It is a variation of the old custom whereby a dying person were given five-coloured strings to hold on to, which at the other end were tied to the hands of an Amida Buddha image (Iwamoto, 1988: 282). Today the 'five coloured threads' are twined into one single strand and attached to holy images or some salient point inside temple buildings. At the other end, the string is tied around the banister in front of the hall housing the religious image. Holding the coloured strings enables devotees to establish a form of connection and physical contact with the deity. I describe an example of this practice in Kyoto's Sekizô-ji temple in the 'Jizô and This-Worldly Benefits' section below.

When purchasing my obligatory charm, I was offered a drink of refreshingly cold water and exchanged pleasantries with the wife of the priest and her ninety-year-old father. He was the one who taught me the correct name was of the rope (*zen-no-tuna*) strung across the yard. Both told me that this year had been rather quiet but that they expected things to become livelier during the evenings of the approaching *Jizô-bon* festival when dancing was scheduled to take place as part of the entertainment for the children. The temple may not have had any impressive characteristics in an architectural sense, but the merry and colourful display of coloured charms fluttering in the breeze compensated for that.

5.2.6. The Sixth Temple: Tokurin-an in Yamanashi Ward

The last temple of the pilgrimage is 'Virtuous Forest Retreat Temple' (*Tokurin-an*). Once more the enshrined *Jizô* (*Shi-no-miya-Jizô*) is named after its location. In the past this temple guarded Tôkaidô, the most important trunk road along the Eastern seaboard of Japan, which connected the imperial city of Heian-kyô (Kyoto) with the shôgun's residence in Edo, present day Tokyo.

A dense canopy of trees offered a pleasing protection against the warm rays of the afternoon sun and a strategically placed bench provided a vantage point from which to take in all the visual aspects of the place. The poignant atmosphere of the restrained aestheticism that suffused this temple and its surroundings set it apart from the others. It was as if the place was deliberately designed to decelerate the pace of visitors and worshippers and invite them to linger, as hinted at in its name. It was tempting to look for an answer to the emphasis on pleasing visual appearances in the temple's religious affiliation. With the exception of the syncretic Genkô-ji temple, the previous temples had all been connected with the Amidist Pure Land sect (Jôdo-shû). This temple, on the other hand, belonged to the Rinzai branch of Zen Buddhism, known for its keen awareness of aesthetics (Suzuki, 1973:352-354).

Once more an upright, sympathetic looking $Jiz\hat{o}$ figure in the traditional posture with staff and jewel was enshrined inside an elegant hexagonal building on which the ends of its plain wooden beams were painted white. This hall design $(end\hat{o})$ in the buildings housing $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues was predominant on this pilgrim circuit. In Japan it is associated with memorialisation rites for the dead. Here, too, his figure was large and heavily coloured, as was the case with the previous statues of $Jiz\hat{o}$. Its features showed a fleshy heaviness, which insinuated the prototype's distant Indian origin. Several layers of heavily padded floss silk (mawata) in white and red colours had been put on the head of the statue in a manner identical to that on the $Jiz\hat{o}$ statue in Daizen-ji temple. The effect evoked an image of the female hairstyle at the imperial court and the shawl of ladies in the past. It also served as a reminder that $Jiz\hat{o}$ takes special care to lead women on to the spiritual path of buddhahood.

When asked if he could tell me anything about the image, the priest repeated the ancient story which relates how the six $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues on the circuit were carved out of one piece of wood by the ubiquitous Ono-no-Takamura (Takemura, 1994:83). A wooden notice board with a long inscription about the history of the pilgrimage was more informative. Apart from the mandatory reference to Takamura as the founder of the pilgrimage, the text was unusual in its attempt to explain $Jiz\hat{o}$ worship in evolutionary terms. Departing from the reverential manner with which

the Buddhist deities are described in temple publications, the notice started to explain his role as a borderline deity in the Buddhist cosmology, where he is situated at the crossroads between the six existences within the world of form and transmigration (rokudô). The text also pointed out how Jizô had fused with the indigenous kami. They, too, protected borderline areas, not in distant worlds but here on earth at those points where the unknown confronts the familiar. Jizô may originally have been put up to complement and assist these traditional border guardians (sae-no-kami or sai-no-kami) and roadside protectors (dôsojin) and over time Jizô and the kami merged and became indistinguishable. The gods of the road were fertility gods as well, so through this connection *Jizô* also became associated with procreation. As a result of this development, Jizô added another dimension to his role as a patron and guide of the spirits of the deceased: he became the earthly guardian of travellers and other people on the road. The new role is not so dissimilar from his previous obligations where he looked after those spirits who travelled from one existence to the next in the afterlife. In both instances we are dealing with a movement from the familiar to the unknown. Women and children also fell within this ambit. This aspect of *Jizô*, where he is the protector of travellers and the weak, is an important element in contemporary Jizô beliefs. It is in this context that he is most frequently encountered as witnessed by the vast numbers of religious icons of stone on the roads of Japan, stones, which incidentally also may serve milestones.

Moving away from one's native village into the unfamiliar world beyond requires all the protection one can get. Many people need someone to look after them on their journey after death into the big unknown where 'Hell' can be interpreted as a collective metaphor for the anxiety with which many view the unknown world which lies ahead of us all, "The road which to discover / We must travel too".

5.2.7. Theories about the Origin of Rokujizô Mairi

Tanaka (1986:116-127) speculates that a conflation of the traditional 'large feast day of *Jizô'* (*Jizô dai-ennichi*) on the twenty-fourth of July with other simultaneous activities eventually led to the Rokujizô Pilgrimage. Gorai (1982:171) has a theory with a different starting point but he arrives at an identical conclusion. He posits that the *Six-Jizô* are closely related to the 'Gods of the Road' (*sae-no-kami*

and *dôsojin*), the theory that *Tokurin-an* advocated on its notice board. According to the old calendar, Gorai argues, festivals in honour of these guardian gods of the road took place at the warmest time of the year when people were most susceptible to diseases. By virtue of their gate-keeping function, Gods of the Road were believed to be able to prevent the movement of evil forces detrimental to people's health. When *Jizô* became identified with these gods, he also became a beneficiary of the festivals held in their honour. The fire festival on Mt. Atago for instance, also occurred during this period and over time all these elements merged or were, at least, felt to be closely interrelated.

Manabe (1975:90-104) takes the motivating force for the genesis of the pilgrimage to be the connection between the six realms of rebirth (rokudô) and the identical number of Jizô figures. He notes that the first mention of the Six-Jizô can be traced back to a work from late eleventh century (Shûi-ôjô-den). Approximately hundred years later, a collection of tales (Konjaku monogatari Vol. XVII) devotes thirty-two tales about Jizô beliefs and practices (Yamamoto, 1976:65). The twenty-third tale speaks of a certain Tama-no-Oya Korechika who goes to hell after his death. Here he meets six young priests who identify themselves as the 'Six-Jizô', each one different from the others. They ask Korechika to return to earth and make six statues identical in appearance to what he has seen.

Another variant of the story appears in a pamphlet published by the 'Association of the Six Jizô Pilgrimage' (Rokujizô-kai, 1994). It quotes a from a 'Foundation Tale of the Six-Jizô' (*Rokujizô engi*) from the seventeenth century, according to which Emperor Go-Shirakawa decreed that six *Jizô* images carved by Takamura were to be placed at those locations where major highways led into the city. Consequently, in 1157 CE the statues were placed individually in an octagonal hall (*Jizô-dô*) and travellers could now ask for protection before they embarked on a journey. They statues served another purpose as well. The six temples were positioned in such a way that they formed a circle around the city whereby they provided a charmed barrier against harmful external forces. The pious reliance on the ability of these icons to ward off external evil and the fact that these *Jizô* statues were placed in temples located at crossroads form the key to Gorai's argument. Among the various speculations about the origin of the 'Six-Jizô

Pilgrimage', this version appears to be the most popular. It is, at any rate, the one that I have most frequently encountered.

These statues are not in the same class as ordinary religious sculptures. To quote the pamphlet of the 'Association of the Six-Jizô Pilgrimage' once more, they belong to the rare category of sacred images called 'living body' (*ikimi*) which reputedly reflect the true appearance of the divinity they are meant to represent. This feat is possible because the sculptor has had the opportunity to observe with his own eyes the corporeal extensions and physical dimensions of a divinity which he then later by virtue of his skills could transform into a 'life-like' image (Seckel, 1964:156-7). The iconogenesis of these *Jizô* statues is described in a matter-of-fact narrative in a competing narrative that replaces Korechika with the name of the ubiquitous imperial adviser and courtier of the third rank, Ono-no-Takamura.

While suffering from a severe illness in the second year of Kashô (849 CE), we are told, he at one point became unconscious. While his physical body remained in a suspended state, he went to the lower regions of hell. Here he encountered a Buddhist cleric who busily moved about amidst seething fires, aiding and comforting the many wrongdoers who found themselves there. Seeing Takamura, the cleric introduces himself as Jizô, entrusted by the Buddha to save the multitude of sentient beings who as a consequence of having erred in their previous lives were suffering the painful consequences of their foolish actions. The cleric goes on to explain his presence in hell with a paraphrase of the eschatological doctrines preached in the 'Sutra of Ten Wheel' (Jûrin-gyô). During the period between the death of the Buddha and the arrival of Maitreya Buddha (Miroku), Jizô has vowed to save everyone in need of guidance. In an allusion to the power of the rituals for the dead, he mentions how his supernatural powers are sustained by the efforts of the living and their religious offerings. But, he adds, it is difficult to help those who have no one to offer memorial services for peaceful repose of their souls. For this reason, Jizô explains, Ono-no-Takamura was summoned. The courtier is instructed to return to the world of the living and tell everyone of the fate that awaits them if they ignore the Buddhist precepts but also how advantageous it would be if they embraced the principles that Jizô stands for. Overwhelmed by this display of universal charity, Ono-no-Takamura decides to carve six images of

Jizô, which he does from the trunk of a single cherry tree (ichiboku-zukuri). These statues are not only a proof of his personal encounter, but they also help others to develop an awareness of Jizô's role and the compassion of the doctrine he represents.

Ohshima (1993:340-6) and Gorai (1997:443-5) list some of the many internal inconsistencies in the stories which set out to explain the origin of the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage'. Volume VI in 'Gempei Seisui-ki', for instance, written about 1250 CE, mentions a certain priest, Saikô, who at several points of entry into Kyoto consecrates *Six-Jizô* statues. Later works from the Edo period (1600-1868) allude to individual statues, not groups of six, being erected in six different places and that the statues are placed at the behest of samurai strong-man, Taira Kiyomori, and not the emperor. In the opinion of Fujii (1972: 84), the confusion as to the exact whereabouts of these statues and the temples associated with them is caused by people trying to identify Saikô's statues and shrines with the locations known to us today. It is possible, he says, that they were located at different spots altogether.

Even if the question of origin may never be solved, it is still an interesting problem since the concept and worship of Six- $Jiz\hat{o}$ appears to be a Japanese convention without any continental parallels. De Visser (1914:94) rightly points out that the words 'Six Jizô' are used in the 'Sutra of Ten Kings' $(Ju\hat{o}-ky\hat{o})$, a work of Chinese provenance, and suggests there might be Asian examples analogous to the Japanese Six- $Jiz\hat{o}$. Personally I am more inclined to believe that the word refers to one $Jiz\hat{o}$ in each of the six realms in the same manner as they are treated in the 'Sutra of Ten Wheels' $(Jurin-ky\hat{o})$. A close reading of the text stands leads me to conclude that the description of the six manifestations of the Bodhisattva does not necessarily imply the concept of the Six- $Jiz\hat{o}$ images as a unit.

It would appear that in the past, many pilgrims would carry an image of $Jiz\hat{o}$ on their back, chanting and singing $Jiz\hat{o}$ hymns as they went along (Takemura, 1994:188). The interesting custom of a 'Rotating Jiz\hat{o}' (Mawari-Jiz\hat{o} \text{ or Meguri-Jiz\hat{o}}) can be regarded as a comparable variant of this pilgrimage, symbolic of Jiz\hat{o}'s wanderings in the six different realms of existence. A small, rather

perfunctory wooden shrine containing a $Jiz\hat{o}$ image is moved around within a limited area to fixed locations and predetermined recipients. It is strapped the back like a rucksack and the person carrying it is either a child or a woman, once more emphasizing the strong link between $Jiz\hat{o}$ and these two groups. The statue is looked after by the devotees who take turns to enshrine it in their own neighbourhoods or even at home, but nowadays the 'Rotating Jizô' is often kept in a temple during those times of the year when it is not in use (Ohshima, 1986:67-72).

III. Jizô-Bon - The Children's Festival

5.3.0. The Dates of Jizô-bon

Between the twenty-third and the twenty-fourth of August many citizens of Kyoto and other parts of the Kansai region, in particular parents with children up to the age of twelve, will celebrate the Jizô-bon festival, also known as Jizô-e or Jizômatsuri. The celebrations are not restricted to this area alone as Jizô-bon is also observed in other parts of the country, albeit on a minor and less lavish scale. Yet most people associate the festival with the Kansai region and scholars believe that this is also the area from which the custom has fanned out to other parts of the country (Kurabayashi, 1980: 206). In this section the focus will be on Kansai and in particular the way in which *Jizô-bon* is managed and celebrated in Kyoto. The festival takes places simultaneously with the *Rokujizô* pilgrimage. The difference is that whereas the six sacred sites are visited by adults, this festival is devoted to children, it is carried out in the neighbour-hoods where people live, and it involves no travelling. Because of these dissimilar characteristics, the two events are regarded as separate even if some of the activities that take place at this time may overlap. The traditional dance (nembutsu-odori), for instance, which is performed in some temples during the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrim-age', is in some localities also part of the Jizô-bon festivities. There is another important distinction: the local Buddhist temple is not the main organizer of the festival although it plays an important role as an active facilitator of the sacred components of the festivities. When the old lunar calendar was still in use, the festival was held in the seventh month, as is still the case in some rural parts of the region, but like so many other specific events tied to the calendar, the dates changed together with the adoption of the Gregorian calendar and its disparate system of time reckoning based on the movements of the sun.

It would appear that the name *Jizô-bon* is of a recent origin since older sources only refer to a 'Jizô festival' (*Jizô matsuri*) which fell on *Jizô's* name day but noone has been able to establish exactly when this change took place. Today, however, for reasons of convenience, many locations do not hesitate to rearrange the traditional dates so that the festival coincides with a weekend when people have more time to indulge their children and participate in the festivities (Koma, 1993:35; Ishikawa, 1995:183). This rearrangement of liturgical dates around people's working commitments is not limited to festivals only. "[M]emorials for ancestors are often held not on the annual anniversary of a death but on a Sunday that is close to the anniversary" (Earhart, 1982:201).

For a while Jizô-bon seemed in decline, in particular during the years following World War II, but it has experienced a revival since the 1960s. So much so that newer neighbourhoods in the region without a roadside *Jizô* of their own have taken to renting one from nearby temples or localities endowed with one or more images to spare. Mibu temple, which traditionally has had strong links with Jizô worship, is a willing lender of appropriate statues for the event. The technical term is 'borrowed buddha' (shaku-butsu) but in popular parlance these statues are also referred to as 'rented Jizô' (*Rentaru-Jizô*). Other neighbourhoods, where roadside shrines and their statues have yielded to the exigencies of urban expansion and the constant demand for more space, store their statues in nearby temples when not in use (Furuda et al., 1988:391). Kuginuki-dera temple (Sekizô-ji), a very popular temple in the middle of Kyoto, which I examine later, is also one such location. At first glance it may seem odd to make use of an image that one has borrowed from sources outside the community. However, there are certain parallels to the practice which I mentioned in the previous section whereby a Jizô statue (Mawari-Jizô) is carried round to different households during the year so that the location of the image alternates between separate households. Nakamura (1992:93), for instances, describes how in some areas Jizô images on loan from a local temple are being shifted around on the twenty-fourth day of each month, the deity's feast day. In a similar ritual, other localities pass on their statue(s) on a weekly and sometimes even on a daily basis. Iwai (1980:158) makes the interesting observation that the persons in charge of these exchanges consist almost exclusively of women or

children, once more underlining the special affinity of $Jiz\hat{o}$ with these two sections of society.

In order to illustrate the scale of this festival Koma (1980:30) has made an interesting if not quite scientific calculation of the number of statues that most likely are involved in the festivities. The number of $ch\hat{o}$, the traditional unit for measuring city blocks, in Kyoto, he says, is 5,037. If one assumes that there is at least one $Jiz\hat{o}$ statue in every $ch\hat{o}$, which is not all together unreasonable, then a conservative count would yield a figure exceeding 5,000 statues. The number is most likely much higher since many city blocks have more than one statue within its perimeters.

5.3.1. Organizers of Jizô-bon

The American occupation has left a legacy of strict separation between religion and the state. Legal restrictions placed on local governments do not allowed them to promote or sponsor religious activities so the arrangements for Jizô-bon are left to the initiative of private citizens. However, if activities can be classified as local tourist attractions with a cultural content, government officials on regional levels are willing to assist with the promotion of these events. But they have to be advertised as such rather than as a religious festival per se (Shiose, 2000:322). How this system operates is exemplified in the town of Ki-no-moto in Hyôgo prefecture where the local and heavily promoted $Jiz\hat{o}$ is known far beyond the geographic borders of the town. People from other districts will come in their thousands to pay their respect to Ki-no-moto-Jizô during Jizô-bon. One reason for the popularity of the event in this particular region is the large scale floating of *Jizô* images (Jizô-nagashi), which is conducted every year by the local temple. Thousands of Jizô figures printed on paper slips are set adrift in elegant wooden floats on the surface of the water. To cater for the large crowds who have come to witness this 'once-a-year' lavish spectacle, temporary stalls are erected which provide various forms of entertainment and nourishment. The result is an atmosphere that combines village fair levity with solemn religious activities (Hayashi, 1997:122-3; Yoritomi, 1987:152).

However, the scale of the *Ki-no-moto Jizô-bon*, the business opportunities, as well as the number of people participating, is the exception rather than the rule. In general the preparations for Jizô-bon are taken care of by the local Jizô devotional association (Jizô-kô) together with those persons from the neighbourhood association (chônaikai) whose turn it is to arrange the neighbourhood activities for that year. The expenses likewise are borne by the inhabitants of the area where the event takes place and there are as many ways of raising money as there are neighbourhood associations. Since the arrangements are for the entertainment and benefit of the neighbourhood, the contributors in general are the local businesses, shop owners and those individuals and families who happen to live within or in the vicinity of the city block $(ch\hat{o})$. In some localities the children, too, go around collecting donations for the event, noisily announcing their arrival by beating gongs and wooden clappers but the money they receive is far from sufficient to cover the costs. Help is also given from other motives. Surveys indicate that many people regard *Jizô-bon* as an opportunity to affirm the spirit of social cooperation and neighbourhood identity so in recent years considerable amounts of money are seen spent on the event (Hayashi, 1997:91-2; Iwai, 1980:150).

5.3.2. Getting the Jizô Statues Ready

In the evening of the twenty-second of August, the statues to be used during the festival are gathered and taken to a predetermined spot, usually a tent erected for this purpose. In some instances it may be taken to the house of the chief organizer. It might be a single statue or several. In areas where the statues cannot be moved, people go to them instead. Awnings or makeshift covers are then put up to shelter the statue and potential worshippers. The statues are dusted and cleaned so they are absolutely spotless. In more frugal times their clothing would be washed and ironed before being put back on the statues. Present-day affluence, however, has made it possible to replace all garments that have been worn with newer apparel, frequently made of multicoloured brocade or other expensive fabrics. Different areas are guided by different traditions when responsibility for the costs and change of clothing is delegated. The tendency is to let those households into which children have been born during the past year pay for the new garments, the Buddhist sash (kesa) or the traditional pinafores. These families also happen to be those who are in special need of protection from the deity (Yamatani, 1989:122-5).

If the statue is of stone, which usually is the case since we are dealing with outdoor images, it is washed several times (Jizô-san no minugui) after which the face and the exposed parts of the body are painted white. Distinct facial features are touched up with black, red and blue colours, resulting in what is called a 'Made-up Jizô' (Keshô-Jizô). The colours used on this occasion are Paris white dissolved in water but ordinary chalk might also be applied. White, as noted earlier, is believed to be a colour with mystical properties. Children are heavily involved in this process and it is said that a Jizô thus taken care of will keep a watchful eye on his little assistants during the year to come, ensuring that no harm befalls them (Iwai, 1980:160).

Brightly coloured paper lanterns (noki-andon and chôchin) are hung from the eaves of the houses displaying the name(s) of the Jizô under whose tutelage the festival takes place such as Ki-no-moto-Jizô, for instance. Formulaic phrases in praise of Jizô and the names of the children living in the house which hangs up the lanterns are also popular inscriptions on the lanterns. So too are wishful slogans such as 'family well-being' (kanai anzen) and 'harmony in the neighbourhood' (chônai chôwa), Coloured pictures drawn by the children are also frequently on display during the festival (Yoritomi, 1987:149).

5.3.3. Salient Characteristics of the Celebrations

In the morning on the twenty-third, a Buddhist priest begins the festivities with sutra reading and members of the local $Jiz\hat{o}$ association may chant some hymns (wasan) in praise of the deity in a ceremony called 'songs of praise' (go-eika). This is also the occasion for some religious instruction. Parents will pass on to the children the various $Jiz\hat{o}$ songs, legends and tales, thus making the little ones aware of his special nature and miraculous powers, in particular his unique relationship with children (Hayashi, 1997:18). The sutra reading and devotional chants constitute the formal part of the $Jiz\hat{o}$ -bon. There is another element with strong religious overtones; a game whereby a large Buddhist rosary is rotated many times (hyaku-man-ben-juzu-mawashi). This very important and much-loved part of the activities I shall describe shortly. It may or may not take place soon after the performance of the priest and the hymns of the $Jiz\hat{o}$ devotional association. Once the official opening of the festival has been concluded, games will

continue for the next two days after which the moveable $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues are returned to their former locations.

There is much variety in the enclosures that house the statues. Some areas may cordon off a whole street for the duration of the festival. Others may only occupy a street corner. In some localities the neighbourhood association may repair to the precincts of a nearby temple where the arrangements may unfold in relatively calm surroundings, safe from the dangers of traffic. Yet no matter what shape the subsequent entertainment might take, whether it will incorporate modern elements or develop along more traditional lines, $Jiz\hat{o}$ is always looming in the background. He is the *sine qua non* of the festivities, and without him watching over the celebrants the festival would be just another party for children.

Flowers, vegetables, fruits, dumplings (dango), and cake offerings are placed on shelves in front of the $Jiz\hat{o}$ statue(s) and parents will ensure that these shelves remain full for the duration of the festival. The food is ultimately eaten by the children and to a lesser degree by the adult participants but initially it is displayed as offerings for all to see. Ishikawa (1995:181-5) has in great detail analysed the nature of the entertainment in distinct parts of Kyoto and the Ohmi district. Although the particulars differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, the core approach to the festival is identical in all localities: the fun part for the children remains central to the program. Some places may serve hamburgers or fried rice for the children; others again will feed the children with some of the offerings given to Jizô. The more traditional food, however, which in the past invariably would have been offered to *Jizô* and then later shared with the participants, appears to have disappeared in most places. According to Takemura (1994:12), sweet potatoes of the purple kind, for instance, as well as the *hôzuki* flower, a reddish cherry variety, were until quite recently never absent from the items submitted to the deity. The dominant usage of the auspicious colour red is no longer strictly observed. Ohshima (1992:454) writes that rice balls (onigiri) flavoured with various forms of pickled vegetables or fish have been the offering of choice for centuries. Rice was considered to have a sacred affinity with the deities because of its nourishing properties and its role as the stable food of Japan and are still presented as offerings in the far north of the country on Osore-zan

mountain. In urban Kansai, on the other hand, the connection between the sacred and the alimentary property of rice balls seems to have been lost and their replacement with snack food is now common practice.

5.3.4. Hyakuman-ben - Rotating the Rosary a Million Times

In one of the few sombre notes of the festivities, all persons who have died during the previous year are remembered with the chanting of sutras on the first night of the festival. This contrasts with the popular entertainment of 'rotating the rosary one million times' (hyaku-man-ben-juzu-mawashi). This game is usually conducted amidst lots of laughter and merrymaking since the way and speed with which the rotation of the large rosary takes place leave ample room for individual misses and 'mistakes'. The rules for this ceremonial game are quite simple: the children, frequently joined by adults, will sit on the floor in a big circle, all holding on to individual beads of a large Buddhist rosary (juzu). At the word 'go', the rosary is moved around in a circular motion at ever increasing speeds while the participants chant 'Glory to the great Bodhisattva Jizô' (namu jizô daibosatsu'). In other places the *nembutsu* is chanted instead. The game may also be game is organised within the local temple's precincts. One such place is the Hyakumanben temple near Kyoto University, which even takes its popular name from this yearly ceremony. When the temple rosary is not in use, it hangs suspended under the roof of the main hall where the large beads lend an unusual visual effect to the temple interior.

Ideally, the rosary should consist of hundred and eight wooden beads, which everyone will tell you represent the hundred and eight obstacles (hyakuhachi bonnô) believed to lie between all sentient beings and their attainment of enlightenment. A group of children seated in a circle take hold of the rosary with their hands and begin to rotate it, passing on the bead they hold to the child or person sitting next to them. Anyone who manages to get hold of that part of the rosary where it is held together with a big knot will quickly raise it to his or her forehead. This particular section is easy to recognise as it is marked by a bead that is noticeably disparate from the rest. Making it touch one's forehead, however, is a different matter since the rosary is circulated in an increasingly rapid motion. It is believed that for the rest of year luck will follow that child who happens to be the

last person to hold this bead when the game is over (Ohmori, 1992:453-4). The same author also mentions several country districts where large rosaries, carried around by children, play an important role in purification rites that are no longer observed in the cities. Given the fact that the aim is to rotate the rosary a million times, at least in theory, some form of accounting is required. A small piece of cloth can be attached to the rosary. The most frequent method is to string on to the rosary a bead that is considerably larger than the rest to make it easy to see when the rosary has gone round a full circle. The person in charge, who also decides the pace of the chanting which he or she indicates by the rhythmic beating of a drum, will count the number of times that large bead or the cloth piece comes by. There is even a special board which may be operated by the person in charge of the chant. Small sticks are moved from one side to the other, in accordance with the number of times rosary has circulated a full round (Nishigai, 1988:105).

In addition to the traditional religious element, the two days will generally feature an action-packed program for the children with entertaining events such as 'pass the parcel', lucky draws, splitting of water melons, watching videos, and so on (Koma, 1993:38). In the evening there will be dancing in the streets where people for the last time that year may have the opportunity to repeat the simple steps of the traditional bon-odori dance. With luck one might also be able to observe one of the groups that performed the *Rokusai-nembutsu* dancing during the 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage'. It is a rudimentary dance with simple steps where the participants move about together while chanting the name of Amida *(nembutsu)* to the sound of bells and drums in continuation of a custom dating said to date back to thirteenth century. (Yamatani, 1989:122).

