Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14
Religion and Thought 4

e-ISSN 2610-9417
ISSN 2610-900X

Itineraries of an Anthropologist

Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri

edited by
Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Edizioni
Ca'Foscari

Itineraries of an Anthropologist

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies
Religion and Thought

Collana diretta da | A series directed by
Luisa Bienati, Paolo Calvetti,
Toshio Miyake, Massimo Raveri

14 | 4

Edizioni
Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies
Religion and Thought

Head office

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies

Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa Mediterranea
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
Palazzo Vendramin dei Carmini
Dorsoduro 3462
30123 Venezia

e-ISSN 2610-9417
ISSN 2610-900X

URL https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/en/edizioni4/collane/ca-foscari-japanese-studies/

Itineraries of an Anthropologist

Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri

edited by
Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Venezia
Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing
2021

Itineraries of an Anthropologist: Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Certificazione scientifica delle Opere pubblicate da Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing: i saggi pubblicati hanno ottenuto il parere favorevole da parte di valutatori esperti della materia, attraverso un processo di revisione doppia anonima, sotto la responsabilità del Comitato scientifico della collana. La valutazione è stata condotta in aderenza ai criteri scientifici ed editoriali di Edizioni Ca' Foscari, ricorrendo all'utilizzo di un'apposita piattaforma.

Scientific certification of the Works published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing: the essays published in this volume have received a favourable evaluation by subject-matter experts, through a double blind peer review process under the responsibility of the Scientific Committee of the series. The evaluations were conducted in adherence to the scientific and editorial criteria established by Edizioni Ca' Foscari, using a dedicated platform.

Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing
Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari | Dorsoduro 3246 | 30123 Venezia
https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it | ecf@unive.it

1st edition October 2021
ISBN 978-88-6969-527-8 [ebook]
ISBN 978-88-6969-528-5 [print]

Itineraries of an Anthropologist: Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri / edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi — 1. ed. — Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing, 2021. — 266 p.; 23 cm. — (Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies; 14, 4). — ISBN 978-88-6969-528-5.

URL https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/libri/978-88-6969-528-5/
DOI http://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8

Abstract

This book is being dedicated to Massimo Raveri on the occasion of his retirement. It is designed to recreate the various thematic itineraries that he has traced and followed in his career. Each of the essays included represents a topic in which Prof. Raveri has shown great interest, paving the way for further studies. In offering these essays to him, his friends and colleagues are both bearing witness to his interest in such topics and contributing to their study. Contributions by former students of Prof. Raveri's further show how these fields of study are being developed in his footsteps.

Keywords Massimo Raveri. Anthropology of Japan. Japanese religions. History of thought. Japanese studies.

Acknowledgements

It is a great pleasure for us to thank those who have offered us their help and collaboration. First of all, we would like to thank all the contributors to this volume, all of our colleagues, and the Department of Asian and North African Studies for its support. A heartfelt thanks also goes to all the anonymous reviewers and to the editorial staff at Edizioni Ca' Foscari: without their help this volume would not have been possible. We wish to express our special gratitude to Massimo Raveri, who has inspired our research and shown us through his example what it means to be a *Maestro* and how important this can be.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Table of Contents

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Foreword

Tiziana Lippiello
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

When, as a new student at Ca' Foscari University, I began to attend the lecture halls of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, and in particular the Oriental Languages courses, I clearly remember that the fame of a young professor, who had recently arrived in Venice, had already spread. His lessons in East Asian Religions and Philosophies soon became more and more crowded with students, including myself, and would remain so in the years to come.

It goes without saying that the abovementioned professor, who had trained at the School of Fosco Maraini – unforgettable master of Italian anthropological and Japanese studies – is the respected academic that this volume honours, who, after graduating from the University of Florence, completed his studies at the universities of Kyoto and Oxford.

Professor Raveri performed all the stages of his academic career at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, focusing mainly on his own teaching subject; however, he has also taught History of the Explorations of Asia and History of Religions. In addition to this, he has gained a rich international teaching experience as lecturer at many prestigious universities such as the Freie Universität in Berlin, the University of Copenhagen, the Leiden University, the Research Center for East Asian Religions of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London, the "El Manar" University of Tunis, the Centre d'Études Asiatiques of the University of Geneva and the École Nationale Superieure of Lyon.