5.3.5. Summary of the Festival Structure

The *Jizô-bon* when celebrated as a festival for children may have the following eight components:

1) one or more *Jizô* statues are prepared for *Jizô-bon*. These statues may or may not be removed from the spot or roadside shrine *(hokora)* where they normally are enshrined and taken to a location specially prepared for the event. The statues are then cleaned and given new clothes to wear,

- 2) offerings with a natural appeal to children are prepared for the statue(s). These offerings will frequently include sweets and other snacks, to be consumed by the participants as the days go by,
- 3) coloured paper lanterns are displayed with the names of the participating children and the particular *Jizô* who 'hosts' the festival,
- 4) a priest will read passages from the Buddhist canon,
- 5) songs of praise (go-eika), which are accompanied by the ringing of bells and beating of hand-held drums, are offered to the deity,
- 6) one event will feature the 'turning of the rosary' a million times (hyaku-manbenjuzu-mawashi). To many people this spectacle epitomises Jizô-bon,
- 7) a variety of games for the children will take place in front of the deity,
- 8) at night there will be dancing in the streets either as an extension of the *Bonodori* or *nembutsu-odori* dances.

Of the above eight items, numbers four, five and eight are most likely to be left out if the organizers cut down on the number of events. Whereas the 'game' with the rosary is very popular, offering the possibility for everyone to join the fun, the religious songs of praise are slowly losing their common appeal. They are mainly remembered and performed by the elderly. Apart from this age group, few seem to have taken any interest in memorising the hymn texts so it is not inconceivable that they soon will become a thing of the past and disappear and with the demise of the practitioners. Another factor which speaks against the inclusion of the hymns (*go-eika*) in *Jizô-bon* is the recognition that this ritual has little entertainment value for children. In fact, during this part of the celebrations the children very often run about and occupy themselves with other things. It is worth noting, though, that in country localities where *Jizô-bon* is not celebrated as a social event for children, people may still go to a temple during this period and

per-form the songs, thus celebrating *Jizô's* feast and name day *(ennichi)*. Some scholars suggest that this celebration may have been the beginning of the festival (Hayashi, 1997:81-2). After all, the name day, which we know to be a Chinese creation, had no connection originally with children (Yoritomi, 1987:149).

5.3.6. Theories about the Origin of Jizô-bon

Koma (1993:35) maintains that *Jizô-bon* has nothing to do with the antecedent Obon festival. But any observer would have to agree with Yamatani's (1989:124) statement that the two have now become so intertwined that one appears to be an extension of the other. A temple visit during this period will readily show that devotees still purify and sprinkle water on the wooden *sotoba* slats inscribed with the names of dead relatives in the merit producing *mizu-ekô* ritual in front of one or more *Jizô* statues. Hayashi (1997:232-248) has analysed the various theories about the origin of *Jizô-bon*, which incidentally are remarkably similar to those of 'Six-Jizô Pilgrimage', pointing out their respective merits and weak points.

One episode that all commentators seem to agree on when theories of origin are up for debate is a visit to Kansai during the Edo period by Bakin (1767-1848), the famous fiction writer. In a subsequent travelogue he describes the various customs and people he came across during the trip and the way he writes about *Jizô-bon* leads the readers to conclude that Bakin himself was unfamiliar with the festival (Yoritomi, 19987:151). In other words, *Jizô-bon* was not celebrated in Eastern Japan at that time.

Be that as it may; when the dancing comes to an end, the games for the children have run their course, the various $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues have been returned to their former locations, $Jiz\hat{o}$ -bon is concluded with the 'thousand lights offering' ($sent\hat{o}$ - $kuy\hat{o}$) in Adashino Nembutsu-ji temple. Once the flames of this ritual die out, the long period of Obon festivities in Western Japan has finally come to an end.

IV. Adashino Sentô Kuyô - The End of Jizô-Bon

5.4.0. The Graveyards of Adashino

In the north-western part of Kyoto in the early evening of August twenty-fourth, $Jiz\hat{o}$'s name day, the festival of $Jiz\hat{o}$ -bon is brought to a memorable close at the

Nembutsu-ji temple. The place is called Adashino, located on a slight elevation in the landscape in the middle of the yet another area of old burial grounds where corpses in the past were simply left on the ground to decompose in accordance with the practice of 'wind-burial' (fûsô). Today Adashino is known not only for its prominence in the *mizuko-kuyô* rituals. It is also famous because of its recurrent appearance in traditional poems and the frequent allusions made to it in literature whenever an image of the transient nature of life was evoked. Today when the name of the temple or its location is mentioned, most educated people, almost in spite of themselves, are reminded of one or more of the many descriptions and poetic references to Adashino which over the centuries have flown from the pen of the Japanese literati. In a famous verse full of haunting alliterations, Saigyô, poet and priest (1118-90 CE), described Adashino as a place of sojourn where one's permanent rest resembled the manner of white dew clinging to a blade of grass (Asano, 1989:94). The reclusive Kenkô, mentioned in the previous section about the beginning of Obon, succeeded in giving a lasting verbal form to those associations of death and quiet resignation that the area provokes among many Japanese. His famous lines describing these burial grounds are quoted almost to the point of obsession; "if man were never to fade away like the dews of Adashino, never to vanish like the smoke over Toribeyama, but lingered on forever in the world, how things would lose their power to move us. The most precious thing in life is its uncertainty" (Keene, 1968:221). Because of the general familiarity with Adashino and the strong cultural associations of the place, the sense of *lacrimae rerum* and the Buddhist worldview that nothing is permanent (shôja hitsu-metsu) resonate more deeply here than in many other places of burial. The original meaning of the word 'adashino' is somewhat analogous to 'osore' in 'Osore-zan' ('Mountain of Awe') as 'adashi' in classical Japanese refers to isolation and the ephemeral (Asano, 1989:94).

Over time several temples have been built in this area with the purpose of caring for the welfare of the dead and commemorating their spirits. The present buildings are said to have been established by Hônen (1133-1212), the founder of The Pure Land sect in Japan. The name of the temple is a reminder of the practice of chanting the formulaic praise to Amida for the repose of the dead *(nembutsu-ekô)*, which is so much part of the rituals of The Pure Land sect. Every year on the last

evening of Jizô-bon the Adashino Nembutsu-ji temple is hosting a moving ceremony in which a massive ritual of burning a 'thousand' candles (sentô-kuyô) is made in commemoration of the many people who over the centuries have been laid to rest in this area. Today their names have been forgotten and they no longer have living relations who on their behalf can perform the appropriate ancestral rites. Such 'orphaned' spirits (muen-botoke) are considered pitiable because of their involuntary exclusion from the rituals and ceremonies which ensure the continuation of the bonds between the living and the dead. Inoguchi (1976:267-271) defines *muen-botoke* (also called *muen-butsu*) as "the spirits of dead persons who have no descendants to perform memorial rites". He also mentions various muen-botoke who fall outside this category, such as casualties of war, people who suffer violent deaths, travellers who perish on their journey, and victims of drowning, demonstrating that it is a concept that does not lend itself to an easy and rigid definition. Yanagita (1988:93) even mentions some areas where family members who die without having married and without any offspring are also called *muen*botoke. However, today's muen-botoke will often be the victims of road accidents and Jizô statues are frequently erected near the place where fatal accidents have occurred.

Given the fact that *muen-botoke* includes such a varied group, the thoughtful person will always be prudent when dealing with the spirits of the dead as they belong to a realm that is largely unknown. The ceremonies for the pacification of hungry spirits (*gakie*) from the realm of the hungry demons will often include food offerings for *muen-botoke*, designed to give them comfort and strength. Various spells, the *Jizô bosatsu darani* for instance, are designed to convert food offerings into energy for the spirits (Sakamoto, 1988:204; Iwamoto, 1988:486). Yet *muen-botoke* are also feared because they may vent their anger on the members of the living community if they are frustrated or feel neglected.

5.4.1. Buddhological Background to the Layout of Stelae and Statues

In Western Japan the practice of erecting physical memorials to commemorate the spirits of the dead is well established. This activity has over the centuries produced a sizeable number of memorial stones and sacred grave markers (*sotoba*) that symbolically resemble the Indian stupa. During the last decades of the nineteenth

century an abbot of Adashino temple with the assistance of the local residents began to collect these grave stones from the vicinity which laid scattered both above and below ground and placed them inside the temple where their worn exteriors are a clear testimony to their century-long exposure to all kinds of weather. The excavations have resulted in an unusually large collection of old stone statues and grave stelae which never fails to strike worshippers and visitors alike with surprise (Yamamoto & Miyama, 1971:119).

There is in itself nothing unusual in the gathering of unearthed statues and grave markers in Japan. Numerous temples across the country have a mound within their compounds where these lapidary mementos of the past have been assembled. What is different in this temple is that the statues have not been put up at random but have been arranged according to a predetermined pattern that is said to have been inspired by a passage in the Lotus Sutra. In an attempt to recreate the ambient described in Chapter Eleven, "Beholding the Precious Stupa", where the Buddha preaches the true significance of the pagoda (shaka hôtô seppô), Fukuden and Nakayama, the two men behind the design, had the stelae and statues lined up in straight, tightly packed rectangular rows around a tall and slender stone pagoda with thirteen tiers some time during the middle of the Meiji period (1868-1912). The result is a symbolic image of the assembly which in quiet rapture listens to the sermon, each stone representing an attentive member of the audience. According to the guide published by the temple authorities, Fukuden and Nakayama assembled over eight thousand individual stone objects within a clearly demarcated area which covers about one square kilometre (Adashino Nembutsu Temple Pamphlet, n.d.). The only figure with clearly discernible features in this crowded display is a large seated image of Amida in stone, facing a tall, thirteen-tiered pagoda of the same material. This image is considerably larger than the 'listeners' around him but at the same time it is clearly subordinate to the sacred authority revealed in the presence of the pagoda, which towers above everyone else. The area is enclosed by a small stonewall upon which more rows of small pagodas (gorin-no-tô) in different sizes have been placed (see Appendix I).

The design has no doubt been motivated by a strong desire to convey a religious message. This becomes evident when one notices that the name of the walled area

is *Sai-no-kawara*, the mythological riverbank where infants gather after death. This appellation solves the riddle about the curious way in which the statue is dressed here. Normally Amida images are simple in appearance, wearing nothing but the austere sacerdotal robe of a monk. This absence of any form of jewellery and adornment, which symbolises non-attachment to material riches, is one of the fundamental iconographic differences between a bodhisattva and a buddha. However, that is not the case here. From a distance the Amida statue is indistinguishable from *Jizô*, who alone among bodhisattvas appears in the garb of a monk. During my last visit, red and white bibs had been fastened around Amida's neck in the same way as people 'dress' *Jizô* as part of the offerings they bring. Also, by referring to the place as *Sai-no-kawara*, an instant association with *Jizô* is created, since this is the realm where only he among all the Buddhist deities is active. Amida, in other words, in this location is treated as if he were *Jizô*.

There is nothing new in this. In his narrative about known and famous $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues in Kyoto, Takemura (1994:160) mentions several instances where people have designated a statue as a representation of *Jizô*, wilfully ignoring all iconographic evidence to the contrary. This observation is substantiated by Irie and Aoyama (1966:62), who make the valuable observation that the number of stone images and statues in Japan representing $Jiz\hat{o}$ is so large that the word for 'religious image in stone' (sekizô) almost has become synonymous with a Jizô figure, regardless of whom the actual image is supposed to depict. At Sai-no-kawara in this location, we encounter the same ambiguity. The statue was originally intended to represent Amida but is has been turned into a manifestation of *Jizô*. This duality also changes the character of the numerous stelae and stone images (sekizô) in the area, which were interpreted as images of an audience listening to a sermon. Because of the separate association with $Jiz\hat{o}$, they can also be viewed as figures representing the spirits of deceased infants. In accordance with the Sai-no-kawara mythology, Jizô will liberate and guide them to that plane of existence where Amida dwells and where they will attain enlightenment through his power and compassion. Buson's haiku "A dead child [re]born [is] a buddha" (shinde umaruru ko wa hotoke) is an apt illustration of this idea which here is given visual form on a large scale.

There is precedence for the dualistic interpretation I present here. The specific iconography displayed by some of the *Jizô* statues in Yamata-dera temple in Nara is said to be a reflection of *Jizô's* double-sided nature. The left part of these statues holding the wish-giving jewel represents *Jizô*. The right side is said to portray *Amida*. It shows a raised arm with the palm of the hand facing outward and the thumb and index fingers touching in the 'upper class middle life' mudra (*jôbon chûshô*), which refers to the attainment of a particular spiritual level in the Pure Land (Irie & Sagasaki, 1967:150; Irie & Aoyama, 1966:108).

The stone pagoda is located right in the centre of the Sai-no-kawara area where it stands like the distant Mt. Sumeru, the centre of the universe. The arrangement is so well conceived and satisfactory in its own right that it can be appreciated without any knowledge of the symbolism involved. But it is also a powerful reminder of the complexity of meaning inherent in religious imagery and how it is open to literal, allegorical and anagogical interpretations (Adams, 1971:116-9). On one level we are confronted with a clear representation of a tall stone stupa surrounded by numerous rows of tooth-like apparitions of former religious carvings that now have lost any external semblance to specific images (nurikôbe-jizô). On this plane we are dealing with a traditional grouping of *muen-botoke*. The temple's guidebook then adds an additional level of meaning by explaining that the arrangement refers to a specific chapter in the Lotus Sutra where an important dogma is being preached. At the same time the area is also being made to represent a third dimension by referring to it as Sai-no-kawara. Further, by including the Amida/Jizô figure, several buddha-fields become simultaneously contained within the same landscape. The stone have become symbolic rows of listeners of all ages, young and old, who in respectful silence are transfixed by a sermon which guarantees enlightenment to everyone, a promise which some teachers in the famous phrase "enlightenment of grass and trees" (sômoku jôbutsu) extend to non-sentient objects as well (Kretschmer, 2000:383).

The whole arrangement can be seen as a metaphor made in stone of a religious event that unfolds on a metaphysical plane. The smaller stone stupas (*gorin-no-tô*), where the ultimate is made symbolically manifest through representations of the five basic elements of the world (Saunders, 1960: 168), here displayed on the sur-

rounding walls, seem to say as much. The stupa and *Amida/Jizô*, visual representations of the cosmic Buddha, are the guide(s) who will extricate sentient beings from their unfavourable karma. Only the words that promise release from the cycle of birth and rebirth lack visual representation here but they are so much part of the familiar narrative that they are present even if they remain unspoken. The composition seems to demonstrate the global idea embodied in the *tathâgata-garbha* womb principle, according to which "every thing in the universe may be said to contain in itself the whole universe…that the ultimate reality and the wisdom of a buddha are present in each and every being" (Gómez, 1995:107-112).

5.4.2. The Ceremony of a Thousand Burning Candles

The 'ritual of a thousand burning candles' (sentô-kuyô) is an event which receives extensive coverage both in the local press as well as the many tourist publication available in Kyoto. The extraordinary atmosphere of the place and the solemn beauty of the memorial rites have over the years attracted ever increasing crowds of visitors and worshippers. In the early 1990s the temple authorities began to limit public admission to its precincts on the two night of the sentô-kuyô ceremony and today entry has to be applied for in advance, a process which involves a small handling fee.

In the past the ceremony was conducted every month on the twenty-fourth, $Jiz\hat{o}$'s feast and name day. It was interrupted by the war years and when peace finally returned to Japan it brought with it a sharp reduction in the number of memorial services per-formed in the temple. Now the ritual only takes place in the evening on the twenty-third and twenty-fourth of August (Asano, 1989; Adashino Nembutsu Temple Pamphlet, n.d.).

The ceremonies start around six o'clock in the evening and loud chanting of sacred texts continues uninterrupted for the duration of the evening in a small chapel dedicated to 'Longevity-Jizô' (Enmei-Jizô). Everyone present is given 'candles of peace' (wa-rôsoku) and asked to put them in front of either a stone image or stele, one candle for each image. After dark these candles are then lit, and the compound is transformed into a fairyland of flickering lights, changing shades and reflections. Or, to borrow a phrase from the temple pamphlet, "the

stone Buddhas appear to be floating on the waves of candle light...like flying butterflies in the darkness of the summer night". In a gesture of respect, many put their palms together in memory of those who once were flesh and blood like they themselves. There is something deeply moving about this spectacle of people who commemorate the memory of total strangers. On these occasions it is as if everyone has recalled the resonating lines of the old Buddhist prayer: "May I develop compassion, boundless as the sky so that all may rest in the clear light of their own awareness".

The charged atmosphere makes people speak in hushed voices as they quietly move about without the normal energy of Japanese crowds. Also absent on this occasion are the common folk practices normally seen elsewhere at this time of the year. During the many fire rituals at the end of Obon, for instance, many try to catch an image of the flames in a sake-cup, an action which is said to prevent palsy. Others are pleased just to bring home a live flame from the fires for good luck (Kyoto no. 517, 1994). But here everything appears subdued and the customary atmosphere of merry-making which one normally associates with Japanese festivals is conspicuous by its absence. Once the last flames of the candles die out, the extended period of Obon festivities in Kansai that bring the living and dead of all generations across the age divide together has finally come to an end.

CHAPTER 6

Jizô and 'This-Worldly Benefits' (Genze-Riyaku)

6.0.0. Jizô and Practical Benefits Here and Now

The descriptions in the previous chapter of $Jiz\hat{o}$ is intimate relationship with death and the role he plays in rituals connected with the afterlife may give the impression that all his activities are of an otherworldly nature. Nothing could be further from the truth. We read in Kanada and Yanagita's Buddhist Dictionary (1989:471) that ever since his introduction to Japan, Jizô has been worshipped because he also serves people in this life and not only in the various worlds beyond. In fact, one would be hard put to specify the role in which he is most venerated, be it is as a guide and protector in the afterlife, or as a benevolent guardian who dispenses health and good fortune in the present. The various Jizô related sutras, regardless of whether they are considered authentic or pseudo-legitimate, comment extensively and in unambiguous terms on the boons that await anyone who worships and pays homage to this bodhisattva. One is actually spoilt for choice when it comes to finding suitable passages which illustrate this claim. For instance, in the third paragraph of the 'Jizô Sutra of Longevity' (Enmei Jizô Bosatsu-kyô), to name but one, we read about the 'ten kinds of good fortune' (jusshu no shôri) that await those who make offerings to Jizô, recite his name or just gaze upon his image (see Appendix II). Not only will they obtain untold riches and bountiful harvests, they will also be loved by all, be protected against every conceivable disease or wild animals, and be spared unfavourable weather conditions. Apart from these extravagant promises of plain creature comforts, believers are furthermore assured that the accumulation of favourable karma which will lead to their ultimate enlightenment with its concomitant release from the cycle of death and rebirths.

Two terms are commonly used to describe the dual planes on which $Jiz\hat{o}$ is active. The first one, 'extrication from Hell' (jigoku-bakku), refers to his salvific efforts beyond this world. The second, 'present world benefits' (genze-riyaku), places him squarely in the phenomenal world of the present where he has the powers to distribute unlimited benefits to those who worship him.

Many commentators firmly believe that in order to understand Japanese religious behaviour it is necessary to recognise the "primacy of worldly benefits" (genze-riyaku)" in the Japanese religious tradition where there is an "emphasis on materiality and this-worldly welfare" (Rambelli, 2000:63). Reader and Tanabe (1998:23) in their extensive study of this-worldly benefits even go so far as to call the pervasiveness of this religious phenomenon "the common religion" of Japan where everyone can buy the sacred powers emanating from a deity or location and take them home. This commodified view of religious transactions is further stressed when they describe temples and Shintô shrines as "religious department stores" (ibid:206) where people go shopping for a temple or deity, which is believed to have an accessible store of divine power that can be turned to individual benefits. Needless to say, the selling of these practical benefits does much to ensure the economic stability of religious institutions but, as Reader and Tanabe point out (ibid:231), by asserting that a specific deity possesses extraordinary powers, the temples also make a claim for the validity and veracity of the religion they preach.

In this chapter I shall focus on this form of $Jiz\hat{o}$ worship of in three contemporary Japanese temples. They typify the specific patterns of observable religious behaviour displayed by believers in their interaction with $Jiz\hat{o}$, in particular when worldly favours are requested. Two of the temples are fairly well known locally although they do not appear on any major tourist itinerary. They do not possess any religious icons or architectural marvels that would make them important in a historical or artistic sense. Their attraction rests primarily on the belief that the magical and curative powers of $Jiz\hat{o}$ can be accessed more efficaciously here than in other places. They are also popular temples in the original sense of the word, sustained and supported by the continued patronage of ordinary worshippers rather than fee-paying sightseers. The abbreviation of the temples' official names as well as the deities enshrined within to short memorable formulae in the form of descriptive nicknames may be taken as an indication of the affection people feel for these places.

There are no hard and fast rules as to when believers can access the 'spiritual benefit or power' (riyaku) that these temples and many others of a similar nature hold. The gathering of worshippers may be determined in a calendrical fashion, as in the case of Togenuki-Jizô in Tokyo where large crowds gather to celebrate Jizô's monthly name day (ennichi). Conversely, people may also turn to the deity when they happen to pass by his shrine, as it is the case with Kitamuki-Jizô in Osaka's Umeda train station. Kuginuki-Jizô-san in Kyoto, on the other hand, is a temple with strong ties to the working class neighbourhood in which it is situated and where most of its worshippers live. Since it is also one of the forty-eight temples of the Jizô pilgrim circuit in Kyoto (rakuyô yonjûhachi gansho jizô meguri), the sixteenth to be exact, it also attracts worshippers who are not locals. Apart from their pilgrimage, these visitors are not connected with the temple and their other religious activities such as memorial rites and prayers for personal benefits are conducted elsewhere (Takemura, 1994:198).

Kuginuki-Jizô will be treated in greater detail than the other temples mentioned since this is where I conducted much of my fieldwork. This is also where I have stayed the longest and where I have spoken with the largest number of people.

I. Karyûzan Kômyô Henshô-in Sekizô-ji (Kuginuki-Jizô Temple).

6.1.0. The Location of Kuginuki-Jizô and the Origin of Its Name

Senbon no Kuginuki-san ('Nail Extractor on Senbon Road') is a Shingon temple located on the upper reaches of the busy Senbon-dôri street in Kyoto's Nishijin working class district, known since the fourteenth century for its production of high quality woven cloth (nishijin-ori). Its contemporary claim to local fame is based on the miraculous powers of the Jizô enshrined here. In the same location one may also find the grave of Fujiwara Teika, the famous thirteenth century poet. Wedged in between a double-storied family home and a large commercial building, a modest stone pillar with the legends Sekizô-ji ('Temple of Stone Statues') and Kuginuki-Jizô-son ('Nail Extracting Lord Jizô') points to the entrance of the temple, a narrow passageway that is easily overlooked. Sekizô-ji is the modern reading used by the

temple itself but traditionally the name would have been pronounced as Shakuzô-ji, an appellation which is still used in some publications even today. There is only one entrance to the temple so that there is no unrelated traffic passing through the place or people just making a shortcut over the grounds to a different destination. The persons in the precincts are there because they have some business with the temple.

Three flamboyantly written gilded kanji (*Karyûzan*) spell out the religious branch affiliation on a name tablet (*hengaku*) that hangs obliquely from a low wooden portal. Beyond this, a flagstone pathway bordered with red and white vertical banners, a few stone lanterns and some granite fence posts with names of donors leads to the temple proper. There are a few notices on the right in front of the traditional gate (*sanmon*), *which* symbolically divides the mundane world from that of the spiritual. During my last visit in 2003, a notice encouraged visitors to talk to the abbot about personal problems so that priest and believer together could appeal to the merciful counsel of *Jizô*. A reminder also drew attention to *Jizô's* monthly feast-day on which special services are held to ward off illnesses and to increase domestic harmony. A large, faded notice encouraged parishioners to contribute funds for the making of one thousand *Jizô* plaques of gold, which the temple had pledged to put up within its precincts. A drawing showed how these small *Jizô* plaques would be attached to the side panels of a revolving miniature pagoda. The name of the donor would be written at the back of the plaque and he or she would receive a replica of the deity for the home.

Financial support of this project would not only ensure the accumulation of individual merit, the notice said, it would also ensure that life in general would be full of joy. I was later told by the priest that the target had been met within eighteen months of the inception of the drive for contributions even though each $Jiz\hat{o}$ image was individually priced at \$10,000, approximately \$100 (AUD).

The left space of the traditional gate is occupied by the remnants of a prayer wheel fashioned in stone. Like the other prayer wheels I have seen in Japan, this one had no handle. Wakasugi (1972:91) speculates that the missing handle on these 'wheels of

the afterlife' (goshô-guruma) might indicate that the idea of transmigration has lost its hold on the imagination of the Japanese. Formerly, he says, people could be seen praying for a fortuitous rebirth for someone dear while they vigorously cranked the wheel around. Now, with the handles gone, the wheel rests motionlessly on its axis and no one attempts to turn it around any more. Chamberlain (1972:395-6) likens the posts of stone on which they are mounted to "pillar post-boxes" and describes the 'wheels of the afterlife' as "a symbol of human fate, with an entreaty to the compassionate god Jizô to let the misfortunes roll by, the pious desire be accomplished, the evil disposition amended as swiftly as possible".

Once inside the temple, one immediately notices a gigantic pair of metal pliers, about two metres tall, standing upright in an incense burner (see Appendix I). Tiny pinafores have been wrapped around the handles that are surrounded by cut flowers and smoking joss sticks. The pliers are placed in the middle of a footpath, which in a straight line leads to a pentagonal hall of wood ($Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$) where the main icon is enshrined. In this instance it is a *hibutsu*, i.e. a religious statue that normally is hidden from the public gaze. The upper parts of these out-sized pliers have an unusually shiny surface and it does not take long to work out the reason why: almost every person entering the place pauses briefly in this location in order to rub the upper metallic parts of the tools with his or her hands. Many make their first obeisance to the deity at this point. Others commence their worship here by placing a small offering next to the pliers in the form of a coin or some lit incense. It is noticeable that many elderly women are careful not to turn their backs on the deity. When leaving the temple precincts, they wait until they reach the pair of pliers before they turn around and head for the main road.

Apart from its interest as a conduit to the magical, the pair of pliers also solves the etymological riddle of the name by which the temple is popularly known: *Kuginukisan*, '[temple where one] pulls out nails'. *San* is a polite suffix, *kugi* means 'nail', and *nuki* is an 'extraction'. It is based on a play with homophonic words (*goroawase*), an innocuous linguistic conceit which one frequently encounters in Japan. The word for

nail, *kugi*, resembles *ku* (pain), which makes it possible to interpret the name as 'pain-removing (*kunuki*) temple'. This seems to imply that both mental and physical pains can be extracted in much the same way that nails are pulled out.

According to the temple's foundation tale *(engidan)*, Kuginuki-san, like so many other temples in Japan, is said to have been founded by the cultural giant Kôbô Daishi in the ninth century (Kuginuki Jizô Ryaku-engi, n.d.). He also is given credit for having dug the temple well, a fact of lesser importance today than in previous ages without the benefits of tap water. He is furthermore said to be the person who chiselled the main icon of the temple from a single block of stone that he reputedly had brought back with him from China. The magical properties of this statue, the legend says, were so powerful that it could alleviate all manners of pain and it soon became known in the city as *Kunuki-Jizô* ('Pain-Removing-Jizô'). Several centuries later another event, which is described below, occasioned a slight transformation of this name but without affecting the essential emphasis:

In the Edo period, a merchant by the name of Dôrin was afflicted by an excruciating pain in both hands. Having tried everything but to no avail, he finally turned to Kunuki-Jizô for help. After a period of extensive homage and prayers, Jizô revealed himself to Dôrin in a dream, the traditional vehicle used by the divine for communication with mortals in Japan (yumemakura). The bodhisattva explained that the pain was in retribution for a wicked act Dôrin had committed in a previous life. Intending to cause harm to another person, Jizô explained, Dôrin had hammered nails through the hands of a doll (hitogata), a magic substitute for the person he wanted to injure. When Dôrin woke up in the morning the pain in his hands was gone and he hurried to the temple to give thanks to Jizô. He explained to the priest in residence what had happened the previous night and they both entered the shrine where the Kunuki-Jizô statue was kept. To their great astonishment they found two vermilion nails, each measuring eight sun (1 sun = 3.3 cm) in front of the statue (Kyoto no Jûmin, 2002; Sekizô-ji pamphlet, n.d.). As a visible proof of Jizô's divine intervention the two men had the pair of nails mounted on a square wooden plaque together with a pair of pliers and put it up on a wall for all to see. "Pliers", the explanation goes, "are used to remove nails. The nails represent our sufferings and problems and the pliers stand for divine help" (http://www.city. kyoto. jp/koho/kyoto).

To this day, people show their gratitude by donating a similar wooden plaque (*orei no fuda*) with two twenty centimetre long nails and a pair of pliers to the temple when they have had their wishes granted. The plaque is then put up on one of the walls of the *Jizô-dô* where the newness of many of these 'nail-removing' votive tablets' (*kuginuki-no-ema*) testifies to a continued belief in the practice. When asking where the temple placed new plaques, it was explained that the oldest specimen would be taken down to make room for more recent donations. These symbolic *ex voto* which almost completely cover the external walls of the *Jizô-dô* lend a curious hardware shop association to the place but they in no way diminish the authenticity of these genuine displays of gratitude.

6.1.1. Interior Layout and Images of Kuginuki Jizô-san

Like so many other Japanese temples, there is no single focus of worship in this temple. Buildings and religious icons are distributed all over the area of the temple precincts and the primary image of worship usually shares the location with other Buddhist deities. To the left of the 'Jizô Hall' there is a 'hall of divine resemblance' (miei- $d\hat{o}$), the building which traditionally enshrines an image of the founder of a religious order. Being a Shingon temple, it here consists of a small building in honour of Kôbô Daishi. Somewhat to the back of the *miei-dô* one will find the abbot's quarters where the front part has been converted into a shop and a general place of contact between the public and the priest. Inside, chairs are provided for visitors and worshippers alike. The abbot and his assistants sit in Japanese style on elevated straw mats (tatami) behind a long counter on which there are several display trays with colourful amulets (*omamori*), candles, incense, and other customary religious paraphernalia. Elderly female helpers look after the sale of these items. The abbot, dressed in the traditional religious cassock of a Buddhist priest, attends to more individual queries but it is not below his dignity to participate in the sales as well. The amulets come in all sizes and price ranges. After a consecration ceremony (shône-ire; lit. 'to infuse nature'), they are inserted into snow white paper envelopes, meant to be placed in the homes of those who require special protection. An amulet may also be put into a small portable pouch of silk brocade with a tiny bell attached. According to the

temple's abbot, amulets are considered to retain their potency for the duration of one year after which they should be replaced.

During my visits and conversations with the priest, petitioners would normally disregard my presence on the premises when they came to seek his counsel about matters of personal concern, perhaps because of my non-Japanese appearance. I tried not to hear things that were not meant for my ears but on one occasion I involuntarily overheard a verbal exchange between the abbot and an elderly lady. Afterwards I was given to understand that this particular consultation was fairly typical of the requests made by worshippers. The lady in question was troubled by the deteriorating health of her husband, who was seventy-two years of age. He had of late been getting weaker and appeared to have lost all appetite. He had been examined by a medical doctor several times and was taking the prescribed medicine but there had been no visible improvement. For this reason, she said, she would like special prayer services (kitô) to be conducted on the husband's behalf. The priest wrote down her name, her age, and the nature of her husband's complaint on a specially designed piece of paper that was put into an envelope. Daily prayer services for one week would cost \(\frac{4}{2}\)000. After that there was a charge of \(\frac{\pma}{1000}\) for each additional week. The woman paid \(\frac{\pma}{5000}\) and left after an exchange of the customary greetings. The envelope, the priest said, would be presented to Jizô during the fixed daily rituals which were set aside for petitions and supplications.

On the right side of the $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$ the temple has a row with other Buddhist statues. There is a fierce looking $Fud\hat{o}-my\hat{o}-\hat{o}$ (Sanskrit: Acalanâtha vidyâ-râja), a powerful servant of the buddhas, several additional $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues as well as a delightful stone sculpture of an Eleven-Headed Kannon. The last image is fairly new and is obviously based on the flowing forms of a famous ninth century namesake from the Kôgen-ji temple on the banks of lake Biwa. Water buckets and ladles were provided for those who wanted to perform the aka ritual (Sanskrit: argha) by which water is poured over sacred images in remembrance of the dead.

Behind the main building there are several additional shrines, all of a modest size. One accommodates a large Amida triad in stone that lays claim to be one of the oldest in the country. But it is severely damaged and the darkness in which it stands makes a detailed examination difficult (Kyoto no Jûmin, 2002). Two octagonal pagodas in wood supported by a vertical centre column and painted in bright vermilion are also located here. They are about one metre across by approximately three metres tall. They can be rotated in the same manner as one spins the large upright prayer wheels in Tibetan temples. This is where one finds the earlier mentioned thousand images (sentai) of $Jiz\hat{o}$, five hundred on the sides of each pagoda. In an expression of respect and humility, many people put their hands together $(gassh\hat{o})$ in front of the pagodas but in my experience only a minority make any attempt to turn them. Right behind the pagodas, there is a bronze statue of a 'Rubbing Buddha' (nadebotoke) that is sheltered under a corrugated iron roof.

When the first impressions have settled and one begins to take in the physical surroundings, the temple strikes one as being a place full of life and movement. It is obviously a site for active worship. There are no entrance fees and, apart from the customary written tributes to *Jizô* and the names of the donors on the many red paper lanterns suspended from the eaves of the buildings, no inscriptions inform visitors about the correct names of the deities enshrined. This piece of information, never absent in temples on the tourist trail where people want to know the name of what they see, is apparently not considered important here. The emphasis seems to be on participation rather than passive gazing. During the sultry summer months the temple helpers provide cold drinking water for all, and in winter there is a large urn with green tea and a tray with cups. This service and the benches set up along the walls make one feel welcome in a homely way. This resting place also provides a valuable vantage point for observing the activities of the worshippers without being intrusive and a location where one can meet and talk to the locals.

When not in use, several small tricycles are neatly lined up in a corner close to the benches. They hint at playground activities and diversion, but during my last visit in

winter it was too cold for children to play outdoors. From previous visits during the summer months, however, I recall images of mothers and grandmothers looking after toddlers playing and pedalling around within the sheltered temple precincts safely removed from the traffic outside.

6.1.2. Observable Behaviour of Worship

Worshippers appear to come all day long in a small but steady stream. Occasionally their numbers increase considerably, especially when a bus with larger groups of elderly devotees arrive. They are usually identifiable as members of a devotional association for $Jiz\hat{o}$ ($jiz\hat{o}-k\hat{o}$), since everyone is equipped with identical armbands and led by guides carrying conspicuous flags. Prayers are usually not limited to one single deity. People walk around the place, paying their respects to several of the various deities enshrined. Some visitors will buy an amulet; others will light up bundles of incense or small candles that then are placed in small containers in front of the icons. However, many elderly worshippers come prepared for the occasion, bringing their own matches and votive articles. After having finished their round of prayers, they normally sit down for a rest on the benches, have some tea from the caddy provided by the temple staff and within half-an-hour they will be off again, presumably to another $Jiz\hat{o}$ temple.

In my experience, contrary to the assertion by some web guides to the temple and young people are mostly conspicuous by their absence (Yorozuya, 2001). During my frequent visits, I recall only one occasion when I saw a teenager on an obvious religious errand. It was a young student who after a short prayer in front of the *Jizô-dô* went away without engaging in the rubbing of knobs, pliers, *vâjra*, etc., which is so much part of the ritual observed by the older worshippers. Apart from this young man, the only other young person I saw during my visits in the winter of 2003 in a religious context was a girl of pre-school age accompanied by her mother. The latter was giving her daughter a quick lesson on how to comport oneself in front of the deity, how to put the palms of the hands together and how to bow. Taking the daughter by her neck, the mother made the child face in the direction of *Jizô* and then gently forced her head

down in a gesture of respect, in the same way as children in Japan are taught the act of bowing.

Another remarkable feature of the temple compound is the noticeable combination of socialisation and worship. From the way people talk to each other, it is obvious that many are close acquaintances. Two groups seem to dominate; one consists of elderly women and the other of mothers with offspring. Men are not completely absent but they are not well represented. Sitting on the same bench as the locals, I became a silent witness to many of the verbal exchanges. During my very first visit to Kuginukisan many years ago, I recall two elderly ladies complaining loudly to each other about the inconsiderate behaviour and lack of respect displayed by their respective daughters-in-law. But given the advanced age of these people, their conversations mostly revolve around health issues, how they happen to feel on that particular day, and what they have done about it. The deity propitiated is referred to interchangeably as either o-Jizô-san or just hotoke-san (Buddha). The lexical term for 'prayer', ogamu, was hardly ever used. Their religious pleas, that is both the act of worship and their going to the temple, are referred to as *mairu*, a verb that is used to describe the humble approach or movement of an inferior in relation to a superior. Their supplications to the divinities are referred to as 'requests' (tanomi), or 'religious entreaties' (kigan).

6.1.3. The Procedure for Jizô-dô Circumambulation

The activity within the precincts never seemed to come to a halt. Someone always seemed to be on the move, either walking from statue to statue or around the $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$ at a personally adjusted pace, relieving those who just a little while earlier had been circumambulating the same building. It was obvious that walking around the building in a predetermined manner made up a large part of the ritual in this place. People who just a little while ago had been moving around according to a fixed pattern, would later be found sitting on the benches, sipping tea while resting their legs and catching up with the latest gossip. At no time did one feel alone. The repeated tinkling of high-

pitched bells from the back of the main hall was a clear reminder of the presence of other worshippers in the temple, active but unseen.

The resident priest, Katô Hirokata, explained the procedure employed in Sekizô-ji for making special requests to Jizô: one walks or runs, as the case might be, around the Jizô-dô the same number of times as one's age, counting one's years in the Japanese fashion (kazoe-doshi). Elsewhere common practice is to do it in numbers of tens, he said, one hundred times being the ideal number of times, but allowance is made for ill health. This number is a clear reference to the 'one-hundred-times-stone' (hyakudo-ishi), a rectangular stone pillar in the shape of a traditional milestone. It can still be seen in many temples and is used as a point of demarcation for a fixed circuit within a temple where worshippers walk back and forth on a predetermined course as part of a vow or in order to do penance. Earhart (1982:13) calls this distance a "path of repentance". The physical effort of walking is made in order to lend credence to one's petition and increase the chances of it being heard. For greater efficacy it is best done when no one is aware of one's wishes and for this reason the circumambulation is frequently performed early in the morning or late at night (Japan - An Illustrated Encyclopaedia, 1993:577).

On the right side of the $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$, a lid-less wooden box with a large number of narrow bamboo sticks approximately ten centimetres long had been fastened to the outer wall. Individual family names were written on all the sticks but that seemed to have no bearing on the ritual itself. These bamboo sticks are picked up by worshippers who use them to keep track of the number of times a full circuit has been made. The circumambulation starts in a clockwise fashion once a worshipper has taken the number of sticks that is equivalent to his or her age. The round begins with a tap on the $v\hat{a}jra$ (goko) or the bronze finial on one of the vertical posts in front of the bay of the $Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o}$ where $Kuginuki-Jiz\hat{o}$ is enshrined. When the back of the building has been reached, people touch a small opening in the wall with one of the sticks they hold in their hand. Some will do it briskly and continue the course immediately afterwards; others will pause briefly in order to say a prayer. When the wooden stick container on

the wall is reached again, the worshipper will return one stick after which he or she will take out another one from the bundle held in the other hand. This circumferential movement, sometimes referred to "as the tracing out of a dynamic mandala", will continue until all sticks eventually have been replaced in the box.

Some will say additional prayers from the front end of the *Jizô-dô*. Here two platted ropes of coloured ribbons representing the five basic elements (*goshiki-no-ito*) are tied around the railing and passed through an elaborately carved, gilded hole in one of the crossbeams under the roof. On the other side of the hole, the two strands are gathered into one single rope that stretches across the interior of the building right up to the doors of the shrine (*zushi*) in which *Kuginuki-Jizô* is placed. The spectacle is vaguely reminiscent of the biblical "camel going through the eye of the needle". The statue, which is approximately two metres tall, has a red and white cape (*mawata*) draped over its head. In districts where people are involved in the production of silk, one often comes across *Jizô* statues around which the locals have spun a fine web of threads, the so-called *mawata*. It may be an offering whereby the deity symbolically is dressed up in the finest material available (Wakasugi, 1972:98) but I have not been able to get an unequivocal explanation. Reverend Katô, for instance, told me that he of course was aware of the existence of the *mawata* but he was so accustomed to seeing it that he had never speculated about its symbolism.

As mentioned earlier, *Kuginuki-Jizô* is a 'hidden buddha' (hibutsu) and Jizô-bon is the only time of the year when it is possible to see the deity. At all other times the doors to his shrine remain closed and one has to imagine the sacred presence. Because of this inaccessibility, votive offerings cannot be put on the statue or placed next to it. Instead votive 'mini-aprons' in the hundreds are tied around the banister in front of the bay. They are not identical but fairly uniform in appearance and most of their inscriptions would fall into one or more of the following categories:

- 1) the word 'hônô' (dedication);
- 2) $h\hat{o}n\hat{o}$ plus name and age of the person to benefit from the petition;

- 3) same as above plus name of donor;
- 4) same as above with the addition of special wishes: *genki ni naru yô ni* (may I get well); *byôki ga hayaku naoru yô ni* (may I be cured of my illness soon), etc.;
- 5) the text of the 'Heart Sutra' (*Hannya Shingyô*) copied by hand.

There were other examples of the traditional offerings which people customarily used when petitioning the gods, in particular when illness is concerned. Here, too, sincerity is expressed in terms of the labour and time devoted to the making of the offering. Multi-coloured wreaths of folded paper cranes are gathered in bundles, each one presumably containing the traditional number of a thousand cranes (*senbazuru*), hang in great clusters inside the hall on specially provided hooks as tokens of someone's earnest endeavour and entreaties. Sincerity is the operative word in exchanges with the divine as it is believed that a light-hearted attitude or carelessness in these matters will provoke an unfavourable reaction from the gods (Kalland, 1991).

6.1.4. O-sasuri: The Rubbing of Icons

I have already mentioned the rubbing of the pincers that so many people engage in when they enter Sekizô-ji. This sets the tone for many similar activities in that temple. Nowhere else have I seen people applying themselves so vigorously to a ritual act for the transmission of power. Worshippers will rub the surface of a sacred object and then immediately afterwards touch parts of themselves in order to bring about a beneficial effect.

On the left next to the open bay of the main hall, for instance, there is a little niche with a wooden statue of a man sitting cross-legged on a cushion in a Chinese style chair. He has an array of dedicatory bibs around his neck, and on his head he wears a shiny silken cap of the type worn by Confucian scholars in the feudal past. His features are those of an old man but with a visible sacerdotal mien. Several Buddhist rosaries have been put around his right hand, which is raised in the 'do not fear' mudra (semui-in; Sanskrit: abhisheka mûdra). Yet the statue does not display any of

the common iconographic characteristics of a bodhisattva. This is how *Pindola* or Binzuru, as he is called in Japanese, is traditionally depicted, the arhat who for centuries has been credited with special healing powers. Here, as in so many other places, his face is almost worn away by the constant fondling by believers. A round object, closely resembling a rolling pin wrapped in expensive embroidered silk, and placed on a cushion in front of him was also constantly being handled by the worshippers in the rubbing ritual. Picking it up, people would rub it over one or several parts of their bodies before returning it to its former position on the cushion. Frequently the ringing of a Japanese-style bell was included in these activities. The rubbing practice is so widespread that there is even a common appellation for these figures in Japanese. They are called 'rubbing buddhas' (nadebotoke), a tangible reference to the external forms of the ritual. Whereas physical touching, or rubbing (naderu), is the most common manner of interaction with the statues, other methods are used as well. Spitballs, for instance, used as projectiles, are occasionally employed, usually in instances where the statues are not within easy reach as often is the case with the two large figures (Niô) guarding temple entrances. The paper balls are thrown at a religious statue and if they stick to the surface of the deity one may partake of the boons for which the statue is known.

Yet it is at the back of the temple where most of the touching and "rubbing" ritual takes place. Here the *nadebotoke* in question is a *Jizô* statue cast in bronze and equipped with a halo, which incidentally reveals that we are in a *Shingon* temple. Seated on a lotus throne with the right leg crossed and the left one hanging down in the 'half-lotus posture' (*hanka-za*), the figure has its right palm extended in the mudra of granting a wish (*yogan-in*) while the left is holding, a wish-giving jewel. If one includes the octagonal plinth of stone on which the statue is placed, the total height is approximately 1.7 metres (see Appendix I).

During one of my first visits to the temple in the 1990s, an elderly lady took upon herself to instruct me in the rituals concerning this statue. In the charming Kyoto dialect she told me that first of all no one called the statue a *nadebotoke* in Sekizô-ji

temple. It was referred to as 'Rubbing Jizô' (O-sasuri-Jizô), connecting it directly with Jizô rather than to a generic buddha, as in nadebotoke, which does not refer to any buddha or bodhisattva in particular. In essence, of course, they are identical but it is useful to get the terminology right. She explained that it was paramount to approach O-sasuri-Jizô according to the normal rules of polite social intercourse (reigi tadashiku) if one intended to make a petition to him. One should bow, introduce oneself, tell one's age and then state the nature of one's physical ailment, a procedure which was reminiscent to that of the priest when he asked a petitioner for similar information before conducting a special service of prayer and healing (kitô). This petition should be concluded with a polite form of the verbs 'to request' (tanomu), or 'to make a wish' (negau). Once this was done, one should rub that part of O-sasuri-Jizô which corresponds to the painful body parts on oneself after which one should touch one's own body in the same spot. It was guaranteed to work, she said, and she was living proof. She told me that over the years she had been cured of various ailments and maladies as a result of this practice. Since most people suffered from similar complaints, she continued, the statue was particularly worn in those places that most frequently cause pain such as the back, hips, knees, shoulders, elbows, and so on. The boons (gorivaku) of Jizô were not limited to the individual who made a supplication, she further explained. They could also be extended to one's loved ones. She prayed daily on behalf of her daughter and her grandchild and as a result they were both well.

In this manner the day goes by and the bustle of the temple only comes to a halt when the gates are closed to the public around 5:30 p.m. after a twelve-hour-day, seven days a week. For the priest it is now time to get ready for the daily session of formal prayers and the presentation to *Kuginuki-Jizô* of those supplications with which his aging worshippers have entrusted him in the hope that they may continue to experience relief or at least some alleviation from physical and mental pain.

II. Togenuki-Jizô of Sugamo

6.2.0. Location and Attractions of Togenuki-Jizô in Sugamo

In Tokyo another *Jizô* image with a similar name, *Togenuki-Jizô*, attracts the same kind of religious attention as we have just seen but in different circumstances and with a slight change of emphasis. The daily number of worshippers and visitors to the temple, which enshrines him, is said to run into the thousands. However, on those three days of the month that fall on a date which includes the digit 'four' (the fourth, the fourteenth and the twenty-fourth) the monthly name-day (*ennichi*) of *Jizô*, there is a vast increase in the number of worshippers and the crowds frequently swell to more than 150,000 people. There are several reasons for this. Kôgan-ji, the temple where *Togenuki-Jizô* is enshrined, has a fortuitous location. Its proximity to various means of public trans-port makes access easy, which is a considerable advantage since the majority of the devotees attracted to this temple are elderly women, some even of an advanced age.

I have several times commented on the gender as well as the age of active Jizô worshippers among whom elderly women seem to play a numerically dominant role. In the case of Togenuki-Jizô, however, the number of older females is so overwhelming that it has even influenced the nature of the business conducted in the neighbourhood of Kôgan-ji. Many shops cater exclusively for the custom of an elderly female clientele both in terms of food and clothing. Snacks, household articles and apparel that went out of fashion long ago can still be found here. Visible efforts are made to make the elderly feel welcome, not only in terms of the items for sale but also in the measured pace in which business is conducted here. The decor of the shops is adjusted to the elderly and the environment still retains strong elements of the past. Here "customers are addressed as *Okaasan* [mother] as a term of respect" (Kondo, 2001: 13). There is no hint at anything that is remotely reminiscent of modern shopping malls and many shopkeepers still advertise their wares in loud voices as they used to do in the past. The mood here is so noticeably different and old-fashioned that the street leading up to Kôgan-ji temple (Jizô-dôri), is often called "grannies' Harajuku" (obâchantachi no Harajuku), a joking reference to the trendy Harajuku shopping area

in Tokyo which normally swarms with over-dressed, fashion conscious teenagers who show off the stylish purchases they have made there. (Kondo, 2001:12; http://www.geocities.co.jp/ 2003).

Kôgan-ji's main attraction rests on the well-established reputation of the $Jiz\hat{o}$ icon it enshrines. The widespread belief in its curative powers dates back several centuries (Watari, 1989:39). An added attraction is the presence of a Kannon statue which worshippers can wash in a ritual resembling that of the *nadebotoke*. The large *Enmei-Jizô* of bronze in the nearby *Shinshô-ji* temple, the last surviving specimen of what used to be a famous group of six $Jiz\hat{o}$ statues ($Edo\ Roku-Jiz\hat{o}$), is also worth mentioning. But it is safe to say that tourists are in the minority. The temple as such does not boast a beautiful physical setting nor do its buildings appeal to aesthetically discerning eyes. Nevertheless, year after year Kôgan-ji manages to attract huge crowds of worshippers by virtue of its fame as a major centre of spiritual power ($reij\hat{o}$) where supplicants can immerse themselves in a "religious culture which emphasizes the importance of the experiential dimension, of 'doing it' and seeing' (Reader, 1991: 170). It is worth noting that the present site dates back only to the last decade of the nineteenth century, implying that a $reij\hat{o}$ is moveable since the temple was able to transfer its spiritual powers to its new location.

6.2.1. The Origin of Togenuki

Recalling 'nail extraction', the gloss for *kuginuki*, it is tempting to interpret the epithet *togenuki* in a similar manner. Since *toge* is 'thorn' in Japanese, *togenuki* should then mean 'thorn removal/extraction', and in fact this is how most contemporary commentaries interpret it. Yet this translation is based in folk etymology and false associations. According to Watari (1989:39), the word originally derives from the Buddhist idea of 'offence' or 'transgression' (*toga*). Transgressions, at least in the popular view of the laws of causation, produce bad karma that frequently manifests itself in the form of illness (Kalland, 1991). Prayers to *Togenuki-Jizô*, it was believed, would eradicate bad karma and protect people against retribution from bad actions. Today a person's health is restored provided *Togenuki-Jizô* is approached in the manner

prescribed by custom. In a curious semantic twist the folk interpretation thus merges with that of the scholar in that both versions talk about removal and extraction. Whereas the literally 'correct' gloss focuses on the fundamental causes, the popular interpretation highlights the effect and the surface phenomenon. Yet in the end the folk interpretation has been triumphant since the meaning of the statue does not reside in its etymology but in what people believe it can do for them.

The origin of *Togenuki-Jizô* is told in the form of a foundation tale (*engidan*) which started to circulate in the early eighteenth century Edo. We are actually dealing with two separate but related miracle stories, both described in detail in the pamphlet distributed by the temple. They explain the genesis of the printed paper image of Jizô (misugata or omikage; lit. 'august appearance') which is on sale here, the appellation of the statue and the rituals connected with it. The plot of one of these stories is analogous to the foundation story of Kuginuki-Jizô: someone was afflicted by a grave disease and cure seemed impossible. As a last remedy Jizô was asked to help. Following a long period of devotion, during which the devotee demonstrated commitment and sincerity, he finally saw the bodhisattva in a dream where the requisite course for future recovery was explained. Instructions in these contexts usually involve the performance of a specific action, the donation of a certain item, or the appearance of a physical object such as a ladder, a spoon, a pair of nails, etc., which then at a later date becomes the identifying feature of the deity in question. In the case of *Togenuki-Jizô*, the panacea turned out to be small slips of paper about 1.5 centimetres long with an image of $Jiz\hat{o}$. In the dream $Jiz\hat{o}$ had originally requested that a statue be carved of him. However when the devotee responded that he was not a carver, Jizô asked for his image to be printed instead. The tale also tells us that $Jiz\hat{o}$ left behind a carved model of himself from which the prints were made (Kôgan-ji pamphlet, n.d.).

The paper slips may be applied to those sections of the body afflicted by pain. For greater efficacy, they may also be swallowed as part of the cure. These images were formerly of the *Nagashi-Jizô* variety where printed images were set afloat on currents of water or running streams. They are also described as such in the first foundation

tale mentioned above. Today, however, the ingestion of a paper slip with the 'august figure' (misugata) of a small printed image of $Jiz\hat{o}$ is the recommended practice. This procedure is described in the second engidan, which tells us about a maid who accidentally swallowed a needle. When she ate a piece of paper with the image of $Jiz\hat{o}$ on it, she was able to regurgitate the needle that had lodged itself in the paper on which the misugata was printed. Those who object to swallowing the paper on hygienic grounds are free to paste it on the body instead (Kôgan-ji pamphlet, n.d.; Yomiuri Shimbun 27.5.2003).

The temple also trades in those items that are part and parcel of the world of popular religion in Japan. Wooden boards (ofuda) with inscriptions designed to be put up in the home and amulets (omamori) of all sizes are for sale to protect people against the multitudes of danger and unpleasant occurrences that generally befall mankind: traffic accidents, disharmony at home, unemployment, unfulfilled dreams and expectations, etc. Surveys show that many of the elderly worshippers pray for protection against problems that are specifically associated with old age such as incontinence and senility. In the case of the former, help is offered in the form of priestly blessings of the worshippers' undergarments. Another frequently heard wish from senior citizens is that they do not want to become a burden to their children. They would prefer to pass on before this happens. The number of so-called 'Sudden Death Temples' (pokkuri-dera), which concentrate on matters of concern to senior citizens, exemplifies this attitude, "the idea being that people praying may be granted a sudden (and painless) death" (Wöss, 1933:192). Given the advanced age of many of Kôgan-ji's worshippers, it is not surprising that these considerations, too, form part of the wish list that many temple worshippers bring with them (Davis, 1988:91-2)

6.2.2. Arai-Kannon and Related Rituals

Inside the temple precincts a small, outdoor *Kannon* statue of stone, placed in a water basin, is the centre of intense activity. Its name, *Arai-Kannon* ('Washing/Cleansing Kannon'), says all one needs to know about its function. On Kôgan-ji's internet homepage one reads that many people confuse this statue with *Togenuki-Jizô*, the

temple's main icon (Kôgan-ji, 2000). The same mix-up is also attested to by Watari (1989:38). It is a good illustration of a phenomenon where devotees identify a religious image in stone (*sekibutsu*) as *Jizô* irrespective of all evidence to the contrary. Tano (1992:410), for instances, writes about several instances where people wilfully refer to religious statues as *Jizô* even if their iconography tells a different story.