With regard to his teaching activity, I would like to add to the memory I recalled above, the many expressions of esteem and even

affection towards him that I have been able to collect over the years from students of our degree programme: his wise lessons, carefully prepared but at the same time capable of constantly encouraging listening and dialogue, have ensured Prof. Raveri an appreciation as deep in intensity as it is exceptionally long-lasting.

His authentic vocation for teaching is one with his vocation for research and, if I had to establish which one prevails over the other (assuming that it is so), I would say that it is undoubtedly the first, in the sense that his dedication to research, together with the well-known and excellent results he has achieved, which I will mention in the following lines, appears to be alien to the cult of personality and devoted entirely at the service of his students.

The variety of his interests, which include issues at the heart of Eastern religious life and experience (also in a comparative perspective), ranging from the analysis of forms of asceticism in the tradition of esoteric Buddhism to that of the different conceptions of death and visions of the afterlife in the ecstatic experience of shamans or of new forms of faith and media languages of contemporary religiosity, with constant attention to the problems of coexistence of different faiths, has been expressed in contributions that have marked an important chapter in the history of this strand of studies. Limiting the list to monographs, I here refer to the books on the problem of evil (*Del bene e del male. Tradizioni religiose a confronto*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1993), on asceticism (*Il corpo e il paradiso. Le tentazioni estreme dell'ascesi in Asia Orientale*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1998), on inter-religious dialogue (*Verso l'altro: le religioni dal conflitto al dialogo*, ivi, 2003), on Zen Buddhism (*Sentieri di illuminazione: il giardino zen e la meditazione sul paradiso*, Biella, Pacefuturo Edizioni, 2009) and on Japanese philosophy, on which focuses the volume released in 2006 (*Itinerari nel sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*, Venezia, Cafoscarina) and the recent, monumental synthesis published by Einaudi and soberly entitled *Il pensiero giapponese classico* (2014, over six hundred pages).

His researches in this particular area of studies have earned Prof. Raveri international reputation and recognition. In 2012, the Japanese Government awarded him the "Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette" for his contribution to the advancement of Japanese cultural studies. In addition to this, he held and still holds various important positions at prestigious institutions, in Italy and abroad: he lectured at the Ambrosian Academy of Milan (Class of Far Eastern Studies); he has been a member of the Academic Council of the Ateneo Veneto for the four-year period 1998-2002; he is a member of the council of Centro Vieussieux-Asia of Florence and a member of the Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti of Venice as well as of the Réseau Scientifique sur l'Asie established in Paris by the Conseil National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS); speaking of

France, he has also been a member of the Conseil Scientifique du Pôle Asie; moreover, he took part in the European Association of Japanese Studies and was a councillor of the Associazione Italiana di Studi Giapponesi (Aistugia) for the three-year period 1983-1986; lastly, he has been a research fellow at St. Antony's College of the University of Oxford.

It would be an arduous task for anyone, and certainly it is beyond the scope of this writer, who participates in such a beautiful initiative merely as author of this foreword, to dwell in detail on the scientific profile of Prof. Raveri. The essays written by the colleagues and friends who have promoted this *Festschrift* (or have enthusiastically supported it) are perfect to face this task without running the risk of indulging in the affectation of the empty celebratory rhetoric into which this literary genre sometimes ends up falling, extraneous to the nature of our honoured fellow.

I rather prefer, given my institutional role, to spend some words on a different aspect of Prof. Raveri's activity, which would otherwise risk remaining in the shadows, obscured by the merits of his work as teacher and scholar.

I refer to his efforts in organising and directing numerous scientific initiatives, among which I recall the coordination of a two-year European Comenius project (2013-2015) that involved five universities, the research program *I linguaggi dell'assoluto* (The languages of the absolute) (2011-2014) funded by Ca' Foscari University and the European "Marie Curie" research program on the theme *Beyond "the West" and "the East"*, the direction of the research program on *Le religioni e la memoria. Strategie della memoria e dell'oblio nei discorsi religiosi dell'Asia* (Religions and Memory. Strategies of memory and oblivion in Asian religious discourses) (2009-2012), funded by Fondazione Venezia per la Ricerca sulla Pace and, to conclude, the coordination of the research unit of Ca' Foscari University in three research programs of national interest (PRIN) funded by MIUR (2001, 2004, 2007).