There always seems to be someone washing the statue, but on festival days long queues of worshippers are patiently waiting their turn to perform the 'washing ritual' which seems to be one of this temple's greatest draw cards. When a devotee eventually arrives at the statue, water is poured over the image with one of the many ladles available at the site. After this the worshipper will start to wipe Arai-Kannon with a small white towel while simultaneously directing prayers to the statue. After wiping the water off the image, the same towel is applied in a wiping motion to those parts of the devotee's body which require divine attention. As it so often is the case within the flexible world of popular religion, Arai-Kannon is not exclusively concerned with matters of health. The deity can also be approached in regards to other issues in which case the supplicant will only wipe the body of the statue, not herself. Formerly the wiping of the statue - scrubbing is perhaps more appropriate - was done with a hard Japanese style brush (tawashi) which over the years wore away all discernible features of the statue because of the heavy abrasions. For this reason, the Kannon statue was recently replaced with a new one and the hard brush has been substituted with a piece of cloth which is now the preferred utensil used for wiping the deity's body (Yomiuri Shimbun, 27.05.2003). Towels can be bought from the same shops on Jizô-dôri Avenue which formerly sold the brushes. As is customary in this and analogous rituals, one washes that part on the statue which corresponds with whichever part of one's own body in need of sacred examination and cure.

One familiar with the *nadebotoke* procedure elsewhere will see many points of similarity. However, the custom of washing and wiping a statue is not unknown in Kyoto either. There are at least three such locations in the city but in contrast to their Tokyo counterpart, the statues in question are all genuine *Jizô* images.

Arai-Jizô ('Washing Jizô') in Myôen-ji temple in Higashiyama ward, for example, is a small statue with the rare mudra where both hands are clasped in prayer (gasshô-in). This statue is also doused with sacred water (akasui) as part of the ritual. After the water is poured over the statue, the supplicant will brush those parts of the statue for which the supplicant requires Jizô's special attention. The benefits of the ritual are not limited to the person performing the rite. It can also be done on behalf of others. Being located close to the centre of Kyoto's nightlife, the statue, it is said, is also popular with female entertainers and prostitutes. They have been known to wash the genital area of the statue for a variety of sex-related issues, ranging from requests to be protected from venereal diseases to prayers for the restoration of clients' lost virility (Takemura, 1993:20-1).

In the same place Takemura thinks that a connection can be made between this image and one of the four "eternally evolved bodhisattvas", 'Pure Conduct Bodhisattva' $(J\partial k\hat{o})$, but I am not wholly convinced. The passages on which he bases this interpretation can be found in Chapter XV in the Lotus Sutra where the four bodhisattvas ask the Buddha whether he is suffering from any ailments.

6.2.3. Special Sutra Reading

Kôgan-ji is also famous for a ritual which has no parallel elsewhere, the phenomenon of the so-called 'homa wind' (*goma-kaze*). Three times a year during the major feast days of the temple on *Jizô's ennichi*, large crowds come to participate in the custom. It seems to have originated spontaneously in this location, making it, as Watari (1989: 40) says, an expression of folk religion in its purest form. On these days worshippers pack the main hall of the temple in order to witness the *tendoku* reading of the six hundred volumes of the *Hannya-kyô* (Prajñapâramitâ sutra) and what is rarer still, the chanting of the major *Jizô* sutras by the abbot and twenty other priests (Kôgan-ji, 2000). The *tendoku* reading is an old technique by which the 'reading' is performed by throwing open a sutra volume in the air in the same manner as one opens the bellows of an accordion or a large fan, after which a few lines from the text are read

before the priest proceeds to another volume. The way a traditional sutra text is folded makes it possible to open the books like this. It is believed that the air produced by this action, the 'homa wind', has healing properties and whoever manages to feel it on the body will remain free from diseases during the coming year. During the tendoku reading, all sorts of wind-inducing objects like fans, handkerchiefs and newspapers are waved about by the worshippers who in this fashion try to attract some of the 'homa wind' to themselves. Later, when the priests start to draw magic signs in the air with their hands, the spectators will try to touch the priestly robes in order to obtain something of the sacred energy that they believe is generated as a result of such mudras. The whole spectacle is in fact rather chaotic and not without droll moments. Several priests are moving rapidly about waving their hands in the air in the dynamic manner that audiences recognise from *ninja* movies. Eager worshippers who very frequently have waited many hours for the rite to begin surround these priests. Once the climactic moment is reached, swarms of elderly women will dart forward from their kneeling positions in order to touch the priestly stoles while other priests will be trying to control the crowds, chasing them away from their colleagues "like rock fans being shooed back by bouncers" (Kondo, 2001:10). After this hypercharged atmosphere and excitement, it is no wonder that the crowds find release in a little shopping and the eating of old-fashioned delicacies. And for those who missed out on the puffs and gusts of the 'sacred wind' during the ritual of simulated reading (tendoku), the whole ritual is repeated once more in the afternoon.

III. Hankyû Sambangai Kitamuki-Jizô

6.3.0. Kitamuki-Jizô of the Railway Station

Both Sekizô-ji and Kôgan-ji have resident priests to whom the public can turn for advice and general counselling while visiting the temples. The latter is especially known for its social work and the large number of professional volunteer who on a regular basis donate their services to the public. The shrine of *Kitamuki-Jizô*, ('North-Facing-Jizô'), which is the subject of this section, is somewhat different. A notice says that a caretaker will be present for a brief period at certain times of the day to dispense amulets, but I have never actually seen him or her. This lack of permanent

attendance may have something to do with the modest size of the temple for which the appellation 'road-side shrine' is more appropriate. The place is known officially as *Hankyû Sambangai Kitamuki-Jizô*, *Kitamuki Jizô* for short. Somewhat confusingly, it is also called 'One-Wish-Jizô' (*Ichigan-Jizô*) on some occasions, implying that the deity will grant petitioners one wish.

However, being unattended does not mean that the place runs itself. A group called 'Religious Service Association for Lord Kitamuki Jizô of Hankyû Sambangai' (Hankyû Sambangai Kitamuki-Jizô-son Hôsan-kai) looks after the practical side of maintaining the site. Local business interests and the owners of the Hankyû Railways, whose director is also the honorary chairman of the association, support it. It further provides the various paraphernalia required for daily worship such as matches, incense and candles on a day-to-day basis. The association also invites priests on Jizô's name days, during Jizô-bon, and on other calendrical occasions associated with the deity, to ensure that prayers are being said at the appropriate times. Once a year it also makes the arrangements for a large-scale ritual bonfire service (goma) with over a dozen specially invited priests in attendance. This ceremony entails the burning of considerable quantities of grain and wood.

The place was the subject of research in the early 1990s by one of Japan's leading religious scholars, Murakami Kôkyô, whose findings form the basis of most of the information contained in the following. I include this place of worship here since it differs in some significant aspects from the temples we have seen so far: it has no foundation tale to authenticate its historical provenance; it is located within a train terminal, one of the new centres of post-war urban development; and it has no resident priest but, as mentioned earlier, is run by an association.

Apart from its primary function as a centre for transport by rail, the modern Japanese train terminal is characterised by the existence of mall complexes, both below and above ground, with a wide range of opportunities for shopping and entertainment (Sano & Hashizume, 2004). In some ways the terminals have replaced traditional

community centres by "adapting themselves to forms more appropriate to the diverse circum-stances of 'irreligious' urban life" (Murakami, 1994). A shrine located here achieves a far higher visibility than the average community shrine because of the large crowds that daily pass through the terminal. Yet this modern version of the traditional roadside shrine resembles its counterparts in more ways than one. In *Hankyû Sambangai* shopping complex, too, the average passer-by only notices the physical exterior of the shrine's edifice and the name of its icon, but he or she remains ignorant of the support structure that ensures the continued existence of the site as a place of worship.

The epithet *kitamuki* 'turning [or facing] north' is not unusual for a *Jizô* statue. There are in fact many other examples in the country (Motoyama & Katsurakawa, 1988). Not surprisingly, the name refers to the (unlucky) northern direction which the statue faces. In this particular instance, it alludes to the original position of the statue inside its first known shrine where it was placed after its discovery in a field in the late nineteenth century. Real estate development and the post-war expansion of the railway links that converge in this area have erased all traces of the rice field where *Kitamuki-Jizô* once stood. He is no longer overlooking farmers tilling the soil. Instead, from his present shrine, where he arrived in 1968, he faces the activities of city dwellers who live in an urban environment of concrete and steel.

6.3.1. Location and Appearance of Kitamuki-Jizô's Shrine

The exact location of the shrine is next to the huge Kinokuniya bookshop on the Eastern end of 'Jizô side street' (*Jizô-yoko-chô*). One could say that the precinct is nothing more than the modest corner area at the end of a corridor-like passageway which takes a sharp left turn in the form of a dog's hind-leg so that pedestrians will either be walking towards the shrine looking directly at it or have their backs turned against it. A wooden partition on the left, which goes all the way from the floor to the ceiling, has the effect of turning the corner into a bay with walls on three sides. The space occupied does not appear to be more than approximately eight - nine metres wide, four metres deep, and with a ceiling about four metres high (see Appendix I).

Even from a distance, the area is readily identified as a Buddhist place of worship. In the front, two rows of differently coloured paper lanterns below the ceiling provide a horizontal facade for the shrine area. One consists of eight large lanterns in white, decorated with two written characters (kentô) that indicate their votive nature. Their sides are adorned with large red swastikas (manji), emblems of good luck and Buddhist virtue in general (Ono, 1986:239). A rectangular wooden tablet (hengaku) resting in the traditional diagonal fashion in the middle of a horizontal beam bears the legend 'Lord Kitamuki Jizô' (Kitamuki Jizô-son), the name of the enshrined deity. This line of lanterns and the hengaku provide a clear demarcation between the shrine area and the public passageway. Other rows of small crimson paper lanterns below the hengaku and along the left and right walls lend a friendly atmosphere to the place.

The shrine proper is a freestanding black, two-tiered wooden structure of a modest size. It has a peeked roof in the style of a common Japanese Buddhist roadside shrine but at the same time it also resembles an elaborate household altar. It has been placed on top of a solid base of stone, approximately one metre high, which stands in the middle of the corner area. With the addition of the base the shrine is about three metres tall and one and a half metres wide. The upper part, which is slightly more elongated than the lower section, is equipped with two doors that are opened wide. A purple curtain, suspended from the eaves of the shrine, is pulled up in the middle with a golden cord. There is a swastika (manji) on the right side and on the left of the curtain in the centre of which two characters spell out the words 'votive offering' $(h\hat{o}n\hat{o})$. Connected to a gong, a tri-coloured rope with a beautiful tassel is suspended in front of the shrine as an open invitation to those who want to announce their presence to the bodhisattva with a little noise.

Inside the shrine beyond the open doors, a richly decorated piece of golden and red brocade completely covers an indiscernible object, which undoubtedly is the deity, *Kitamuki-Jizô*. In front of the shrine there are two large receptacles for incense, a round and a square one. These, too, are embossed with the Buddhist *manji*. On either

side of the wooden shrine there is a tiered glass case with holders for votive candles. There are also two large stands with yet another pair of bulky paper lanterns. A table on the left with votive candles and incense stick together with a box for donations (*saisenbako*), and a 'one hundred times stone' (*hyakudo-ishi*) slightly off centre on the right complete the physical exterior of the shrine.

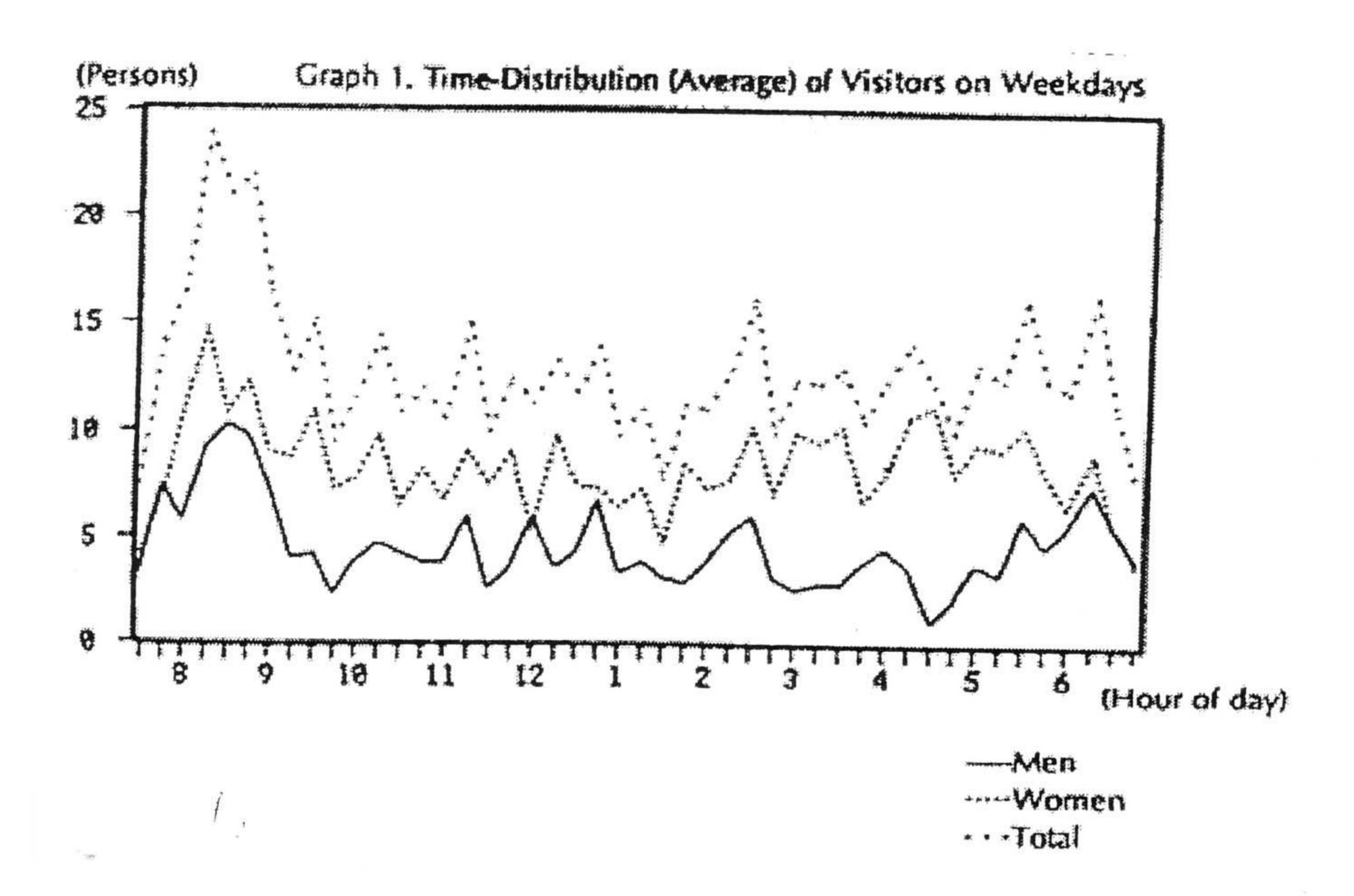
There are several neatly engraved notices with instructions about the procedure for worship, telling people what to do and what to avoid. For instance, worshippers are asked not to leave perishable flowers behind but to take them back again once the act of devotion is over. The ritualistic splashing of water on the premises is discouraged since it "makes the ground wet and causes the floor to go bad". The public is also requested not to bring its own candles and incense since these items are provided free of charge. During my visits, worshippers seemed to abide by these injunctions and the place was unusually clean and free of rubbish at all times. A sign mounted on the front side of the shrine explains how the magic formula (mantra) specific to Jizô is to be chanted. Each syllable is written out separately in clear hiragana so as to make the chanting easier. According to these instructions, the correct way is to repeat the syllables 'on ka ka ka bi samma ei sôwa ka' either three, five or seven times.

6.3.2. Survey at Kitamuki-Jizô of Worshipper Behaviour

Murakami (1994) has postulated that "rites founded on the communal solidarity of residents of a region have, as the result of urbanization and a loss of that communalism, been transformed into more individualistic supplications". In order to test this hypothesis, he conducted a series of surveys in 1990 and 1992 at the shrine where he investigated the rituals performed by individual worshippers, their gender, the various age groups and their presumed occupation. These surveys were divided into two groups: Graph (1) worship during the week on normal working days and Graph (2) worship during the weekend and on holidays. The two graphs reproduced below show the results of Murakami's survey.

My object was to ascertain whether there had been any changes over the last ten years to the original findings in terms of *Kitamuki-Jizô's* popularity with the public and whether the general distribution of Murakami's statistical material, which dealt with gender, manner of worship, etc., was still valid. Whereas the initial survey took place over six consecutive days, the time at my disposal was very limited. For this reason I opted for a random survey method conducted with observations spread over one weekday and one Sunday but with the same number of hours spent at the site as in the original survey. For the sake of clarity, I shall call the original investigation survey A, and the work I did, I shall refer to as survey B.

(1) Weekday Visitors to Kitamuki-Jizô Shrine (Murakami, 1992)



My investigation eventually confirmed the results of Murakami's original findings and the overall results required only a few readjustments. One factor missing in the 1990 survey was the presence of beggars and destitutes. The initial research took place during the heyday of Japan's so-called 'bubble-economy', a period when unemployment, poverty and material want were not part of the social vocabulary. The

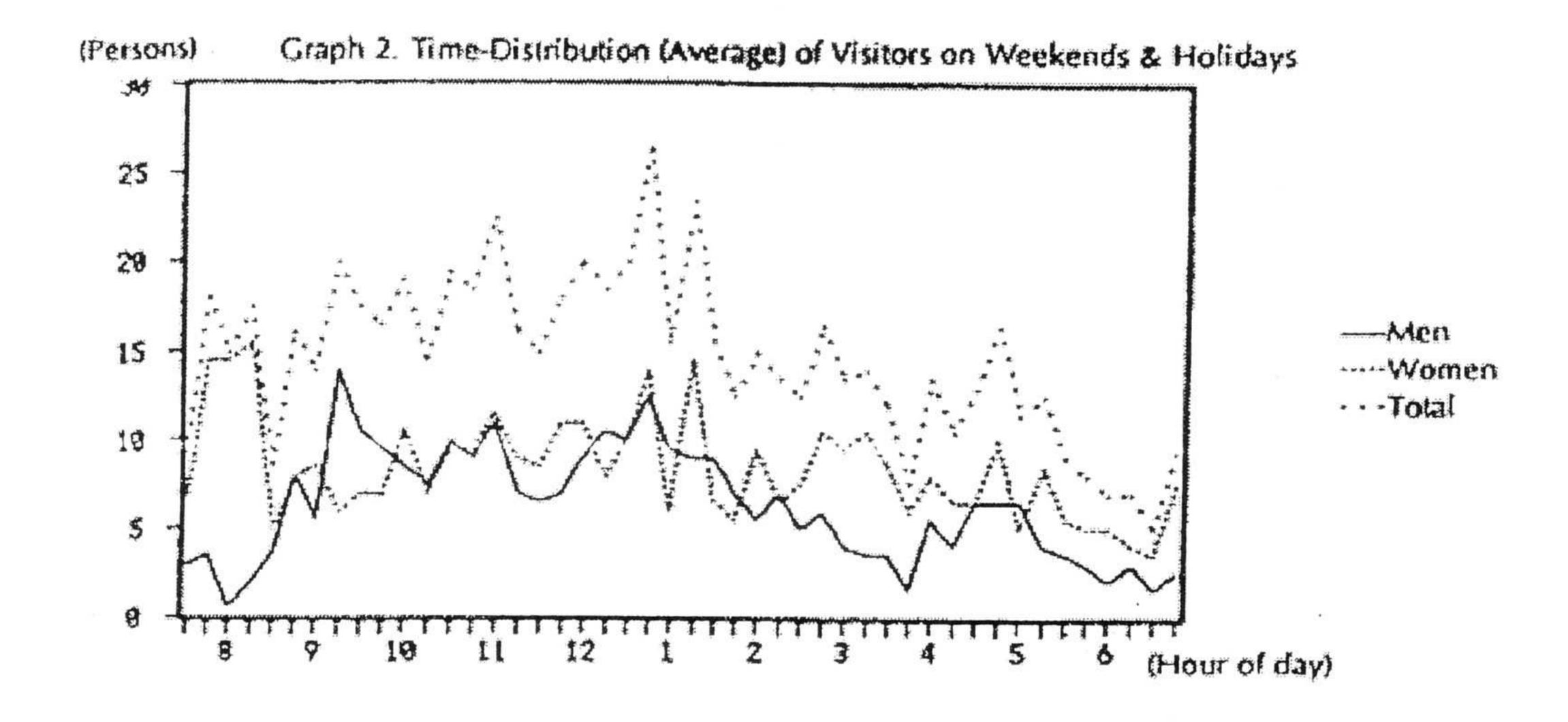
past decade, however, has brought large changes to the Japanese work force and the country's economy. The people visiting *Kitamuki-Jizô* today do not consist exclusively of commuters, shoppers and members of the general public as before. Hard times are very much evident. Indigent figures clad in rags patrol the area at regular intervals, scrutinising the ground around the offertory box for lost coins. The contents of dustbins and wastebaskets nearby are also the object of close and frequent examination.

As is evident from the above graph, the peak period, in particular for men, was in the morning, just before the beginning of regular office hours. This phenomenon was also noticeable in my surveys. Many people would make a brief stop by the shrine on their way to work almost as if they were greeting the deity as a familiar person they had expected to see in this place. The majority of the men appeared to be *sarariiman*, i.e. white-collar workers of all ages although the older age group seemed to predominate. Young women, too, were well represented, often with what appeared to be friends or colleagues, who likewise gave the impression of being on their way to work. Women distinguished themselves from the men in that they often prayed together in the company of other women whereas male approaches to *Kitamuki-Jizô* overall appeared to be of a more solitary nature.

In was not uncommon for several people to be worshipping at the same time and during the peak periods, short queues occasionally developed in front of the shrine. In both survey A and B, the number of devotees would diminish later in the day but never to such an extent that the shrine remained empty for long periods of time, a trend that is born out by the number of people appearing in the surveys. Towards the end of the day there was once more a discernible increase in the number of people who made a stop at the shrine yet the figures did not quite reach the high levels observed in the morning. However, in contrast to Murakami's survey, whose weekday figures never exceeded eight hundred worshippers in a single day, my own survey was just a few dozens short of a thousand people. Within the span of one single day they had all engaged in one form or another of religious activity at the shrine. It was worthwhile observing that over the years there had been no change in the distribution

of gender. In both instances, the numerical ratio of males and females on weekdays was identical and women outnumbered men at the approximate rate of 2:1.

(2) Weekend Visitors to Kitamuki-Jizô Shrine (Murakami, 1992)



Again my own survey yielded exactly the same weekend results as those elicited more than a decade ago. Visitor numbers, which were only slightly less than those during the week, did not peak in the morning but during the lunch hours. In distinction to the weekday situations where the crowds tended to wear formal working attire, a smart casual appearance characterised the Sunday throng. Couples or family groups were more conspicuous but the Sunday crowds' casual way of dressing made it next to impossible to classify people's occupation based on visual evidence. I also failed to notice the 'gambling types' which Murakami's survey had observed in the morning. The reason for this difference could rest with the anecdotal evidence that *yakuza* and other gambling types dress less flamboyantly than they used to. But apart from this possibility, newspapers of special interest to gamblers, which Murakami took as one of his clues for designating someone as a "gambling type", were not conspicuous among the reading material people carried.

The most outstanding difference between weekday and weekend behaviour at the shrine was the visible unfamiliarity with the procedure of worship displayed by some members of the Sunday crowds. Whereas the majority of people who turned up on working days to pay homage at the shrine behaved with customary certainty and confidence, it was slightly different during the weekends. After having read the notices that candles and incense had been provided by the caretakers, people started to look for the place where these items were kept. Once having discovered their location, many found it difficult to fit the candles in their holders and did not know what to do with the used matches afterwards. The same uncertainty was noticeable with the treatment of the incense sticks. People would remove one or more from the wooden box they were in and then, after a moment of hesitation, return some of the incense before lighting up the remainder as if they did not know what the appropriate number was.

6.3.3. Modes of Worship.

There are few fixed ways of addressing the gods in Japan. One may for instance bow and put one's hands together in a gasshô. This may or may not be preceded by the clapping of one's hands (kashiwade), an act which popularly is interpreted as a signal for calling the attention of a deity. Many will say that this approach is restricted to the Shinto religion (Kai, 1993:110). It is, nevertheless, not unusual to see people clap their hands in front of Buddhist shrines as well (Reader, 1991:55). This act may take place in conjunction with the burning of incense and/or votive candles, which are usually lit before the praying, but again, not necessarily so. Worshippers may also strike the hollow gong (waniguchi) that usually is fastened to the wooden beam supporting the structure of the shrine roof. If so inclined, one may also drop a coin or two in the offertory coffer. Murakami mentions that the total amount of yearly donations in this location runs into hundreds of thousands of Japanese Yen, which at the end of the year are donated to charities. Should the layout of a given shrine allow for circumambulation, some people will walk around the building as part of their personal worship in the same ritual we had occasion to observe in Sekizô-ji. The culmination of these activities is the $gassh\hat{o}$, the act by which the worshipper's palms are put together in a gesture of prayer and homage. It is difficult to say exactly which because

the same gesture is used on both occasions. Whereas all the previously mentioned acts of worship may be performed individually or in combination with each other, they are not an indispensable part of the shrine visit. Bowing and $gassh\hat{o}$ alone seem to be the only constant features of the worship and without them a visit to a temple or shrine would not rise to the level of veneration.

In general, women seemed to linger longer over the ritual than their male counterpart. Smith (1974:118-9) found that there is a correlation between gender and religiosity and in a more recent study by Reed (2006:334); he concluded that "women and older people tend to be more religious". Reed's study likewise confirms my initial observation that there was a correlation between the age of the worshipper and the time spent worshipping: the older the person, the longer the shrine visit seemed to be (see p.126 and p.135). In my experience, men were generally more inclined to go through the process in a more cursory manner. The majority only performed the absolute minimum in terms of ritualistic requirement; after a quick bow and $gassh\hat{o}$, most men were on their way again. This observation is also borne out by Murakami's survey.

As so often is the case in Japan, there were some notable endemic variations in people's ritual behaviour. Murakami, too, mentions these practices. Some devotees, for instance, would walk around the shrine in an anti-clockwise fashion and when they reached the back of the shrine they would knock on the wall, say a prayer and then continue back to the front again. In principle this conduct is identical to the prayer pattern followed by worshippers in Sekizô-ji temple in Kyoto, yet here circumambulation is done in the reverse. At Kitamuki-Jizô shrine one advances with the side of the shrine to one's left and when the rear of the free-standing shrine is reached, people turn away from the shrine and knock on the wall behind it rather than knocking or touching the shrine itself. The number of times people went around the shrine varied but according to my calculations the majority followed the numerical frequency recommended for chanting the *Jizô mantra*: three, five, seven or ten times. I noticed one young woman, for instance, who came to the shrine several times during the early hours of the morning. She was most probably working in the vicinity since

she was wearing the uniform of a shop assistant or waitress, an outfit one normally does not travel in. On each occasion she left after having completed ten circuits. She went around the shrine and the 'one hundred times stone' (hyakudo-ishi) in front, tracing a pattern which most of the other worshippers seemed to ignore. They simply walked around the shrine proper, paying no attention to the hyakudo-ishi.

Of the various ritualistic options open to worshippers, circumambulation was the least frequently used method of worship. It was no doubt also the most time consuming. With the exception of the previously mentioned young girl and an elderly man, everyone who walked around the shrine also burned candles and incense, rang the gong and made a donation. During my weekday observation, twenty-one persons, around two per cent, made the walk around the shrine. During the Sunday survey this figure did not exceed 1.5 per cent.

This is in stark contrast to the act of putting one's palms together $(gassh\hat{o})$ which, accompanied by a nod, is the most frequently used method of worship performed by about forty per cent of all visitors. When it came to recurrent behaviour, the $gassh\hat{o}$ gesture followed by a financial donation was the second most frequently observed manner of worship. In terms of popularity, the additional burning of incense came next. Only five per cent did everything, less the anti-clockwise circuit around the shrine, that is to say, striking the gong, making a donation, and burning candles and incense.

IV. Summary

6.4.0. Classification of Temples

The selection of the three temples treated above was, among other things, guided by the fact that they roughly reflect the generally used classification system of Japanese temples. According to this taxonomy, there are *danka-dera* and *shinja-dera*. (Gellner, 1996:259). The former is said to specialise in death rituals and burials and will often be described as *bodai-ji* as well. *Jizô Bodai-ji* on the mountain of Osore-zan, which I have dealt with later, is a good example of this. This kind of temple is normally pat-

ronised by those who make up its congregation (*danka*) and by the people who in one way or another are affiliated with the temple through traditional bonds. *Sekizô-ji*, which to a large extent is used and supported by local parishioners can also be classified as a *danka-dera*. Within this particular group, sect affiliation and place of domicile frequently play an important role.

The other category, *shinja-dera* (temples of believers), also known as *kitô-dera* (prayer temples), does not operate within the narrow framework of the *danka-dera*. It caters for the public at large and it does not rely on a permanent congregation for its financial support. Instead, the 'temples of believers' try to advance and promote special practices, often of a magico-religious nature, by which they hope to attract visitors both from within the city and beyond, irrespective of which sect they belong to or where they live. Kôgan-ji in Tokyo, the place where *Togenuki-jizô* is enshrined, is a good representative of this group. Needless to say, temples of both categories appeal to believers in need of assistance and guidance for their worldly needs as well as prophylactic cures (Gellner, 1996:257).

The neat distinction between *danka-dera* and *shinja-dera* is not without its problems. According to the above division, Sekizô-ji with *Kuginuki-Jizô* is a prayer temple *(kitô-dera)* for those who visit the place as part of their *Jizô* pilgrimage. At the same time it is also a congregational temple *(danka-dera)* for the people who live in the neighbourhood of the temple.

The above division also fails to accommodate places such as *Kitamuki Jizô*, which reflects the changed circumstance of many urbanites' relationship with temples and religious institutions. The very nature of *Kitamuki Jizô*, unattached as it is to any traditional religious sect, excludes it from either category. Temples, too, that are famous as tourist destination because of their age and historical importance, like Hôryû-ji temple and Tôdai-ji temple, both in Nara, may likewise lack a permanent congregation or a particular boon *(goriyaku)*, which is the common attraction of the 'prayer temples'. Visitors may try to access some of the sacred aura of the historical

temples while being there; they may say a prayer or give expression to a sense of veneration, for instance. They may have their fortune told and buy a religious souvenir or an amulet. These activities are also combined with elements of sight-seeing, a meeting with the country's historical past and an encounter with its religious tradition. Nelson Graburn (1983) must have had all these activities in mind when he called his research about Japanese tourism and pilgrimages 'To Pray, Pay and Play' because "these three elements are commonly included in any journey, whatever its stated purpose" (Hendry, 1996:181).

The services provided by Buddhist temples also reveal how problematic the traditional categorization is. Regardless of classification, the emphasis on attaining physical well-being ranks just as highly as concerns with spiritual matters, and healing practices seem to be just as much part of temple practices as are prayers for success in business. Some worshippers may also wish to take advantage of the free counselling service offered by some temples. The wealthier establishments will deal with psychological as well as legal problems and the elderly may like to go to a particular temple where they can meet like-minded people of the same age. Here they may for a limited period of time share a sense of community, exchange information of mutual interest while attending to both religious matters as well as secular concerns (Wöss, 1993:192-3). The convivial aspect cannot be ignored since is should be regarded as the "concrete expression of social relationships that are an important factor in the act of visiting a temple" (Earhart, 1982:143).

There is a further overlapping. When Earhart (1982:12) speaks of "purification, rituals and charms" as "persistent theme[s]" in the world of Japanese religion, they are nowhere more conspicuous than in the places of popular religion. Regardless of temple classification, everywhere supplicants are busily purifying themselves and carrying out various rituals, usually without the assistance of a priest, and there are few places without a prominent display of lucky charms for all conceivable matters and occasions.

6.4.1. Specialisation of Cures and Countermeasures to Illnesses

It is in the field of this-worldly or instant benefits (*genze-riyaku*) that one may observe how supplicants resolutely attempt to shape events in accordance with individual hopes and desires. In the same area there is also a notable division of labour among the deities even if some duplication does occur. In theory all bodhisattvas are omnipotent but over time some have been invested with an overt expertise in a given field. Thus when a believer hopes that a certain wish will come true or is looking for a cure to a specific ailment, he or she will turn to the bodhisattva who is known for granting wish fulfilment in these specific matters.

What the bodhisattvas have in common is that their 'foundation tales' (engi) not only authenticate this expertise, they also serve as a guide for people who wish to access a particular reservoir of specialist spiritual powers which they hope to translate into real benefits (Reader, 1991:146). The same division of labour is also, I believe, responsible for the practice of giving descriptive nicknames to the deities so that people may readily identify the nature of a given bodhisattva's healing powers. At any rate, it is among the images connected with *genze-riyaku* that one finds the largest number of descriptive epithets. 'Child-Granting-Jizô' (Kosazuke-Jizô), for instance, will cure infertility. Once conception has occurred, the expectant mother will turn to a 'Safe-Delivery-Jizô' (Koyasu-Jizô or Anzan-Jizô), and after childbirth, 'Child-Rearing-Jizô' (Kosodate-Jizô) is relied on for bringing up the child. The same specialisation can be observed in the charms (omamori) that a given temple will offer. Apart from the ubiquitous traffic safety (kôtsû-anzen) and domestic safety (kanai-anzen) charms, individual temples and shrines usually have one or more charms of a specific nature. The Jizô charms sold in Kyoto's Sanjûsangen-dô temple to prevent children from crying at night (yonaki-tôji) are a case in point.

Ohnuki-Thierney (1984:123) writes that the Japanese do not consciously label the services of temple and shrines as $iry\hat{o}$ (medical treatment), yet many of the requests to the deities are clearly of a medical nature where people search for a corrective to a health problem. This form of self-help is made easier by the fact that maladies are

frequently categorised in a metaphorical manner so that a bowel cancer will be referred to as a 'pain in the stomach' (Ohnuki-Thierney, 1984:156). But overall the technique for dealing with poor health should be seen in connection with the widespread interpretation of the aetiology of illness, according to which an illness is regarded as a form of "divine communication". The message is negative because something has displeased the gods. Since people "are unaware of the identity of the divine voice", they will initiate a search for the appropriate remedies until they are cured (Kalland, 1992). The human response to this message from above frequently takes the form of rituals that are thought to be pleasing to the gods. The ideal platform for these rituals are naturally thought to be temples, shrines or other locations of religious merit "whose basic function since archaic times has been to serve as a places where magical and ritual exchanges can take place" (Davis, 1988:84). This is where foundation stories take on a special significance. Few religious statues and places of worships in Japan exist in a vacuum; they all come from a meaningful somewhere, having grown out of an imagined organic whole so that they fit into a comprehensible context. Because the "foundation stories or myths are rooted in the miraculous" (Reader, 1991:146), they suggest that the location where the events of the engidan occurred has been touched by the divine and that visitors will benefit from this contact as well. The fieldwork of Kalland (1992) demonstrates the importance of Jizô's role within this framework of medical treatment by divine intervention although in this particular field the bodhisattva must share his healing functions with other deities.

The therapeutic aspect can also be viewed as a natural extension of Buddhist doctrine since these curative powers accord with numerous Buddhist scriptures which maintain that the *dharma* is a repository of special powers, available to all who believe. Winfield (2005) has written a fascinating account of the doctrinal foundation of faith cures in which the cosmic energy of Mahâvairocana Buddha (*Dainichi-nyorai*) is utilised to cure various illnesses. However, as the healing techniques (*kaji*) she writes about require expert knowledge by its practitioners, they are not instantly available.

The rituals surrounding the cures take a multitude of shapes and forms. However, more important is the extent to which it is felt that a deity is responsive to devotees' pleas for warding off bad luck and obtaining good fortune. One may have to swallow pieces of paper inscribed with the name of Kôbô Daishi, the famous ninth century priest or, if an immediate response is required, one may turn to a 'Heavy/light Jizô' (Omokaru-Jizô) like the one enshrined in Shitennô-ji temple in Osaka or even 'heavy / light stones' (omokaru ishi) which one may find in assigned shrines. An answer to a yes/no question will be revealed through the lifting of the statue or the 'heavy/light stones' whose weight will change, depending on the response of the deity. It will be heavy if the reply is unfavourable, or light if the response is affirmative (Ohnuki-Thierney, 1984:128; Kalland, 1992). Wakasugi (1972:87) mentions a statue, 'Roaring Jizô' (Todoroku-Jizô), where the white facial paint of the statue plays an important role in the transfer of benefits from the statue to the believer. If the paint is put on the face, one obtains physical beauty, if applied to sore joints or aching parts of the body, the pain will vanish instantly, and smeared on the stomach it will result in the birth of beautiful children. Some again will buy special amulets and write letters to Jizô, asking him to relieve them of toothaches, as is the case with *Nurikobe-Jizô* in Fushimi. Other petitioners might even threaten the bodhisattva with some form of castigation, attempting to force him to comply with the nature of their request (Davis, 1988:89). One of the most famous instances of this is the 'Tied-Up-Jizô' (Shibare-Jizô) in Tokyo's Katsushika district but it is by no means the only one. Petitioners will fasten a rope around the Shibare-Jizô statue when they approach it with a wish that they want Jizô to make come true. When that happens, the statue is untied and released of its 'obligation' (Ishikawa, 1995:78-9).

This is an area where websites and readily available printed guides help people to find shrines and temples that specialise in the particular boons that they are looking for. Practical benefit guidebooks usually have a geographical focus and they explain, frequently in humorous terms, what benefit specifically named holy places (*reijô*) and statues are famous for. Other guidebooks concern themselves with the hopes and longings of limited target groups such as students, people in love, pregnant women,

business people, and so on (Reader and Tanabe, 1998:239-240). An interesting website (kyoto-inet, 2003), sponsored by Kyoto city council, calls itself 'a map to special benefits' (*goriyaku mappu*). This sponsorship incidentally highlights the robust commercialism which characterises these activities.

As mentioned earlier, official bodies are by law prevented from advertising or supporting religious activities. Article eighty-nine of the Japanese constitution is very clear on that point:

No public money or other property shall be expended or appropriated for the use, benefit or maintenance of any religious institution or association, or for any charitable educational or benevolent enterprises not under control of public authority (Shiose, 2000:322)

However, 'public authority' is granted to enterprises that promote tourism so that *Kuginuki-Jizô* can be mentioned by name as a tourist attraction. In this way the assistance by the authorities remains a secular activity. The fact that *Kuginuki-Jizô* also happens to be a Buddhist deity enshrined a sacred place is incidental since that part is not being promoted. The same guide also gives advice as to where one can change financial misfortune into riches, convert ugliness into physical beauty, and how to find the ideal spouse, etc. This website clearly shows that the roads to instant benefits (*genze-riyaku*) may be varied and at times obscure, but regardless of the path taken, they are united by a common desire to obtain personal benefits here and now, and preferably as soon as possible.

6.4.2. How to Find the Right Jizô

It is not uncommon to find examples of statues which the public has decided to regard as representations of *Jizô* despite evidence to the contrary. The "Jizô" statue in Shinobazu-ike, Tokyo, is a good example. The statue displays all the visible characteristics of the seventh century ascetic, En-no-gyôja: exceptionally high Japanese style wooden clogs (*geta*), a long beard, a wanderer's staff, and the peculiar head dress of mountain ascetics. These iconographic features are commonly ignored and the statue is variously called 'Bearded-Jizô' (*Hige-Jizô*) or 'Umbrella-Jizô (Kasa-Jizô). Viewed

from the back, however, the statue has an unmistakable phallic appearance that justifies its third epithet, 'Sensuous-Jizô' (*Iro-Jizô*). It is said that embracing this statue will make barren women fertile (Motoyama, 1988:492-3).

I pointed out earlier the importance of the foundation tales. An examination of a few more examples in addition to those we have encountered already will provide a deeper understanding of the process by which a given statue acquires its reputation. It will also reveal a remarkable similarity in the narrative structure of the foundation tales: someone suffering from an apparently incurable disease is introduced. After trying everything, the afflicted person ultimately puts all faith in the supernatural power of a deity, represented in the visible form of a statue, and achieves a cure. Afterwards other people suffering the same ailment will petition the statue and they, too, will be cured. By reporting successful cures, the tale becomes a kind of accreditation since it establishes a basis for belief in the supernatural powers of a particular statue. Thus the legendary tale not only offers an etymological explanation; it provides divine credentials as well.

'Tooth-Shaped-Jizô' (*Hagata-Jizô*) can be found in a small but well-kept wooden shrine decorated with red paper lanterns on which is written the legend 'Tooth-Jizô' (*Ha-no-Jizô*). It is close to a bus stop on Senbon-dôri road in Kyoto's Nishijin district. While waiting for the bus, I have often had occasion to read the explanatory story on the bronze plaque next to the shrine:

Once upon a time, a jealous woman flew into an uncontrollable rage when she saw her husband in the company of a young woman. The man tried to avoid his wife by hiding in the shade of a statue of $Jiz\hat{o}$ but she detected him and angrily sank her teeth into his shoulder, or rather what she thought was the husband's shoulder. For in that moment $Jiz\hat{o}$ took the place of the husband and what she bit into was actually the stony shoulder of the statue. Initially she was unable to release her bite but with the aid of some powerful mantras, the local priest finally managed to dislocate her from the statue. To this day the statue carries the tooth marks on its shoulder. The woman, however, died soon after.

Here we see the principle of substitution (*migawari*) in action. *Jizô* had taken the place of the husband and accepted punishment intended for someone else. The tale

also includes an overt warning against jealousy, one of the evil passions (*bonnôma*) considered detrimental to spiritual enlightenment and traditionally associated with women (Mochizuki, 1989:35). The tragic end of the wife also makes clear what might happen if a religious statue is defiled: it is done at the peril of one's life. Incidentally, Takemura (1994:134) argues that the statue in question most probably started out as an Amida image, as can be inferred from the meditation mudra (*jô-in*) of its hands, but wilful (mis)representation has converted it into a *Jizô* figure.

The quiet Yakushi-ji temple in the Arashiyama hills has one special attraction: Inside a modest shrine visitors will notice a seated *Jizô* figure surrounded by wooden ladders of various sizes. According to the temple legend, the reason is as follows:

Once upon a time there was young acolyte in the temple who suffered from nightly bed-wetting. No matter how hard he tried, he was unable to rid himself of this embarrassing affliction. His fellow novices eventually became so impatient with him that they threw him out of their communal dormitory, forcing him to sleep outside. During that very same night a young priest $(koz\hat{o})$ appeared in the dreams of the other young boys, saying that the boy they had thrown out had died but that he had been reborn as $Jiz\hat{o}$. From now on, the $koz\hat{o}$ said, this $Jiz\hat{o}$ was going to help all those who were afflicted by bedwetting. Next morning the novices discovered a small Jiz \hat{o} statue outside and they wasted no time in building a special hall $(Jiz\hat{o}-d\hat{o})$ for it.

Since that day those who suffer from a loose bladder, nightly bed-wetting, and old age incontinence have supplicated this Jizô. A wooden ladder usually accompanies wishes for a cure. The rungs of the ladders correspond in numbers to the age of the supplicant so that a ten-year old child will leave behind a ladder with ten rungs, a forty-five year old forty-five rungs and so on. Because of the ladder this particular Jizô has become known as 'Ladder-Jizô' (*Hashigo-Jizô*). The writer who first drew my attention to this *Jizô*, professed his inability to fathom the meaning of the ladder (Takemura, 1994: 137-8). Based on the principle of mimetic action, I think the underlying idea is that the affliction is being led away from the sufferer, step-by-step, or rung-by-rung.

6.4.3. The Epithet as a Clue to a Statue's Power

Many statues do not have any foundation story attached to them. Instead they are known by their individual epithets that, apart from the statue's generic provenance, provide information about a statue's special powers. There are several factors which determine how a statue acquires a cognomen of its own. Sometimes it is associated with particular rituals and the nature of the offerings given to the statue. When favours are asked of 'Broad-Bean-Jizô' (*Soramame-Jizô*), he is given a fixed number of beans which, as we have seen on other occasions, must be equivalent to the worshipper's age. 'Tied-Jizô' (*Shibare-Jizô*) is tied up and dragged around in some instances, only to be released when the worshipper's wish comes true, and supplicants will plaster 'Mud-Smeared-Jizô' (*Dorokake-Jizô*) with mud.

In other instances the epithet emphasizes the visual aspects of a statue. It may describe the human demeanour that people profess to detect in a given statue, which also reveals worshippers' interest and affection for the deity. From field trips in my student days looking for Buddhist images in the wild (nobotoke), I recall a pair of large upright statues under a cedar tree near Shôryaku-ji temple in the Yamato basin with the unforgettable names of 'Weeping Jizô' (Naki-Jizô) and 'Laughing Jizô' (Warai-Jizô). In the same area on the narrow mountain road leading to the hamlet of Yagyû, famous for its swordsmen of yore, travellers will encounter a large stone statue with a big red bib around its neck. It is a familiar image to many since it recurrently appears in advertisements. This is the famous 'Decapitated-Jizô' (Kubikiri-Jizô) which for centuries has served as a landmark and guidepost.

'Nodding-Jizô' (*Kubifuri-Jizô*) in Kyoto's Kiyomizu-dera temple, 'Star-Gazing-Jizô' (*Hoshimi-Jizô*), also in Kyoto, as well as the ubiquitous 'Headless-Jizô' (*Kubinashi-Jizô*) are all self-explanatory.

Taking a cue from the cardinal points of the compass, other statues are named from the location they are enshrined in or the direction in which they face. We find names such as 'North-Facing-Jizô' (*Kitamuki-Jizô*), which I examined earlier and 'West-

Facing-Jizô' (*Nishimuki-Jizô*). There are also statues facing South and East. 'Morning-Sun-Jizô' (*Asahi-Jizô*), 'Mountain-Pass-Jizô' (*Tôge-Jizô*) and 'Lake-Jizô' (*Ike-no-Jizô*) are also quite common names in this category.

Generic names such as 'Longevity-Jizô' (*Enmei-Jizô*), 'Easy-Delivery-Jizô' (*Anzan-Jizô*), and 'Child-Granting-Jizô' (*Kosazuke-Jizô*) are encountered all over the country and they gives a clear indication about the nature of people's wishes and what they expect to obtain from *Jizô*. Statues with more specific names like 'Jealous Jizô' (*Yakimochi-Jizô*), 'Sake-Drinking-Jizô' (*Sakenomi-Jizô*), 'Stone-Throwing-Jizô' (*Ishinage-Jizô*), and 'Sutra-Reading-Jizô' (*Kyôyomi-Jizô*) are not uncommon either.

The interpretation of some of these names, however, is not self-evident, in particular those that refer to 'replacement' or substitute (migawari) activities. 'Sake-Drinking-Jizô', for instance, is not a bodhisattva with a craving for alcohol. It refers to a Jizô statue which is believed to help people with a drinking problem. By accepting as an offering what people might otherwise have drunk in excess and thus reducing their overall consumption of alcohol, Jizô supports people in their endeavours to control their alcoholism. 'Burnt-Cheeks-Jizô' (Hôyaki-Jizô) takes the place of people who are caught in fires and 'Arrow-Taking-Jizô' (Yatori-Jizô) would in the past divert the arrows that enemies were shooting at his believers towards himself.

Yanagita's (1962) *Dictionary of Folkloric Terms* lists over ninety different *Jizô* epithets from which all *Jizô* appellation combined with a place name is excluded. To this Ishikawa (1995:47-52), whose text has yielded many of the above names, adds another four hundred more yet even this substantial increase fails to include several names that are of regional importance. Many more names can be found in the *Jizô Dictionary* (Shimpen Nihon Jizô Jiten, 1988) or among the eighty famous *Jizô* statues in Kyoto described in Takamura (1994).

In all these instances one may discern a specialisation - one function per statue - which, I believe, is responsible for the practice of referring to them with descriptive

nicknames so that people may readily identify the nature or healing powers of a given statue. At any rate, it is among the images connected with worldly gains (genzeriyaku) that one finds the largest number of descriptive epithets.

Taking my illustrating examples from Ishikawa (1995:48-52), the epithets can roughly be summarised as follows. They may reflect

- a desire for certain natural occurrences to take place, such as rain, bountiful harvest as in 'Rain-Stopping-Jizô' (Ameyami-Jizô), or 'Rain-Fall-Jizô' (Amefuri-Jizô),
- a desire for changes to one's condition such as avoidance of danger: 'Danger-Avoiding-Jizô' (*Yakuyoke-Jizô*); a cure from illness: 'Pain-Extracting-Jizô' (*Kunuki-Jizô*); how to get wealthy: 'Money-Making-Jizô' (*Kanemôke-Jizô*); and how to procure a spouse: 'Match-Making-Jizô' (*Enmusubi-Jizô*),
- matters related to fertility ranging from a desire to becoming pregnant: 'Child-Granting-Jizô' (Kosazuke-Jizô) to easy child birth: 'Easy-Delivery-Jizô' (Anzan-Jizô), the ability to breast feed: 'Breast-Jizô' (Chibusa-Jizô), and infant survival: 'Child Protection-Jizô' (Komamori-Jizô),
- a geographical location: 'Bridge-Jizô' (*Hashi-Jizô*) or the directions of the compass: 'Southerly-Facing-Jizô' (*Minami-muki Jizô*),
- the physical appearance: 'Blind-Jizô' (Mekura-Jizô) and 'Bird-Jizô' (Tori-Jizô),
- a ritual connected with a given statue: 'Water-Washing-Jizô' (*Mizuarai-Jizô*), 'Sugar-Licking-Jizô' (*Satôname-Jizô*), and 'Walking-Stick-Jizô' (*Tsue-Jizô*),

- death and rebirth related activities where Jizô will guide the deceased through the difficult process of post mortem judgment, hell and rebirth: 'Leading-Jizô' (Indô-Jizô) and 'Greeting-Jizô' (Mukae-Jizô). Mizuko-Jizô, who looks after the spirits of the stillborn, aborted foetuses, and dead infants, also belongs in this category,
- acts of substitution where *Jizô* stands in for a believer of which the most general cognomen is 'Substitute-Jizô' (*Migawari-Jizô*). But there are many others such as 'Burnt-Jizô' (*Yaki-Jizô*), 'Body-Protection-Jizô' (*Gomi-Jizô*), 'Rice-Planting-Jizô' (*Taue-Jizô*), and 'Arrow-Avoiding-Jizô' (*Yayoke-Jizô*),
- methods of foretelling the future, usually by lifting: 'Heavy-light-Jizô' (*Omokaru-Jizô*) or observing whether the statue is sweating: 'Sweating Jizô' (*Asekaki-Jizô*).

These epithets are many and varied, and perhaps even a bit confusing but they must be seen against the background of remarks made earlier about the infinite capacity of Jizô to transform himself into exactly that being who is needed by his devotees at a given moment in time. They may need a cure for a disease, assistance in love, material benefits, or any of the myriads of imaginable objects, animate or inanimate, desired by human beings.

CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE: THE WORLDS OF JIZÔ

I. Jizô and the Afterlife

7.1.0. Mizuko-Jizô

In this thesis I have addressed two sides of Jizô's activities: how he in the afterlife delivers all sentient beings from the pains of hell (jigoku bakku) and guides them to salvation (Indô-Jizô), and also how devotees in the present put their faith in his powers as an agent of current wish-fulfilment (genze-riyaku), requesting him to make their hopes for prosperity, good health, and social success come true (Kanada et al., 1989:471). He is, as the 'Sutra of the Past Vows of Jizô Bosatsu' (Jizô hongan-kyô) explains, multi-locational in character, i.e. he can be in several places at the same time, which makes it possible for him to deal with the inhabitants of the shadowy worlds of the afterlife and to mediate between the living and the dead, while simultaneously assuming a visible presence in this life. In fact, he is said to have "hundred thousand million transformation bodies" that all exist "in response to the circumstances created by the living" (Hua, 1974:90-1). Apart from the ability to be in many places at the same time, this statement defines $Jiz\hat{o}$'s nature as being infinitely variable. It becomes self-referential in that it reflects whatever a devotee wants to see and it can change into whatever forms a particular situation requires.

There is no better example of the mutations and adaptability of the bodhisattva to new circumstances than in his newly found role as Mizuko- $Jiz\hat{o}$. A hitherto unknown emphasis on the ritual memorialisation of prematurely dead infants, stillborn babies, and aborted foetuses in particular (mizuko- $kuy\hat{o})$, which developed in the late 1960s, has created a situation which has established $Jiz\hat{o}$ as a vital mediating link between women and their aborted foetuses and prematurely dead infants. I do not believe that this new approach is a liturgical 'invention' by priests who created a revolutionised form of $Jiz\hat{o}$ worship, which ultimately reached such proportions that the word 'cult' is appropriate to describe its magnitude. Neither did it arise ex nihilo. The basic elements in infant memorialisation drew on preexisting practices that facilitated its development. The many and varied strands of $Jiz\hat{o}$ belief have been pointed out in this thesis in order to demonstrate how

mizuko-kuyô and its deep links with Jizô evolved out of a well-established historical and religious matrix which provided fertile grounds for new developments. For instance, the role within the ambience of mizuko was doubtlessly an extension of his traditional position as a tutelary deity of women and children. Yet the changed conceptualisation of infant-related rituals and the ways in which they manifest themselves are so distinct that it is possible to speak about a significant additional branch to Jizô worship. I have argued that the reason for this very public rise to visual prominence was linked to structural changes within the urban population. Changing social conditions produced economic affluence and isolated nuclear families from one another. Somewhat surprisingly, the social circumstances that to my mind created the need for a new approach to the old issue of infant mortality and abortions have received scant attention.