Furthermore, I would like to mention here the important institutional functions held by Prof. Raveri at Ca' Foscari University, such as his presence in the Advisory board (2011) and in the Academic Senate (2012-2015), his position as Rector's Delegate for the Erasmus Program and member of the Commission for International Relations, the chairmanship of the Committee of the Specialist Inter-university Degree in Science of Religions, involving our university and the University of Padua, whose scientific aspects and setting were mainly organised by him.

This foreword, apparently impersonal, attempts to underline a peculiar trait of Prof. Raveri's personality, whose behaviour does not remain confined in the purely intellectual or contemplative dimension, but constantly results in action, showing a marked inclination

(not at all incompatible with the reflective aspect of his character) for concreteness: he is different from his much-loved ascetics, who retreat into the solitude of the mountains (the 'other' place *par excellence* in Japanese culture), and reveals himself as *homo politicus* or, in other words, as an Aristotle's man, a son of the Western World.

In conclusion, I would like to complete Prof. Raveri's profile, which I have tried to retrace in its essential traits, by sharing with you some brief personal notes inspired by some moments of the professional path and friendship that bind us.

In the space of a few years, the young professor that I mentioned at the beginning became, for me, first an authoritative guide, then a companion on the road, with whom I shared many scientific initiatives and conferences, as well as a valuable advisor, who never failed to support me during the most delicate stages of my institutional career at our university: first as director of the Department of Asian and North African Studies, then as Vice-Rector for International Relations (an area on which, as I have already mentioned, Prof. Raveri's work has focused for many years). Lastly, he was the one who encouraged me to apply for the position of Rector: he always supported and motivated me while I was full of doubts and hesitations. I must admit that one of the reasons I decided to accept this professional challenge is the trust that he placed in me.

In many occasions during our long professional collaboration and in the moments that I have just remembered, I could always count on his presence, discreet but decisive, and appreciate the courtesy of his manners, the affable cordiality, the composed reasoning and the sincere disposition to listen, which avoids any attempt to reach a superficial agreement, and is based on a frank confrontation of ideas, seen as a proof of mutual respect. A genuine discussion and, sometimes, a lively debate take place only when (or rather: precisely because) the parts involved are ready to listen to each other. I owe this lesson to him.

I would like to conclude these brief remarks by sharing a memory that I am unable to trace back to a specific occasion, which is rather a sort of 'hyper-recollection': the condensation of many individual episodes and situations. It is that of one time (one of the many times, any time, all times: it doesn't matter), of a late evening, in the Department, in which, knocking at the door of his study to exchange some ideas on a scientific issue or to share our opinions on some aspects of the academic life, I saw him look away for a moment from his computer or raise his eyes from the books on his work table and welcome me with a smile, which expressed better than many words his disposition to listen, without any trace of the fatigue of a long day dedicated to teaching, studying, writing or to the performance of one of the many institutional roles that I have already mentioned above.

All this to say, in conclusion, that if I had to draw a very personal portrait of Prof. Raveri, it would come out a figure in which, paraphrasing freely, the vision of the oriental sage, who encourages people to look for a job suitable to one's nature and appropriate to one's strengths, accepting it without complaining, and the *jouissance* of a European professor of Humanities in the United States, who abandons himself to his object of study to the point of not distinguishing anymore between work and fun, blend harmoniously or perhaps confuse themselves (I couldn't say). I trust that such an image, even though imbued as it is with a bold (but I hope not irreverent) syncretism, will not displease our honoured fellow.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Introduction

Giovanni Bulian
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Silvia Rivadossi
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