In 1970 Nakane (1974:63-4) wrote about a manifest absence of community relationships and co-operation in post war Japan and how difficult it was to make friends in the city for those who had recently arrived from the countryside (*ibid:131*). The same observations had been made by Vogel (1963:109-111) almost a decade earlier. Most Japanese men, he wrote, found an outlet for social needs with colleagues at work but their wives had to struggle to make friends in the neighbourhoods where they lived. The social networks of personal friends and relatives were often far away and decisions had to be made without any friendly group support or encouragement.

Using Ochiai's (1996:37-47) analysis of post war structural developments, I show that there is no obvious relationship between the number of performed abortions *per se* and the demand for privately sponsored infant and foetus memorialisation services (*mizuko kuyô*). The decade immediately following World War II had a high rate of reported abortions, which culminated in and around 1955 when 37.4 abortions (*sic*) were performed "per 100 pregnancies theoretically expected". Yet the *mizuko-kuyô* rites, which became the rage about ten years later, were as yet not heard of. These rites did not begin to figure prominently until the early 1970s when the abortion rate had actually almost halved in comparison to the 1955 figures. *Mizuko-kuyô* coincided with the trend to have no more than two children and then using abortion, rather than other methods of contraception, as a means of

controlling the birth-rate. The reasons for this are many and complex but they need not deter us here. Suffice it to say that "the period in which the stable structure broke down or changed" (*ibid:41*) coincides with the rise in the popularity of *mizuko-kuyô*. These rites "translate some human needs and some aspects of life, whether social or individual" (Durkheim, 2002:37) and it is my contention that they filled the vacuum that had arisen as the result of the disappearance of interfemale social networks which in the past supported women in times of crises.

This interpretation explains the need for the secrecy or low-key manner with which the rites are conducted in most instances since the individual is not keen to let strangers know about private decisions and grief. It also explains the high public profile of the *mizuko-kuyô* providers who have a need to advertise their existence and make their activities known to a wider public.

Another important factor in the *mizuko* narrative is the frequently overlooked development of the computer as a popular and fairly anonymous means of information gathering and exchange. For many isolated individuals virtual relationships are a source of great comfort where "communicating with others in online forums and chat rooms help [the users] to regain emotional stability" (Fukamichi (2007: 7). This appearance of "virtual worship, virtual gravesite visits, and confession rooms...on the internet" has become a matter of concern for some of the established religious bodies, and the Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja honchô*) "has refused to recognize "virtual experiences"... as a means of worship" (Maekawa, 1999:46). She also points out that these fears are not totally groundless since the internet facilitates direct contact with the buddhas and other deities posted on various websites, thus promoting a personal approach to religion not encumbered to any degree by the mediation or interpretation of doctrine by institutionalised religion (*ibid:47*).

In the past *Jizô* was regarded as the guardian and protector of all infants, dead or alive. In his present representation as *Mizuko-Jizô*, he is also asked to be a surrogate for deceased individual children to whom he gives visual shape and identity. For someone who has experienced the loss of an infant, *Mizuko-Jizô* serves as an outlet for maternalism, which motivates the dressing of these statues,

large and small, in the apparel of children (Glassman, 2001:93). This practice dovetails with the traditional ceremonial dressing of religious idols, which in Japan is conspicuous in the worship of the infant prince, Shôtoku Taishi.

Abortions have never been a straightforward and uncomplicated affair in Japan. They have often been condemned as morally unacceptable as is evident from governmental decrees as well as some late nineteenth century paintings, depicting how women go straight to hell after an abortion (Miya, 1988:80). But abortions do and did take place. In the past, women who suffered from post-abortion trauma could rely on the support and understanding of female friends and relatives. Today this support system is usually not available to the many housewives who find themselves in an urban housing complex with little or no contact with their next-door neighbours. Here the individual has to cope without much external help.

A long tradition of belief in and fear of malevolent spirits *(onryô)*, in particular those who have suffered a 'bad death', frequently cause additional anxieties, and this is where *Mizuko-Jizô* images enter the picture. They supposedly avert the feelings of resentment that the many *mizuko* might harbour towards the living because they were not allowed to be born or because of the brief length of time they stayed on earth. Some of the new religious movements tap into this fear of the dead as part and parcel of their teachings (Earhart, 1989:57).

Sensationalist magazine and newspaper articles also fan the fright of retribution (tatari) with gory articles about the misfortune of women who have fallen victims to the evil machinations of resentful spirits (Hardacre, 1997:77-91). This fear of retribution may be related to the "deritualization and medicalization of pregnancy" but also to the psychological possibilities of denial and projection where "guilt [is] projected onto the spirit of the foetus who is reified as revengeful" (Sonne, 1998). Regardless of the reasons for accommodating malevolent spirits in today's beliefs, for our purpose it suffices to pay attention to the important role performed by $Jiz\hat{o}$ in maintaining a meaningful relationship and balance between a *mizuko* and this world.

7.1.1. Mizuko-Jizô and the West

Given the unresolved and very antagonistic attitudes in many quarters in the West towards the idea of abortion, it is not surprising that some Westerners have started to look at the Japanese conditions to see if they may help to shed light on an activity that at home is singularly void of consensus. It is in this context that Jizô has been introduced to a wider audience, in particular an American one. Although it is unusual for a deity from an unknown religious ambience to receive a large amount of attention, this does not seem to be the case with Jizô. Figures from the Buddhist pantheon are normally just known under the generic name of 'buddha' in the West, irrespective of their actual function and spiritual level within the Buddhist hierarchy. But Jizô, this rather obscure figure from an alien culture, has caught the imagination of some segments of the American public, especially those groups involved in the acrimonious debate about abortion. Many feminist publications and pro-choice websites explain to their readers the purpose of a mizuko kuyô and what Jizô represents to the Japanese public. Some sites even have Mizuko-Jizô images for sale and others discuss how they have performed their own mizuko ceremonies (Ray-Hamaie & Reese, 2002; Post Abortion Support, 2002). As plain 'Jizo', Mizuko-Jizô has even appeared on the pages of The New York Times (Peggy Ornstein, April 20, 2002). Here he was introduced as the dispenser of special benefits for women traumatised by a miscarriage or an abortion together with an explanation, erroneous as it turns out, about the origin of the *mizuko kuyô* ritual.

Jan Chosen Bays' (2001, 2003) popular publications on *Jizô*, on the other hand, are more informed than most even if they are written with the all-embracing and uncritical admiration of a religious convert. Her emphasis, too, is on *Mizuko-Jizô* but by situating him in a broader historical context and connecting him with the generic *Jizô*, she attempts to show that he is much more than just an alien deity intimately connected with abortions.

However, in most cases, $Jiz\hat{o}$ is narrowly defined in terms of abortions and the explanations given about his nature are usually grounded in American domestic problems and attitudes rather than the social circumstances under which mizuko $kuy\hat{o}$ take place in Japan. In the American context $Jiz\hat{o}$ is mostly seen in the role of an exemplar, a 'noble oriental healer' and an enlightened 'other' from an exotic

foreign land where local customs are deemed to solve all problems in an amiable and rational manner. This ideal situation is contrasted with the ideological straight-jacket at home where contentious issues remain unresolved in an atmosphere of suspicion and mutual animosity.

As one may recall, the *mizuko* ritual has been instrumental in the ubiquity of *Jizô* statues that are mass-produced in all shapes and sizes. This visual immediacy has made *Jizô* an easily recognised figure in the Japanese landscape. Because of his unproblematic portrayal as a mendicant monk, he is frequently represented in the foreign media as the Buddha or a 'buddha'. For instance, a set of Australian made laminated A5 cards, used as a teaching resource in some Australian schools, called 'Images from Japan of People, Places and Scenes', identifies *Mizuko-Jizô* as an image of "Buddha" (Japanese Catalogue, 2004:2).

7.1.2. Jizô and the Ancestors

The *Jizô* figure also serves as a constant reminder of the Japanese attitude towards death. A statue can be put up to commemorate a group of people or an individual. When Atsumi Hiroshi, the comic movie actor of *Tora-san* fame, died in 1996, I remember seeing a *Jizô* figure in the hall in Kobe where the public paid their last respects to the silver screen idol. A newly carved wooden statue of *Jizô* displayed the familiar physical traits of Atsumi. It even showed the large facial moles for which the actor was known. Here too, *Jizô* was the embodiment of a dual principle. On the one hand, mourners directed their prayers to *Jizô* who embodies the principle of compassion, which assures repose and salvation for the dead. Yet at the same time the statue was also a stand-in for Atsumi Hiroshi in which capacity it served as a surrogate for the deceased actor. As such it reflected a long tradition in which statues often are said to resemble a certain individual who frequently happens to be a beautiful woman.

We do not know much about the cult status of the earliest *Jizô* statues in Japan. They were presumably used in ancestral rites, as was the case in China from where the *Jizô* narrative was transmitted initially. But when he became connected with Amida Buddha and the salvation of souls in hell, his popularity increased exponentially. His "personification of Amida's boundless compassion" and his

vow "never to become a buddha as long as even one soul remained in hell" ensured a lasting acceptance (Matsushima, 1986:20; Kitagawa, 1966:82-3). This role continues to the present day. The many interrelated festivals and activities at Obon, for instances, are testimony to the centrality of *Jizô* in rituals connected with the ancestors and the dead. The visual recordings of the structure of the Buddhist cosmos, the 'Heaven and Hell' hand-painted hanging scrolls that are on prominent display in so many temples during this period leave no spectator in doubt about *Jizô's* importance as a cult image and his profound involvement with the afterlife. Here we see him depicted as the guide for the newly dead, as a protector of infants in the Buddhist limbo of *Sai-no-kawara*, how he extricates those unfortunate beings condemned to painful torture in hell, and how he finally leads them away to a new existence.

Apart from the readily observable reality of painted images depicting the various Buddhist hells, the degree to which these hells have been accepted as an ontological argument among the Japanese is a difficult question. Werblowsky (1991: 319) has noted the paucity of references in much of the modern *mizuko* literature to Sai-no-kawara, the Buddhist limbo par excellence. Supportive statements can be found in Smith (1974:51) who writes that "it is difficult to find much evidence that the Japanese really think of their ancestors as ever being in hell". This may be true for some Japanese today but in several active Buddhists sects 'hell' is still part of the religious dogma and continues to be a matter of concern. Texts used by Risshô Kôsei-kai speak of "ancestors suffering in fiery hells" (Kômoto, 1991) and Sôka Gakkai still operates with the concept of 'hell' intact. In its publications, the sects may describe 'Heaven and Hell' as mental constructs that should not be regarded as locations to be found outside ourselves, but as concepts they are alive and well (SGI-USA, 2002). Dore (1973:262) tries to look at the matter from a different perspective, suggesting as he does that "the worship of the spirits of the ancestors...can exist independently of Buddhist institutions". This is certainly true but, nevertheless, the Buddhist establishment is intricately connected with death and the world of the afterlife in the form of burials and memorial rites. Be it as a metaphor or as a physical location, in Japan Buddhist hells have played an important role in the explanations with which attempts were made to give life and death an ethical dimension. 'Karmic hindrances' (gôshô), i.e. the consequences of an

objectionable life, are commonly described and explained in terms of 'Heaven and Hell' which may or may not be acceptable or even believable. But it is an explanation, nonetheless, which is repeated over and over again in the voluminous accounts about visits to hell and in the stories and descriptions of the inmates' suffering which have accumulated over the centuries.

The literary preoccupation with hell from the past to the present is quite overwhelming, both in its scope and its detailed interest in evil and suffering and it is difficult to imagine that such accounts only survive as cultural artefacts of the mind (Umehara, 1967). In fact, hell is alive and well in the world of movies, manga and anime, as can be gauged from the frequency with which these 'other worlds' appear in the popular media. Staemmler (2005) has dealt with the phenomenon in an illuminating paper where she investigates the persistent belief in supernatural beings and parallel universes. One might also mention Ishii Teruo, the Japanese movie director, who in 1999 directed a well-known movie called 'Japanese Hell' (jigoku) which dealt with the life of a sect member of Aum Shinrikyô (AUM), responsible for the poisonous gas attacks on the Tokyo underground and her subsequent punishments in hell. The plot of a recent manga, called 'Girl from Hell' (jigoku shôjo), serialized in 2005 in the magazine Nakayoshi, revolves around the ability of the main characters to access hell on a 'hell hotline' (Jigoku Tsushin) where they can request Enma Ai, a 'hell girl', to cause injury or harm to whomsoever the callers do not like. In exchange for this service, the callers forfeit their souls, which go straight to hell after death (http://newsnetwork.com/ encyclopedia/mangaphp?id=6150-February 4, 2008). There is even a website called 'Manga of Hell / Japattack' which specialises in manga with Hell as their main theme (http://japattack.com/main/node/45-February 4, 2008).

This presence in the media does not imply that the Japanese concepts of the after-life, reincarnation, the ancestors, heaven and hell are lucid and straightforward in a Buddhist or any other sense, far from it. As Hori and Ooms (1970:16) make clear, the Japanese attitude to reincarnation is ambiguous, to say the least. On the one hand, the souls of dead children and infants are believed to re-enter the world fairly rapidly after their death. They are not even, or were not until fairly recently, considered to have become a *hotoke* (buddha), the appellation for a dead person.

They were still part of an 'energy pool' of potential life; they had only had a false start (Yanagita, 1988:173). Adult souls, on the other hand, are on one level expected to make yearly return visits to the living, and yet they are also believed to be reborn in a distant paradise, most prominently the Pure Land of Amida, located somewhere in the West. From this it can be seen that the fluid concept of the afterlife is full of inconsistencies and contradictions yet no one, apart from the occasional orthodox scholar and reformist religionist, really seems to be overly concerned about that.

Only one thing appears to be of paramount concern in the context of this world and the afterlife: the dead must be given some opportunity to visit the living so that the mutual dialogue which has been going on for centuries can continue. Because of his special capability to bridge all mental and physical states and to be present in all known existences at the same time, $Jiz\hat{o}$ is eminently suited to facilitate these contacts.

II. Jizô and the Present

7.2.0. Genze-riyaku

Prayer, as Huxley (1994:261) notes, consists of "four distinct procedures": 1) petition, where we ask for something for ourselves; 2) intercession, where we ask for something for other people; 3) adoration, where we perform "acts of devotion" directed towards a god or the sacred; and 4) contemplation, a "condition of alert passivity in which the soul lays itself bare to the divine". It goes without saying that petitions and intercessions rank high on the scale of people's transactions with the powerful and divine. The necessity of self-preservation almost forces this attitude upon us. Aquinas is reputed to have said that "it is legitimate for us to pray for anything which it is legitimate for us to desire" (Huxley, 1994:264). The Japanese have taken this notion to heart far more than anything else and petitioning the various *kami* and Buddhist deities for favours to be enjoyed in the present life constitutes a large part of an individual's relationship with the sacred.

While it is true on one level that the Japanese are fond of offering written petitions to the gods, the written word is frequently accompanied by verbal prayers as well (Werblowsky, 1991:303; Reader, 1991a). But occasionally even prayers are

absent. We may recall the rituals which essentially consisted of touching and rubbing religious images (Naderu-botoke and Osasuri-Jizô). The idea that physical contact with a sacred or spiritually powerful being is beneficial appears in so many places and under so many guises that one could almost talk about a universal trait in humans: be it the children who are brought to Jesus so that he may lay his hand on them (Mark, 10:13), or the crowds of Japanese women trying to catch a whiff of magical air (goma-kaze) produced from riffling through stacks of sutras. They all display a craving for some kind of physical contact with the sacred that cannot rest satisfied with a mental construct (Kimura, 1992:299-311; Iwamoto, 1988).

To make the sacred, usually represented by an icon, more receptive to requests, the devotees' prayers are usually accompanied by gifts. In the case of *Jizô*, the range and variety of offertory gifts are truly amazing. Mauss' classical account of gift giving explains in detail the dynamic principles that operate in these situations. When an insignificant human being proffers something to an elevated divinity, there is an obligation to receive, as well as an obligation to repay the gift. The gods, we are told, are not in a position to refuse this exchange; because of their special nature, they are even expected to "give something great in return for something small" (Mauss, 1969:10-14). This is illustrated in the traffic of the small and inexpensive 'good luck charm' (*omamori*). For a modest financial outlay, people in general expect huge returns. Sold extensively in temples and shrines, they are very much part of daily life in Japan. Apart from their functions as travel souvenirs and gifts for friends, they are also meant to protect their owners against the vagaries of life. 'Things that bring good luck' (engi-mono) are available in abundance in these locations where the brisk trade in these spiritual items demonstrate that "the practice for worldly benefits can be explained in terms of commerce" (Tanabe and Reader, 1998:204).

When to the principle of religious exchange one adds the rewards promised to followers of the *dharma* by many Buddhist texts, the requests for the fulfilment of wishes and material gain in the present have received canonical *imprimatur*. One can no longer define the act in instrumental terms alone. The 'Jizô Longevity Sutra' (*Enmei Jizô Bosatsu-kyô*), which can be found in the appendix, is extravagant in its wide guarantees of material gains for its believers. But the 'Merits of

Joyful Acceptance Chapter' in the vastly more important Lotus Sutra is not to be outdone with its promises of "fine elephants, horses and carriages, jewelled palanquins and litters". These are by no means exceptions. Tanabe and Reader (ibid:73-84) write of many other instances where these assurances appear as a matter of course. In view of such pledges, it is not possible to dismiss the pursuit of individual gains in the present life as practices engaged in by the uneducated whom unscrupulous religionists are deluding since the *genze-riyaku* phenomenon receives canonical sanctions. So when Daniels (2003:620) writes that "Buddhism propagates an ideology of generous giving that can be combined with exploitation for material gain", he is on safe grounds. This does not mean, however, that everyone is pleased with the pursuit of immediate 'this-worldly' gains in its present form. Reformers have attempted to place the practice within a stricter and more religious framework but so far these attempts appear to have met with scant success (Tanabe and Reader, 1998:82-106).

In the introduction to Chapter III I wrote about the primacy of rituals among Japanese worshippers. For a ritual to be effective it has to be correctly executed. Since it is in their interest to do so, priests will usually give advice on the nature of the ritual to be followed in order to access the powers of the deities enshrined in their temple. But in general the ritual structure for communication with *Jizô* follows commonly known procedures of the nature explained in the section dealing with *Kitamuki-Jizô* in the railway station. The same location also illustrated how much religion is a private affair in Japan. Individual worship need not coincide with institutional teaching or dogma. It can be as distant or close to sectarian teachings as the individual decides, a phenomenon described by Reader (1991: 160) as "the fluidity of Japanese religion in general [where] personal choice and interpretation are important". This tendency is further facilitated by the interaction and exchange of opinions of faith on the internet which often is "spread through individuals' stories of personal experience related as religious narratives" (Fukamizu, 2007:3).

Group worship as a rule takes place on fixed days in accordance with the liturgical calendar such Obon and New Year. Priests, on the other hand, are usually engaged in their capacity as specialists in order to perform specific rituals which invariably

involves the chanting of Buddhist scriptures that normally takes place in connection with a death in the family or the anniversary of a deceased person. It is on the occasions of group worship that importance of $Jiz\hat{o}$ becomes apparent.

Radcliffe-Brown's (1956:156) definition of 'ancestor' leaves little room for variations but, as Smith (183:35-6) is recorded to have said once in a colloquium, in Japan variation is what it is all about. These changes to the social meaning of 'ancestor' and 'ancestral rites', in particular since World War II, are ideal for a deity like *Jizô* whose adaptable character makes him thrive in all environments, whether changing or stable. These important shifts have been discussed by Yanagawa and Abe (1978:33-4) and even if they do not mention *mizuko kuyô* specifically, they note that a "significant change is occurring in ancestral worship" where the "rituals for the dead... are becoming mere memorials".

Numerous temples possess exquisite $Jiz\hat{o}$ images fashioned many centuries ago; he even has his own set of sacred texts exclusively dedicated to him. Apart from singing his praise, they explain and define his roles in all the worlds of transmigration and impermanent forms. But, as this thesis has shown, he is most of all a bodhisattva within a living tradition with a remarkable capability to adapt itself to new situations.

He straddles the past and the present in equal measure and today he occupies not only a significant position in the rituals for individual advancement and personal happiness (*genze-riyaku*) and the newer post-war memorialisation rituals, he fulfils a pivotal function within the traditional ancestral rites, which in the opinion of some scholars are of crucial importance in a Japanese context. "Buddhism still exists in contemporary Japan largely because it has continued to play a central role in ancestral rites" (Smith, 1974:22). These activities have ensured him a permanent place in the religious activities of the Japanese (Matsunaga, 1969:237), and as long as these rites continue to be considered meaningful it will be difficult to overstate *Jizô's* significance.

APPENDIX I

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Tôji temple in Kyoto with advertisement for mizuko kuyô

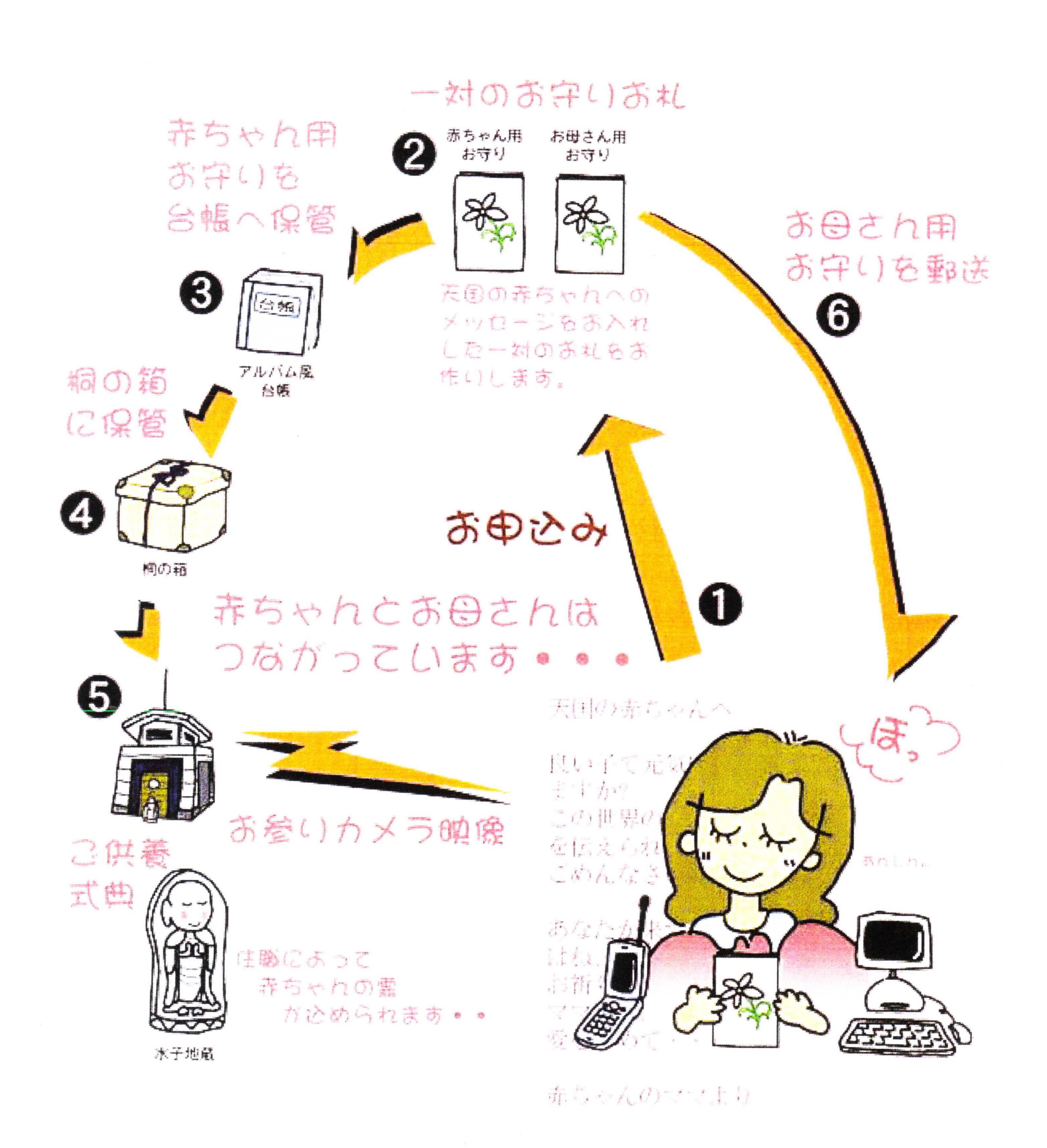


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Two Mizuko ema. The one above from Sada Island is the older variety. The one below is of the 'warabe' variety' from Injô-ji temple in Kyoto.