The international conference *Reassessing the Field: The Study of Japanese Religion and Thought in the 21st Century*, dedicated to Massimo Raveri and held at the Department of Asian and North African Studies of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice (28-29 October 2018), was an opportunity for friends, colleagues and students to confirm their esteem and gratitude towards a scholar whom they regarded as a point of reference. This occasion was made possible through the coordinated efforts of Bonaventura Ruperti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Erica Baffelli (The University of Manchester) and Lucia Dolce (SOAS, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), with the indispensable support of the Japan Foundation. The primary aim of the conference was to highlight the international recognition and appreciation of Prof. Raveri's scholarly career. His long and fruitful academic research was officially recognised in 2012 with the awarding of the prestigious national decoration of *kyokujitsushō* 旭日章 (The Order of the Rising Sun), which the Japanese government bestowed on Prof. Raveri for his contribution to the diffusion and promotion of Japanese culture in the world, but also to implicitly recognise his extraordinary sensitivity and ability to awaken the enthusiasm of entire generations of students. Prof. Raveri is someone who sincerely believes in his profession, which has given him the opportunity to unite generations of scholars and span geographical distances.

Indeed, over the course of his long career, Massimo Raveri has shown a strong interest in different disciplinary fields, establishing long-lasting friendships and academic collaborations with scholars specialising in theological, anthropological, philosophical and historical-religious studies. His interdisciplinary vocation led him to specialise in the field of the history of religions in Japan, first at the University of Florence, under the guidance of Fosco Maraini, and then at the Research Institute for Humanistic Studies of Kyōto University and at the Institute of Social Anthropology of the University of Oxford. As visiting professor, Massimo Raveri lectured at the Department of East Asian Studies of the University of Copenhagen in 1998, at the SOAS, University of London, in 2001, at the École Normale Supérieure of Lyon in 2003, and at the Université de Genève in 2006.

This book is being dedicated to Massimo Raveri on the occasion of his retirement, two years after the conference in his Honour, and has been made possible by the participation of scholars, friends and colleagues from many different countries. The essays collected in this book express the interdisciplinary recognition of his extensive academic wanderings, which have led him from rural areas of Japan to the classrooms of many Italian and foreign universities and research institutes. Prof. Raveri embarked on his academic career in the late Seventies and initially carried out research on Shinto, analysing the conceptions of time, space and religious power expressed in ritual practices connected to rice cultivation. He also dealt with the imagery of death and ascetic practices in the tradition of Tantric Buddhism, focusing on the construction of an esoteric discourse in contemporary religious movements. His varied interests eventually led him to study many other topics, such as the meaning of play as a cultural phenomenon and the religious power of humour in Japan, the subjects of two volumes he co-edited, respectively, with Joy Hendry (*Japan at Play: The Ludic and Logic of Power*) and with Francesco Remotti and Francesco Bettini (*Ridere degli dèi, ridere con gli dèi. L'umorismo teologico*).

The structure of the present book is designed to recreate the various thematic itineraries that Massimo Raveri has traced and followed in his career. Each of the essays included represents a topic in which Prof. Raveri has shown great interest, paving the way for further studies. In offering these essays to him, his friends and colleagues are both bearing witness to his interest in such topics and contributing to their study. Contributions by former students of Prof. Raveri's further show how these fields of study are being developed in his footsteps.

In their contribution titled "Massimo Raveri, the Oxford School of Social Anthropology and Researching and Teaching on Japanese Society", Joy Hendry and Roger Goodman trace the origins of

Massimo Raveri's approach back to the time he spent studying social anthropology at Oxford, showing how this influenced his work.

Over the course of his career, alongside his great fascination with anthropology, Raveri has shown a keen interest in philosophy, which is the focus of Luigi Vero Tarca's contribution "Philosophical Truth and Buddhist Wisdom. For a Dialogic Dialogue". Raveri's interest in the history of thought has influenced many of his students. A valuable homage to this is Federico Marcon's contribution "The Quest for Japanese Fascism: A Historiographical Overview", which offers a historical survey of the historiographical debate on "Japanese Fascism" worldwide.