Sai-no-Kawara Cave on Sado Island with pinwheels and miniature Jizô figures





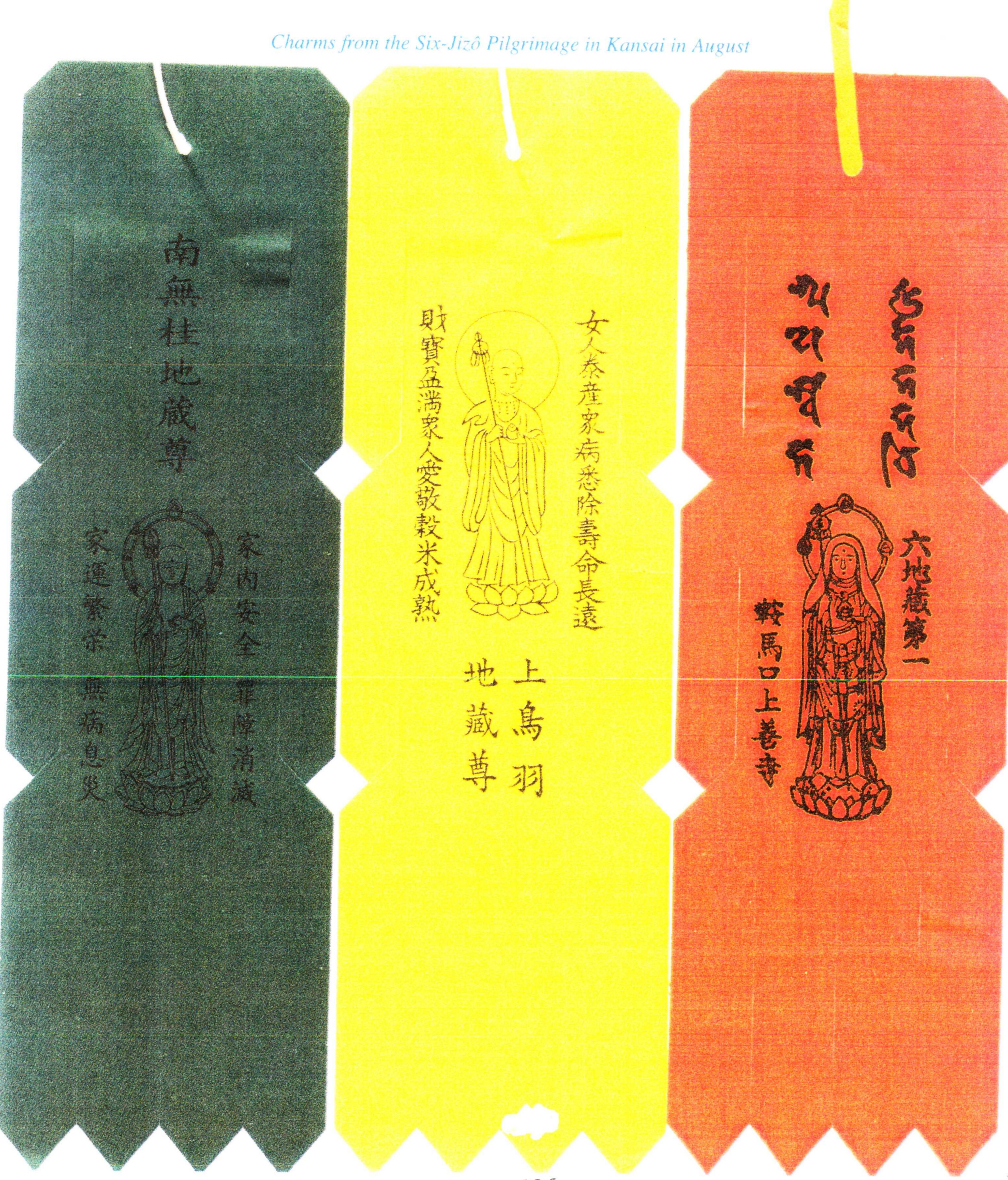
Mizuko-Jizô on Osore-zan

Starting Point for a Round-Trip of Hell (jigoku-meguri) on Osore-zan



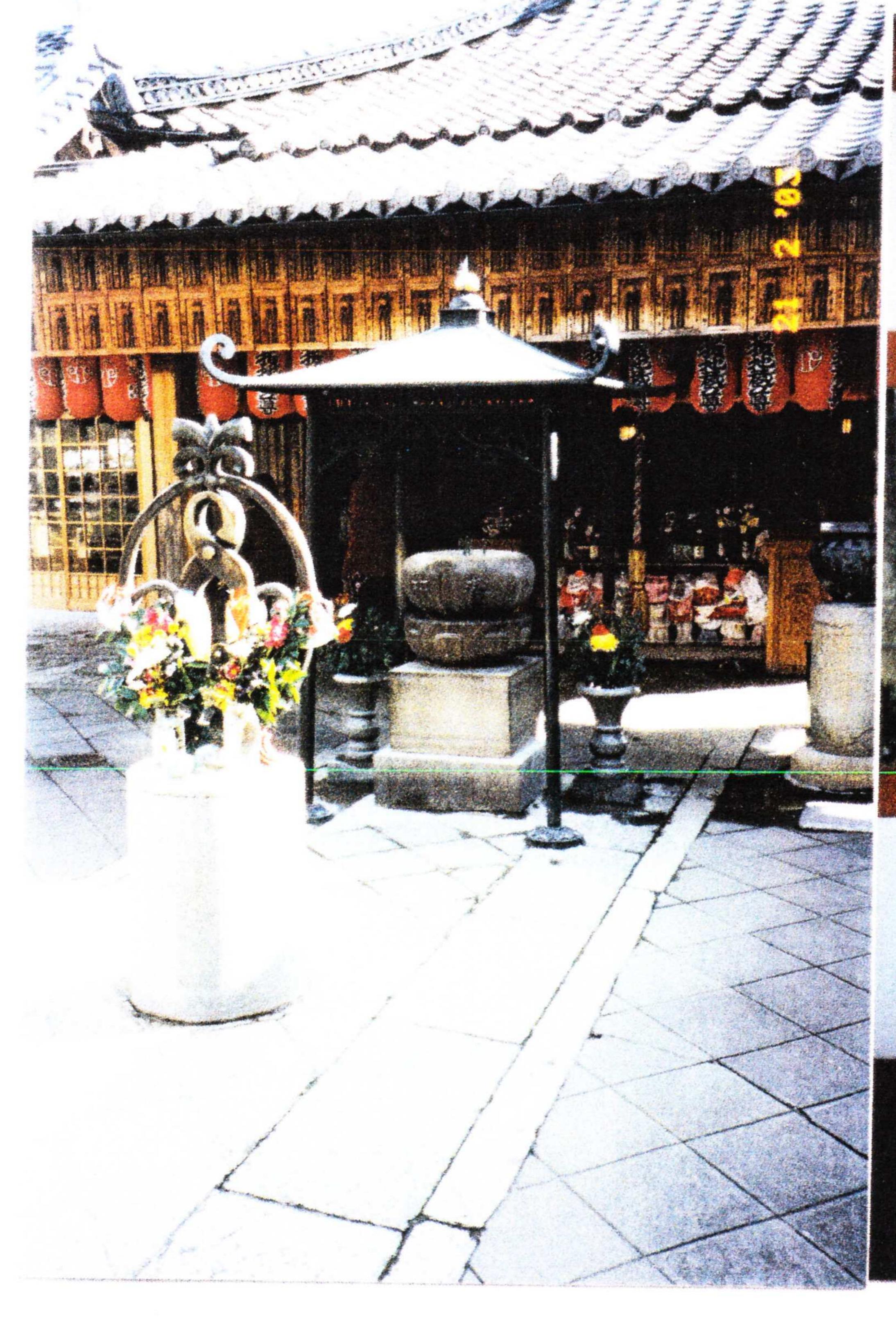


Heaven und Hell Painting (Shônen-ji Temple)



Sekizô-ji temple in Kyoto with 'ex voto' pliers

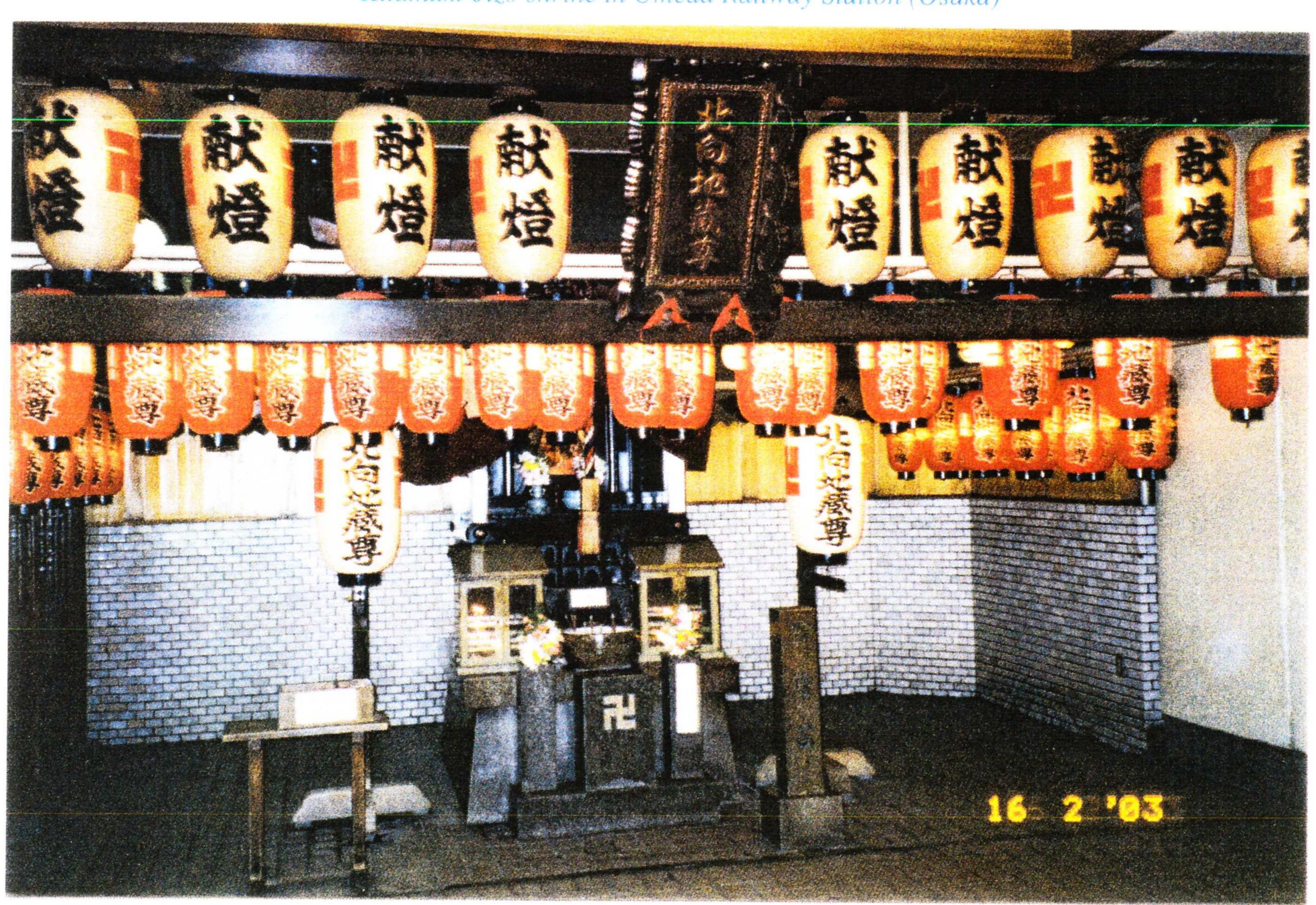
O-sasuri-Jizô in Sekizô-ji (Kuginuki-dera)







Kitamuki-Jizô shrine in Umeda Railway Station (Osaka)



APPENDIX II

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PREFACE TO ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF ENMEI-JIZÔ

1.

ANNOTATED TRANSLATION of ENMEI-JIZÔ BOSATSU-KYÔ ('The Kshitigarbha Sutra of Longevity' of 'Earth Store Bodhisattva of long Life Sutra')

When the Chinese started to translate Buddhist texts into their own language, they did so it with the aid of neither dictionaries nor an established vocabulary in which to transmit alien thoughts and concepts from Sanskrit into a familiar framework. Initially the Chinese did what other translators do in similar situations: they used the available vocabulary. For the spiritual aspect there was a Taoist tradition to fall back on but often words had to be created when previously unknown concepts had to rendered in Chinese.

At one point it was believed that to reconstruct a lost Sanskrit text, all one had to do was to make a 'back-translation' from an available Chinese text. However, recent scholarship shows that many translated texts took on a sinisized existence all on their own, replete with symbols and references that were meaningful only in a Chinese context. Not all translation took this course. Some later translators, if only to mention Kumarajiva and Hsüan-tsang, were very careful in their usage of technical terms. That should not obscure the uncomfortable fact that an exceptionally large amount of material that falls within the provenance of 'Buddhist texts' in Chinese is actually a home grown variety rather than translated texts from the original Sanskrit or Pali. Paul Swanson (1999:248), for instance, estimates that no less than one fifth to one third of all these books and treatises are of Chinese origin.

More than anyone else, the Chinese were acutely aware of this unsatisfactory dichotomy of facts and pious fiction, and many efforts were made to establish whether certain groups of sutras were authentic or whether they belonged to the apocryphal category (Jpn. $giky\hat{o}$). Scholars and bureaucrats started very early to draw up catalogues where scriptures were categorised in terms of their provenance and they would debate whether a given text came from an identifiable source, whether the date of the translation was known, and if the identity of the translator was known. It was not a process without problems; some sutras initially classified as apocrypha were 're-classified' at a later date in accordance with the

prevailing political climate and other sutras, originally classified as authentic translations, were 'de-classified'. A favourable categorisation in many instances assured the survival of a text because it meant it was acceptable as an offering, an act which frequently meant that the sutra would be copied by hand and its number thus multiplied for posterity. However, other scriptures survived because of their inherent appeal, in particular those dealing with Hell and the Underworld, regardless of their unfavourable classification as apocrypha (Buswell, 1990:1-25).

The Japanese came into contact with written Buddhism through these Chinese texts, rather than the Indian originals. Since the Japanese for a very long time did not even attempt to translate these texts into their own language, it would appear that they felt well served by this material. It was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that serious attempts were made to place the Chinese Buddhist texts within a Sanskrit and Japanese framework (Kitagawa, 1987:215). One would have thought that these attempts would have been greeted with general approval but Rev. Tomatsu (2001:3) makes the interesting observation that "sutras ...translated from classical Chinese into contemporary Japanese...have not struck an emotional chord with followers". This may partly explain why we know of so few instances where Japanese clerics have attempted to pass on their own writings as authentic scriptures, in contrast to the large-scale production of Buddhist texts in China. The present text is an exception.

Enmei Jizô Bosatsu-kyô, to give it its full Japanese title, is a small sutra consisting of a single volume, reputedly translated into Chinese in the T'ang period by Fukû (Skt: Amoghavajra, 705-774 CE). Recent scholarship has shown that this is not the case and few people today doubt that it is a text of Japanese origin. This has in no way damaged its popularity in so far as one can call the Jizô-related sutras popular. It has been widely read since ancient times and many commentaries on the text still survive to this day (Ohta, 1996:14-5). From early on it was called shôkan Jizô-kyô, 'small volume Jizô sutra', since it is quite short when compared with what superficially appears to be its namesake, namely the Jizô hongan-kyô (Manabe, 1975:30-1).

It made sense to ascribe the *Enmei Jizô* sutra to *Fukû*. Any text associated with this famous translator automatically increased its status. As well as being the sixth patriarch of the esoteric Shingon sect, he was also responsible for the translation of *Jizô Bosatsu giki*, a manual of rituals, which appears to have found its way to Japan some time around the middle of the eighth century CE (Mochizuki, 1989:53).

The *Enmei Jizô* sutra is not only the most accessible of the sutras dealing with Jizô; it summarises the origin of the bodhisattva as well as the various activities and physical characteristics that form the nucleus of the *Jizô* discourse. In fact, this work seems to formulate the Japanese concept of *Jizô* so well, that one is tempted to disregard the other texts because they do not augment one's knowledge of *Jizô* but only seem to reiterate the text of *Enmei Jizô* sutra. It is of course the other way round, but its terseness and focus on essentials make other works appear longwinded and repetitive. The brevity of the text, however, may also have had other reasons. Buddhist sutras, in particular in Japan, are mainly chanted as an act of homage and worship and are far less read for meaning. Indeed, it matters little whether one understands the text or not. It is the act of engagement with the scripture that produces merit, not necessarily the understanding of it (Kitagawa, 1987:229; Watanabe, 1994:2)

We have no precise information about the genesis of the text, but external evidence puts it somewhere between the eleventh and twelfth century CE. From early times it has been regarded by many as a sutra of dubious origin. Already in the early seventeenth century Japanese scholars pointed out the incongruity of indigenous Japanese *kami* and spirits appearing in what purported to be a text of Indian origin. The same fact also drastically reduced the possibility of Chinese authorship since it is highly unlikely that a Chinese writer would have animated a text with creatures of whose existence he or she was unaware. Yet to this day, regardless of its problematic provenance, the *Enmei Jizô* sutra is still being used in religious rituals by the Shingon and Sôtô sects (Manabe, 1987:119-124). It is also one of the very few sutras that is readily available from many of the small temple stalls selling trinkets and religious paraphernalia.

Enmei Jizô Bosatsu-kyô starts with the words "Thus I have heard" as do all proper sutras in order to show that a) the text originates with the Buddha and b) that it has been heard by Ananda who in accordance with the instructions given to him by the Buddha relates what he has heard in order that it may be committed to paper. This procedure was put in place to guarantee that the text had not been arbitrarily composed but that it was a faithful reiteration of what the Buddha had actually said.

The structure of the text also agrees with the traditional sutra form. According to Hsüan-hua (1974:29), sutras cannot be told like any other story. Their narration must be in accordance with a specific paradigm, the so-called 'Six Establishments', which are "the establishment of (1) credibility, (2) of a hearer, (3) of a time, (4) a host, (5) a place and (6) of an assembly" (*ibid:22-3*). Overall these conditions seem to have been met. The only conditions that are not self-evident, are those numbered (1) and (3). Hsüan-hua would most likely view the first instance in apodictic terms, i.e. its truth-value is incontrovertible. As for the fulfilment of the temporal requirement of 'establishment (3)', it would be futile to place the event within calendrical time since we are dealing with a genre, where mythopoeia and supranatural time concepts hold sway.

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ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT OF ENMEI-JIZÔ BOSATSU-KYÔ

('The Kshitigarbha Sutra of Longevity' of 'Earth Store Bodhisattva of Long Life

Thus I have heard: At one time the Buddha dwelt on *Mt. Kharâdîya1* attended by twelve thousand great monks (bhikshus). There were also present 60,000 bodhisattvas, myriads of *apsaras, devas, dragons, nagas, yakshas*,² all kinds of illustrious and noble kings³ who had gathered there from the *ten quarters*.⁴

Just when the Buddha had finished explaining the doctrine that in times of declining faith the *dharma* will be continued by monks who seemingly do not follow its precepts, ⁵ *Taishakuten*, ⁶ also called '*Stainless Birth*, ⁶ asked the Buddha: "Enlightened One! I endeavour to protect the world [from pain and ignorance] but how can sentient beings be saved after the *parinirvâna*⁸ of My Lord, in a period when the *dharma* will be in the decline (*mappô*). ⁹

The Buddha answered *Taishakuten* as follows: "There is a bodhisattva by the name of Enmei Bosatsu, ('Earth Store Bodhisattva of Long Life'). Every day during the early hours of dawn, he enters into several distinct states of deep meditation and goes to the rescue [of all sentient beings] in the six stages of existence (rokudô), 10 where he relieves suffering and confers joy. Anyone dwelling in the 'three lowest stages of existence' [the realms of hell, hungry ghosts or beasts], 11 anyone who sees the figure of *Enmei Jizô* or hears his voice will surely be reborn as a human being, or as a heavenly spirit (ten), or in the 'Pure Land' (Jôdo). Those who dwell in the 'three good realms' will [in this life] be endowed with favourable karma and will afterwards be reborn in a *Buddha Land*. If they always remember this [teaching] and open their mind's eye [to the truth of this message] how could they possibly not achieve their goal [of rebirth in the 'Pure Land']. This bodhisattva has furthermore the power to bestow [the following] ten kinds of good fortune: 1) easy delivery in childbirth; 2) absence of physical deformities; 3) complete cure of all diseases; 4) a long life; 5) penetrating wisdom; 6) surfeit of riches; 7) the love of many people; 8) the growth and ripening of rice and cereals [so that no one will ever starve]; 13 9) protection by all the spirits (jinmyô) [in heaven and on earth]; and 10) the realisation of supreme

enlightenment (daibodai). Moreover, Enmei Jizô Bosatsu will avert the 'eight calamities' so that 1) rain will fall and the wind blow in season; 2) discord with foreign countries will not occur; 3) there will be no strife at the home; 4) the sun and the moon and will not wane [be eclipsed]; 5) the constellations will remain in their fixed positions; 6) avenging ghosts and spirits will not materialise; 7) there will be no outbreak of draught or famine; and 8) man will be spared the pains of illness.

And the *Enlightened One* continued his address to *Taishakuten*: "If in the worlds of the future there are sentient beings who will accept this sutra, revere [its teachings] and make offerings to *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu*, they shall experience no calamity, have no bad dreams or [see] unlucky omens, and devils, evil spirits and demons shall not be able to seize them within a distance of a hundred *yojana*. And further, if the various *tengu*, lords of the earth and planets, spirits of the mountains, trees, rivers, oceans, water, fire, famine, want, burial grounds, spirits of the snakes, curses and spells, gods of the spirits of the dead, of the road and the kitchen hear this sutra or the name of *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu* [and then] rid themselves of their wicked feelings, they shall in their present form realise the emptiness of all phenomena and obtain enlightenment [here and now]."

Thereupon *Taishakuten* put another question to the Buddha: "*Enlightened One*, when *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu* in that manner is moving between the six realms of existences (*rokudô*), in what way does he cause the deliverance of sentient beings?"

The Enlightened One replied: 16 "All existing things are void and tranquil [without permanent form]; in death there is no rest [finality] and one is reborn in accordance with the laws of *karma*. But the path of *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu* is a path of universal salvation."

Living creatures do not resemble each other in their appearance and their desires are virtually without end. Because of this, enlightenment is not easily attained. [Accommodating himself to these differences], *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu* may assume the form of a buddha, a bodhisattva, a *pratyeka-buddha*, a *shrâvaka*, ¹⁷ the king of

Brahma Heaven, Bonnô, 18 Taishakuten (Indra), Enma-ô, 19 (ruler of the Underworld). Bishamonten (guardian god of the northern sphere), ²⁰ the [gods of the] sun and the moon, or any one of the five planets, 21 or one of the seven planets, ²² or the nine planets. ²³ He may also assume the guise of a 'wheel-turning noble king', ²⁴ or appear as the ruler of minor kingdoms, or reveal himself in the form of a wealthy person, or a sage, a government official, or a woman. He may assume the shape of a monk or a nun, or that of a layman or laywoman, who follows the precepts of the *dharma*. He may also assume the shape of a celestial being, a dragon, a demon or a non-human creature. He may appear as a medical doctor, take the shape of a medicinal plant, or as a merchant or a farmer, as the king of elephants, lions, and oxen, or show himself in the shape of a horse. He can assume the shape of the great earth, [appear as] king of the mountains and the great seas; in short, he may take on the form of everything permanently subject to the 'four modes of birth' (shishô), 25 or the five elements (gorin), 26 and he can appear in the 'three realms of transmigration'. ²⁷ Thus *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu*, because of the universal nature of his dharma-body²⁸ is omnipresent in the six realms of existence (rokudô) where he will appear in any shape or form and with genuine compassion deliver all sentient beings and unfailingly destroy the illusion of 'three realms of transmigration'. Even if people in the future are not fully able to walk the Buddhist path, as long as they are single-minded in their belief, give offerings and revere *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu*, they shall suffer no injury by [dangerous] weapons and poison shall not affect them. And in the same way that those who spit up in the air are hit by their own falling saliva and those who throw ashes against the wind are hit [in their faces] when the wind blows it back, so shall sorcery, malicious spells and the curses of vengeful spirits return to those who wish them upon others.

Thereupon *Taishakuten* put another question to the Buddha: "*Enlightened One*, why is [this bodhisattva] called *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu* and what are the reasons for his name and appearance?"

And the *Enlightened One* replied: "My pious friend! Because he has the heart of a truly good bodhisattva and is perfect and bright, he is called *Nyoirin*, ²⁹ because his heart is free from obstacles *(mukeige)*, ³⁰ he is called *Kanjizai* (someone who can

observe freely),³¹ because his heart is beyond birth and death, he is called *Enmei* ('extender of life'), and because his heart is unbreakable, he is called *Jizô* ('earth store'). Because there are no limits in his heart, he is called a Great Bodhisattva; and because he is beyond form, he is called *Mahâsattva* ('great being').³² Take these things to heart, believe and remember them well!".

At this time the Great Earth trembled and rumbled and *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu* emerged out of the ground with his right knee bent, elbow raised and his [left]³³ hand cupped to his ear. His left leg was hanging straight down, and in his right hand he held a sistrum (mendicant's staff).³⁴ [Turning] to the *Enlightened One*, he said: "Every morning at daybreak I enter several separate levels of deep meditation. From these [mental realms] I go forth to the various hells to release those who dwell there from pain. I also go to the 'buddha-less' worlds in order to deliver their inhabitants [from pain]. Thus I guide them all [to salvation] both in this and other worlds.

Men and women alike who wish to obtain my blessings after the *parinirvâna* of the Buddha, who do not question the condition of [their] lives, whether lucky or unfortunate, who do not question [sentient beings'] psycho-physical obstacles and impurities, 35 who treat their parents with filial piety, respect their teachers and are considerate in their speech and conduct, who do not upset others [through intemperate acts], who do not cause the taking of lives, who refrain from illicit sexual conduct, and who on the eight (hassaijitsu) or ten fasting days (jissaijitsu)³⁶ or the eighteenth or the twenty-fourth³⁷ with a sincere heart read this sutra³⁸ and invoke my name, by the divine power of my 'dharma-eye', ³⁹ I shall transform their karmic retribution, make them benefit from the fruit of their present [good deeds] so that they [in the future] may obtain the highest wisdom and enlightenment (bodhi). Through countless kalpas (aeons)⁴⁰ I have until this moment observed all sentient beings within the 'six realms' (rokudô). In spite of our dharma nature 41 which affirms an ultimate and undifferentiated identity between us all and [that there is] no beginning and no end, [they still believe] because of their ignorance $(avidy\hat{a})^{42}$ that we are all different, and that birth, permanent dwellings, changes and death exist for real [and are not conditioned phenomena]. For this reason they are not able to distinguish between right and

wrong thus generating uncharitable thoughts, which produce evil karma, that cause them to transmigrate perpetually through the 'six realms'. Only when all these people, who are being born now and who are dying in order to be reborn as fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, have entered the path leading to enlightenment, shall I become a buddha. As long as even one sentient being remains [unassured of enlightenment] I shall not become a buddha. If anyone should ever be aware of this vow, here or in future worlds, who desires enlightenment yet does not achieve it, I shall not accept perfect illumination (shôgaku) for myself."

Full of praise the *Enlightened One* then said: "Splendid, splendid! You are indeed a pious man *(zennanji)*. After my *parinirvâna*, I'll entrust you with the care of those who shall be born in the wicked worlds of the future, [who will become] victims of crime and hardship. In this world and in the worlds hereafter, guide them onto the path [of salvation] and let no one, even for one single moment, fall into any of the evil realms *(sangai)*, let alone the 'hell of interminable torment'!"⁴³

Waiting on the Buddha, *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu* addressed him thus: "*Enlightened One*, fear not! I shall save all sentient beings in the six realms. If anyone is profoundly suffering [within these realms], I shall substitute myself for them and personally take their anguish upon myself. If this shall not come to pass, I will not accept perfect illumination *(shôgaku)* for myself."

Reiterating his praise for *Jizô* in verse, the *Enlightened One* responded: "Splendid, splendid! *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu* is indeed a compassionate friend of the multitudes. When they come into existence, you become their body, and when they die you become their guide. Yet oblivious of this fact, they conduct their brief lives void of happiness. During the period of the 'declining dharma' *(mappô)* after my extinction, when there is strife in the land, when the governments of kings are thrown into disarray, when one shall see the emergence of robbers on the prowl and marauding soldiers, then the time has come to put one's trust in *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu*. If in this or any future worlds [the desires and wishes] of those who seek [rebirth] do not come true, the doctrines that I have preached shall all have been in vain."

Upon this all the universes trembled six times and, addressing the *Enlightened One*, the bodhisattvas *Monju* (Sk: *Mañjushri*), *Fugen* (Sk: *Samantabhadra*), *Kongôzô* (Sk: *Vajragarbha*), *Kokûzô* (Sk: *Âkâshagarbha*) and *Shôkanjizai* (Sk: *Avalokiteshvara*) all exclaimed as with one voice; "We shall reveal ourselves to those who in the future will hear either this sutra or the name of this bodhisattva and we shall accompany them, guide them and enlighten their minds. If this cannot be, we shall not accept perfect illumination *(shôgaku)* for ourselves."

At that moment *Bonnô*, *Taishakuten* and *Shitennô* ⁴⁴ let heavenly flowers rain down on the Buddha as an act of devotion, saying: "*Enlightened One*, if in the worlds of the future sentient beings on their own accord are upright and rightminded, and if they do not blur the distinction between right and wrong, and do not abandon [the karmic system of] rewards and punishments, if these persons possess this sutra and place their faith in this bodhisattva, then we and our kin shall protect them and stay by their sides night and day, ward off any calamity that otherwise would have fallen upon them within a distance of hundred *yojana* in the region where they live. We shall grant them peace of mind, their cereals shall ripen and their wishes shall come true. If not, ⁴⁵ we shall not be called guardians and protectors of the world and shall not revert to [our] original state of enlightenment. ⁴⁶

At that very moment two boy attendants appeared on the right and left side of $Jiz\hat{o}$ *Enmei Bosatsu*. The name of the boy on the left is $Sh\hat{o}zen$ (Ruler of Good); white in appearance, he holds in his hand a white lotus and is in charge of the 'dharmanature' $(hossh\hat{o})$. ⁴⁷ The boy on the right is called $Sh\hat{o}aku$ (Ruler of Evil). His body is red and he holds a $vajra^{48}$ in his hand.

The *Enlightened One* then finally addressed the assembled crowd with the following words: "You should all bear in mind that these two boys are the hands and feet of the 'dharma-nature' and of ignorance (avidyâ). Jizô Enmei bosatsu is the fierce spirit of Fudô-myô-ô (Sk: Acalanâtha)⁴⁹ and the true form of [the letter] 'A'. All sentient beings who [clearly] understand this truth shall without fail realise their aims [of leaving this world of sorrow]. They shall rid themselves of

the 'three poisons' (sandoku) ⁵¹ and obtain the ultimate freedom [where the mind is freed of all obstacles], and if they wish to be reborn in a Buddha-Land, their wish shall come true accordingly. If people in future worlds revere and pay homage to *Enmei Jizô Bosatsu* without any doubt in their minds, everything they wish for in this existence shall be theirs, and in their next lives they shall be reborn in the *Pure Land of Sukhâvatî* ⁵² and be blessed with clear insight [cognition]. ⁵³

After *Buddha Shâkyamuni* had expounded this sutra, everyone assembled was filled with joy and made even greater endeavours in upholding and preaching the *dharma*.

NOTES AND COMMENTS:

¹ *Mt. Kharâdîya* (Jpn: *kyaradasen*; also *Karadasen*) is the location of "Jizô's Pure Land"; one of the seven golden mountains surrounding *Mt. Sumeru* (Jpn: *Shumizen*), the centre of the Buddhist universe, where Buddha, in accordance with tradition, in several sermons revealed the existence and activities of Jizô (DJBT p.199)

² supernatural creatures; 'demi-gods'.

³ noble kings: Sk. *cakravartin*, (Jpn: *tenrinjô-ô*) "wheel-turning noble kings"; a descriptive title of the ideal monarch.

⁴ i.e. the four cardinal points of the compass, the four intermediate directions, and upwards and downwards; in other words, everyone in all the various universes.

⁵ The Candle of the Latter Dharma (Mappô-Tonmyô-ki) is a short but influential Japanese Buddhist text attributed to Saichô (Dengyô Daishi, 767-822), the founder of the Tendai sect in Japan. This work argues paradoxically that in the age of the Latter Dharma (mappô) the nominal monk - i.e., a monk who shaves his hair and wears the Buddhist robes and maintains the outward appearance of a monk but ignores the Buddhist precepts and acts in a manner that seems to go against the basic rules of monastic life - nevertheless is to be regarded as a 'True Treasure' of the dharma (Rhodes 1994).

⁶ from Sk. *Shakra Devendra*, also know as *Indra* and considered a protector of Buddhism (DJBT p.338).

⁷ 'Stainless Birth', (Jpn: *mukushô*).

- ⁸ *Parinirvâna*, 'complete dying out', is coincidental with one's physical death, a term used to diffentiate it from *nirvâna* "dying out" (Coomaraswamy 1964:122).

 ⁹ The Buddhist view of history holds that after the passing of Shâkyamuni Buddha, there follow three successive ages, the *True, Imitative*, and *Latter Dharmas*. As the periods grow further removed from Shâkyamuni's lifetime, people's ability to understand and practice his teachings grows increasingly feeble and flawed.

 During the period of the *True Dharma*, the Buddha's teachings are revered and widely practiced by monks, and many will attainment enlightenment. On the other hand, only the teachings and their practice are found in the *Imitative Dharma*; and in the degenerate age of the *Latter Dharma* (*mappô*), only the teachings remain.

 Finally, at the end of these three periods, the Buddha-Dharma is thought to perish completely (Rhodes, 1994).
- ¹⁰ *Rokudô* are the six lower stages of the ten realms of existence (*Jikkai*). The frequent reference to six rather than all ten stages is most likely a reflection of the unobtainable nature of the last four (*shrâvaka*; *pratyeka-buddha*; *bodhisattva*; and buddha-hood); cf.¹⁷. The other six are in ascending order (1) hell; (2) *pretas*; 'hungry spirits'; (3) animals and beasts; (4) *asuras* (evil spirits, constantly engaged in fighting); (5) human beings; and (6) heavenly beings, '*ten*'. One hears the least of (4), and many texts leave the *asuras* out all together (Ikeda, 1995:148).
- ¹¹ sanzu, the realms of (1) hell fire; the (2) bloody condition of beastly animals spent killing; and (3) the realm of hungry ghosts causing agony and pain with swords and sticks (DJBT p.278).
- ¹² sanzendô, the 'three good realms' of heavenly spirits (ten), man, and demispirits (ashura) in distinction to the three baser ones; cf. above.
- ¹³ This most likely refers to the 'five grains' (*gokoku*): wheat, rice, *mugi* [common denominator for wheat and barley] beans, and millet, of which there are two varieties *awa* and *kibi*.
- ¹⁴ A *yojana*, (Jpn: *yujun*) is said to be equivalent to the distance a royal army can march in a day, which is said to be between thirty and forty Chinese miles.
- ¹⁵ Mythological monster equipped with wings, a long nose and prominent beak. The incongruous appearance in this context of a Japanese creature of the imagination gives the lie to the supposedly Indian origin of the text, which was already pointed out in the Tokugawa period by Ryôta (De Visser, 1914:163).

¹⁶ The passage start with the word *zennanshi*, 'good (virtuous) man/men', which together with the compound *zennan-zennyo*, 'virtuous men and women', is traditionally used when referring to the listeners of a sûtra. In this instance it is directed at *Taishakuten*. I have resisted the temptation to translate the word with the expression "my good man".

17 A pratyeka-buddha (Jpn: byakushi-butsu) is someone who obtains enlightenment through his own efforts but who does not communicate this insight to others. A shrâvaka (Jpn: shômon) is a 'monk', but more literally someone who 'hears' and understands the dharma, in which case he can be considered as an arhat as well. Both terms may on occasion be derogatory (de Barry, 1958:159), yet in Mahayana texts shrâvaka are frequently included in the crowds that listen to Buddhist sermons. One must also bear in mind that the physical appearance of Jizô is identical to that of a shrâvaka. "The Bodhisattvas are specially distinguished from the Shrâvakas (Arhats) and Pacceka-Buddhas (Sanskrit: pratyeka-buddha) or 'Private Buddhas', who have become followers of the Buddha 'for the sake of their own complete Nirvâna'...For the bodhisattvas enter upon their course out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, weal, and happiness of the world at large, both gods and men, for the sake of the complete Nirvâna for all beings" (Coomaraswamy, 1964:231).

¹⁸ King of Brahma Heaven, (Sanskrit: *Mahâbrahman*).

¹⁹ *Yama*, King of the dead and the Underworld. It may be a typographical error, but he does not appear in Itô Tsukasa's *kobun* version where he should have been between *Taishaku* and *Bishamon* on p.80. He is however mentioned in the modern Japanese version. *Enma-ô* is likewise mentioned in *Kokuyaku issaikyô*, 1985:296.

²⁰ Bishamonten (Sanskrit: *Viashravana*, guardian god of the northern sphere).

²¹The five planets are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.

²² The seven planets are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn to which the sun and the moon are added.

²³ The nine planets consist of the seven planets to which were added the waxing and waning phases of the moon. "With the naked eye as their sole means of observation, the Indians knew only the seven planets (*graha*) of the ancient - Sun (*Sûrya*, *Ravi*), Moon (*Candra*, *Soma*), Mercury (*Budha*), Venus (*Shukra*), Mars (*Mangala*), Jupiter (*Brhaspati*) and Saturn (*Shani*); to these *grahas*, two more were added, *Râhu* and *Ketu*, the ascending and descending nodes of the moon"

(Basham, 1967:493). It is worth noting the different translations into Japanese of the various number of stars (5, 7, 9) in the two versions of *Enmei Jizô-kyô* by Itô Tsukasa and the *Kokuyaku issaikyô*, respectively. The former translates *goshô* as the five elements, but strictly speaking, the five elements are only essences thereof. They are related to, but are not the planets themselves. Later in the sutra the five elements are actually referred to "sangai no arayuru shishô gogyô".

- ²⁵ *Shishô*: the four modes of birth: (1) *taishô*, 'birth from the womb', (2) *ranshô*, 'birth from an egg', (3) *shisshô*, 'birth from moisture', and (4) *keshô*, 'metamorphosis' (DJBT, p.306).
- ²⁶ The five elements comprise earth, water, fire, trees, and stones. "The five elements…are mutually friendly or antagonistic to each other. From the operation of the five elements proceed the five atmospheric conditions, five kinds of grain, and five planets. According to Chu Hsi, the five elements are not identical with the five objects whose name they bear but are subtle essences whose nature is however best manifested by those elements. The spirits of the five elements…are also regarded as the Spirits of the five Planets" (Williams, 1974:186-7).
- ²⁷ Sangai, "three realms of existence (transmigration)": (1) 'the realm of desire' (yokkai), which encompasses those parts of heaven and hell where mankind and beasts are still driven by carnal lust and selfish desires; (2) 'the realm of form' (shikikai), where matter still exists but without the bodily appetites which characterise the former existence; (3) 'the realm of non-form' (mushikikai) where only the meditative aspect exists (DJBT, p.264).
- ²⁸ reference to the theory of the Three Bodies *(sanshin)* of a buddha. The Dharmabody *(hosshin)*, is the body of ultimate reality, invisible and formless (DJBT, p.112 & p.273).
- ²⁹ Nyoirin: lit. 'wish-granting-wheel'; one of *Kannon's* attributes which indicates the bodhisattva's capacity for fulfilling people's wishes (DJBT, p.235).
- ³⁰ *Mukeige* (Sanskrit: *a-citta-âvaranah*); complicated compound which refers to pure thought (Kanaoka, 1973:110; Conze, 1975:95-6).
- ³¹ *Kanjizai* usually refers to *Kannon* (Avalokiteshvara), as in the well-known opening line of the Heart Sutra *'Kanjizai bosatsu gyôjin'*.
- ³² *Mahâsattva* ('great being') is an epithet for someone who seeks to save all sentient being; a bodhisattva, in other words.

²⁴ cf. 3 above

- ³³ It is problematic as to which hand is holding what. The text is specific with regard to the legs; i.e. whether it writes about the right or the left leg. Not so, however, in respect to the hands. If one were to follow the visual interpretations of the first *Enmei-Jizô* sculptures then the right hand is cupping the (right) ear and the left is holding the sistrum (Matsushima, 1986:59 & ill.19). Yet this appearance is not universal. I have frequently seen sitting, cross-legged statues being called *Enmei-Jizô* as well.
- 35 Fujô, 'bodily defilements'; refers to anger, greed, hate, and stupidity, etc., the passions that are obstacles to enlightenment.
- ³⁶ Saijitsu are those days of the month where the Buddhist precepts are to be strictly observed and when one abstains from committing evil acts (the 1st, 8th, 14th, 15th, 18th, 23rd, 24th, 28th, 29th and 30th). If that is not possible, one should make an attempt to honour at least the eighteenth and twenty-fourth, the two days of the month dedicated to *Jizô*.
- ³⁷ the two feast days of the month in honour of *Jizô*.
- The Japanese text is actually more magnanimous than one could guess from the English translation. Literally, the text only asks for *tendoku*, i.e. an abbreviated form for sutra reading and chanting where one skips large sections of the text. A few lines of each page are read aloud before proceeding to the next page where the same action is repeated. This is in contrast to *shindoku*, 'true reading' which refers to the reading and chanting of the whole of a sutra, often the six hundred volumes of *Hannya-kyô* (Sanskrit: *Prajñâpâramitâ Sûtra*).
- ³⁹ *Hôgen*, 'dharma-eye', refers to the ability to see things as they really are, the Kantian *Ding an sich* (DJBT, p.101).
- ⁴⁰ Infinitely long period of time. The length of a *kalpa* is equivalent to "the period required for one to empty a city full of poppy seeds by taking away one seed every year" (DJBT, p.181).
- ⁴¹ *Hosshô*, 'dharma nature', the ultimate and essential Buddhist nature of all things which lie dormant in everyone, in all things, even, according to some Mahâyâna schools of thought.
- ⁴² 'ignorance', *mumyô* (Sanskrit: *avidyâ*) is one of the 'Twelve Causations' (*nidânas*), the destiny of unenlightened beings still subject to the 'death/rebirth' chain of causation (DJBT, p.154). Since *avidyâ* is the error of deeming transient phenomena to be permanent, it is the root of all other *nidânas*. Humphreys

describes the twelve *nidânas* as "spokes on the Wheel of Becoming, links in the Chain of Causation" (1967:244).

- ⁴³ 'Avîci hell', (Jpn: *muken abiji jigoku*); the worst part of hell where sinners stay the longest and suffer the most pain.
- ⁴⁴ The Four Guardian Kings of the Four Directions: *Jikokuten* in the east, *Zôjôten* in the south, *Kômoten* in the west, and *Tamonten* in the north.
- ⁴⁵ Each paragraph finishes with the stock phrase: *moshi shikarazunba* 'if this be not so'.
- ⁴⁶ hongaku as opposed to shikaku, 'entering enlightenment'.
- ⁴⁷ *hosshô*, the ultimate nature of things. Here it is worthwhile recalling the two *kushôjin*, the gods that are said to be born simultaneously with oneself, one to record the good, the other one in order to take note of one's evil deeds (DJBT, p.198).
- ⁴⁸ A metal stick to be held in the hand. It comes in several sizes with curved, spear-like prongs at both ends. It is used for esoteric rituals.
- ⁴⁹ Acalanâtha is the immovable centre between good and evil.
- ⁵⁰ The first letter in the Sanskrit alphabet believed to embody the Ultimate Truth.
- ⁵¹ *sandoku*, i.e. avarice and lust. in DJBT p.268 'stupidity', *guchi*, has taken the place of 'lust', which is also the word used in the *gendaiyaku* (modern translation).
- ⁵² Pure Land of Sukhâvatî (the land of happiness); the land where Amitabha dwells as described in the 'Amida Sûtra' (Conze, 1973:232-6).
- ⁵³ *Mushônin* refers to the Sanskrit term *anutpattika-dharma-kshanti*, a higher spiritual stage in which one recognises the immutable reality of all existence (DJBT p.216).

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ORIGINAL JAPANESE TEXT OF ENMEI-JIZÔ BOSATSU-KYÔ

(after Iwano, Masao (ed.), (1985), Kokuyaku Issaikyô, Tokyo: Daitô Shuppan)

佛說延命地藏菩薩

千人と供なりき。一切の諸天及び龍、夜叉、人、非人等、 に生じ、 はく、「未來世に於いて、 星宿變ぜず、六には鬼神來らず、七には飢渴發らず、八には人民病無し。」と。佛、 除く。一には風雨、時に隨ひ、二には他國起らず、三には自界叛かず、四には日月蝕せず、 寶盈盗,七には衆人愛敬,八には穀米成熟,九には神明加護,十には大菩提を證す。亦,八大怖を 六道に遊化して苦を拔き樂を與ふ。若し 世尊、我れ世を護らんと欲するに、若し佛の滅後の には女人泰産、二には身根具足、三には衆葯悉除、四には鬱命長遠、五には聰明智惠、六には財 に況んや憶念して心眼開くことを得ば、決定して成就するをや。亦た是の菩薩は十種の福を得。 諸の災患、惡夢、 爾の時に世尊是の 帝釋に告げたまはく、「一りの菩薩有り。名けて延命地藏菩薩と曰ふ。每日晨朝に諸の定に入り、 の如く我れ聞きき。 若し此の經、是の菩薩の名を聞かば諸の邪氣を吐き、 或は淨土に生す。三善道に在つて其の名を聞く者は現の果報を得て、後には佛土に生す。 宮山神、 木神、 惡相の諸の不吉祥無し。魍魎、鬼神、娘 大乗無依の行を說き已る。 岩し衆生有つて此の經を受持し、是の菩薩を恭敬し供養せば、百由旬の內 江海神、 時, 佛、佉羅陀山に在して、大比丘衆萬二千人と俱なりき。 水神、 火神、隨餓神、 三途に在つて此の菩薩に於いて體を見、名を聞けば人天 時に帝釋有り。 法末の衆生は當さに何んが拔濟すべきや。」と。 塚神、 金輪、銀輪、諸の輪王等十方より來れり。 自ら本空を悟つて速かに菩提を證せん。 鳩槃茶等も永く便りを得ず。天狗、土公、 蛇神、咒詛神、 無垢生と名く。佛に白して言く 靈神、 帝釋に告げたま 路神、竈宅神 五には

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(*) 崩大本は息に作る。 校訂者) 校訂者) (大正新脩大藏經は本經を收

空三藏韶(を奉じて)譯す

(*) 龍大本は惠に作る。 に在りて、地融十輪経を脱きた まふ。 に在りて、地融十輪経を脱きた まか。 に在りて、地融十輪経を脱きた を輸費に金、銀・銅・銀・銀輪主は一洲に、金輪、大方廣の義。 【三】 大乗とは小乗に對する話。 大方廣の義。 【三】 法末=末法の時代を云ふ。 「三】 法末=末法の時代を云ふ。 「三」 法末=末法の時代を云いては本願短脚註参照、 大方廣の義。 「三」 法末=末法の時代を云いては本願短脚註参照、 「一」 地換茶:所にもいっに、 た、阿修羅を云ふ。 「一」 地換茶:「中、下の三あり。天、 人、阿修羅を云ふ。 「一」 地換茶:「中、下の三あり。天、 人、阿修羅を云ふ。 等も還つて本人に著かん。天に唾を吐き、風に向つて灰を投ぐれば還つて其の身を扮すが如し。」 心に延命菩薩を禮拜し、供養すべし。刀杖も加へず、毒も害すること能はず、厭魅、咒詛、起屍 三界の有を破す。悉く心、善なるを以つてなり。未來の衆生は發心するとと能はず、但だ當さに の如く法身の自体遍きが故に種種の身を現じて、六道に遊化して衆生を度脱す。能く一菩を以つ は山王の形を現じ、或は大海の形を現す。三界の所有る四生、五形變ぜさる所無し。延命菩薩は の身を現じ、或は欒草の身を現じ、或は商人の身を現じ、或は農人の身を現す。或は象王の身を 現じ、或は、七星の身を現じ、或は九星の身を現す。或は轉輪翌王の身を現じ、或は諸の小王の は比丘、比丘尼、優婆塞、優婆夷の身を現す。或は天、龍、夜叉、人、非人等の身を現す。 を現じ、或は長者の身を現じ、或は居士の身を現じ、或は宰官の身を現じ、或は婦女の身を現す。 巴身同じからず、性欲無量なれども普く得度を爲す。延命菩薩は或は佛身を現じ、或は菩薩の身 网の時に帝釋、佛に白して言く、「世尊、延命菩薩は何んが六道を 化して衆生を得度するや。」と。 帝釋に告げたまはく、「善男子、諸法は空寂にして生滅に住せされども、縁に隨つて生するが故 或は師子王の身を現じ、或は牛王の身を現じ、或は馬形の身を現ず。或は大地の形を現じ、 五星の身 或は路

きが故に大菩薩と名け、心に色相無きが故に靡訶薩と名く。汝等信受して心に別つ所無く、妄失 故に觀自在と名け、心に生滅無きが故に延命と名け、心に摧破無きが故に地藏と名け、 爾の時に帝輝、佛に白して言く、「世尊、 天帝に告げたまはく、「善男子、真善の菩薩は心、明圓なるが故に如意輪と名け、心に礙导無き 何んが故に名けて廷命菩薩と日ふや。其の相云何。」と。 心に邊際

> 化=遊化するとと。

空の五を云ふ。 しむる咒法を使ふ鬼なり。死屍を起たしめて、人を殺されたといる。人を殺さ 月曜を加ふ。 【三】 五形=地、水、火、生、胎生の四を云ふ。 【三】七星=五星に更に日、歳星、大白星、辰星を云ふ。 王なり。 m-Inrn. 叉、釋提桓凶と云ふ 多聞天に何じ、四天王中の 忉村天の主なり 【10】帝释=Sakra-devāmā 毘沙門 = Valistavanu. 梵王 = Mahabrahman **较脱玉 = 本顧經註參昭** 龍大本は豊に作る。

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せしむること莫れ。」と。

しは さ 成佛せん。若し一人も殘らば我れ成佛せず。若し此の願を知つて,二世の所求悉く成ぜずんば正覺 て無始、無終、無異、無別なれども、無明は異相にして生住異滅せり。是れ得、是れ失なりと不善 を取らず。」と。 の念を起し、諮の惡業を造つて六趣に輪廻す。生生の父母、世世の兄弟悉く佛道を成じて後に我れ て當に菩提を得しむべし。我れ過去無量劫より來た諮の六道の一切衆生を見るに、法性は同體にし 稱せん者、我れ!! 事し、言色常に和かにして、人民を枉さず、生命を斷ぜず、邪婬を犯さされ。若しは「十齋日、若 切の男女我が稿を得んと欲せば、日凶なることを問はず、不淨を論ぜず、父母に孝瓷し、師長に奉 の地獄に入りて苦を離れしめ、無佛の世界に衆生を皮し、今世、後世能く引導す。若し佛滅後の 承け、左の膝を申べ下し、手に錫杖を持して、佛に白して言く、「我れ毎日晨朝に諸の定に入り、 爾の時に大地「六種に護動して延命菩薩地より出現して、右の膝を曲げて、臂を立て、掌に耳を 一六齋日、若しは十八日、若しは二十四日、但だ自心を正しくして此の經を轉讀し、 、法眼の威神力を以つての故に即ち業報を轉じて現の果を得しめ、無間の罪を除き 我が名を

を取らず。」と。時に世尊重ねて偈を以つて讃して白く、 の罪苦の衆生を汝に付囑す。今世、後世、善く能く引導せよ。彈指の頃も惡趣に墮せしめされ。況 我れ當さに六道の衆生を拔済すべし。若し重苦有らば我れ代つて苦を受けん。若し爾らずんば正覺 んや無間、 爾の時に佛、延命菩薩を讃したまはく「善い哉善い哉、真の善男子なり。我が滅度の後の未來惡世 阿鼻地獄に墮せしめんをや。」と。延命菩薩而も佛に白して言く、「世尊、慮りたまはざれ。

る。 善い哉善い哉。 衆生は知らずして、短命にして福無し。我が滅度の後、末法の中に於いて、國土に災起り、人 延命菩薩は有情の親友なり。衆生の生する時は其の身命と爲り、 滅すれば導師と爲

佛說延命地藏菩薩怒

福北没、四に北涌南没、五に西波、二・西涌東没、三に南頭とは大品敷若に、一に東涌頭とは大品敷若に、一に東涌頭とは大品敷若に、一に東涌頭とは大品敷若に、一に東涌 輪時、五に天魔の勤闘により合に、一に佛の入胎時、四に轉法 四に轉法 四に轉法 E に動、起、涌、震、吼、覺とあり。又、六相は震動とは華厳超 【三〇】 六齊日=黒、白月の八 邊涌中沒、六に中涌邊沒とあ涌北沒、四に北涌南沒、五に 智慧を云ふ。 衆生を度するために照見する □□】 法眼=五眼の一、菩薩日、十四日、十五日を云ふ。 無明 = Avidyā ₹ 297

根元。

二世=今世、教世を云

Ξ

佛說延命地被菩薩經

の所求滿せずんば我が所說の法、是の處有ること無けん。」と。王の政亂れて、他方の賦來り、刀兵劫起らんとき、但だ當さに延命菩薩を憶想すべし。今世,後世

せしむべし。若し爾らずんば正覺を取らず。」と。名を聞かば、我等皆當さに是の人に隨順して、心眼の明と作つて、其の人の前に現じて所求を圓滿空觀自在菩薩摩訶薩等、異口同音に佛に白して言く、「世尊、未來の衆生、若し此の經、是の菩薩の爾の時に三千大千大千世界六變に震動す。文殊師利菩薩、普賢菩薩、金剛藏菩薩、虚空藏菩薩、爾の時に三千大千大千世界六變に震動す。文殊師利菩薩、普賢菩薩、金剛藏菩薩、虚空藏菩薩、

生じて無生忍を得ん。」と。 の一切の衆生、延命菩薩を悲敬し供養して疑惑を生ぜされば、現世の所求皆滿足し、後には淨土に す。卽ち三毒を滅して自在力を得、 念せば我等祭屬、是の人を擁護して日夜を離れず、其の國土をして百由旬の內に諸の災難無からし 來の衆生若し自心を正しうして、是非を狂さず、賞罰を捨てずして是の經を持せん者、此の菩薩を を降伏す。佛、 白蓮華を持し、法性を調御す。 本覺に還らず。」と。時に二りの童子左右に侍立す。一りを「掌善と名け、左に在り。 め、其の國の人民安隱を得て、穀稼成熟し、所求滿足ならしめん。若し爾らずんば護世と名けず、 爾の時に梵王、帝釋、四大天王、諸の天華を雨し、如來を供養して、佛に白して言く、「世尊、 大衆に告げたまはく、「汝等當さに知るべし。是の二童子は法性無明にして、兩手、 ! 不動阿字の本體なり。若し衆生有つて是の心を知らば決定して成就!!* 一りを一 佛土に生ぜんと願はば願に隨つて生ずることを得。若し未來世 掌惡と名け、右に在り。赤色にして、 金剛杵を持し、無明 白色にして、

佛此の經を說き已つて、一切の大會の心大いに歡喜し、信受して奉行す。

佛說延命地藏菩薩經(終)

動阿字とは不動そのものの義

もの)の義ありとす。故に不

し、有空を眞空妙有の意に解は名、空、不生の三義ありと

四

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JJRS: Japanese Journal of Religious Studies

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