The first intellectual itinerary that Massimo Raveri followed in his research concerns the Shintō tradition, and particularly its communal rituals and beliefs. In the present volume, three contributions explore this field. The specific topic of mountain beliefs is addressed in Suzuki Masataka's contribution "The Localization of the Kumano Gongen Cult and Mountain Beliefs: From *engi* to *kagura*", in which the author discusses the Kumano Gongen cult in medieval times. In his essay "The Multilocality of *Satoyama*. Landscape, Cultural Heritage and Environmental Sustainability in Japan", Giovanni Bulian analyses the close interrelation between Japanese landscape, cultural heritage and the social construction of spatial meaning in the context of *satoyama* (mountain villages). Silvia Rivadossi's "Researching Shamanism in Contemporary Japan" takes its cue from Massimo Raveri's studies on Japanese shamanic practitioners, which are broadened through the addition of more recent data, to suggest how a study of contemporary Japanese shamanism could be undertaken.

A second intellectual itinerary that Massimo Raveri has kept to throughout his career is Buddhism, in all its various forms. Lucia Dolce, in her essay "'And the *Zasu* Changed his Shoes…': The Resurgence of Combinatory Rituals in Contemporary Japan", discusses three case studies in order to offer a reflection on the continuity of institutional *shinbutsu* combinatory practices, as well as the creation of new forms of combinatory ritual that have emerged in recent years. Fabio Rambelli's essay "The *Sutra of Druma, King of the Kinnara* and the Buddhist Philosophy of Music" presents the *Sutra of King Druna*, a text which proposes the first systematic Buddhist theory of music, while also offering a justification of the activities of musicians and performing artists and providing a model for Buddhist ceremonies involving instrumental music and dance.

Homage is paid to Massimo Raveri's interest in charismatic religious figures by Antonio Rigopoulos' essay "*Mānasa bhajare*: A Commentary on Sathya Sai Baba's First Public Discourse", which focuses on one of the most popular Indian *gurus*, Sathya Sai Baba. This same interest is also reflected by Marcella Mariotti's "My First Steps in Religious Fieldwork: Exploring Aum Shinrikyō in 1995", an

English version of her 1995 paper on the history and development of the religious group Aum Shinrikyō.

Lastly, Erica Baffelli, in her essay "The Android and the Fax: Robots, AI and Buddhism in Japan", further develops Massimo Raveri's most recent research on new forms of faith and media languages in contemporary society. By analysing the case of Android Kannon Mindar, she explores the interaction between AI, robotics, and Buddhism in contemporary Japan.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Massimo Raveri, the Oxford School of Social Anthropology and Researching and Teaching on Japanese Society

Roger Goodman
University of Oxford, UK

Joy Hendry
Oxford Brookes University, UK

Abstract This paper explores the context in which Massimo Raveri has produced his corpus of work on Japan and explains how and why he has so successfully been able to cover such a wide range of topics – stretching from the pre-modern to the contemporary. It situates his work in the context of debates between those in the worlds of Japanology and Japanese Studies and considers how he and his work have acted as a bridge between the two. It also examines the influence on his work of the debates taking place in the Oxford School of Anthropology at the time that he studied in Oxford in the late 1970s and how his distinctive approach has influenced the social anthropology of Japan.

Keywords Japanese studies. Japanology. Social anthropology. Oxford.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Japanology and Japanese Studies. – 3 The Influence of British Social Anthropology and the Oxford School on Japanese Studies. – 4 The Teaching of the Anthropology of Japan. – 5 Raveri's Contribution to the Development of the International Community of Anthropologists of Japan.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Open access
Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/002

1 Introduction

Massimo Raveri has written on Buddhism, Shinto, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity; new religions and classical religions; classical philosophy and contemporary theology; death, play, food and drink. How is it possible for a scholar of Japan to be able to work across such a wide span of subjects and time? We argue that one of the reasons lies in his training in the Oxford School of social anthropology.

Today, there are many anthropologists of Japan teaching at universities across the world who were trained in the Oxford School.[1] The first generation of such scholars, however, included Massimo Raveri, which is why it is so important to honour his contributions at this time of his retirement. Raveri arrived in Oxford when social anthropology barely recognised Japan as a legitimate field of study. While he stayed only for a relatively short period of postgraduate student study, his legacy lives on in significant ways. We would like to consider here how we perceive the Oxford tradition of anthropological research influenced his work on Japan – as well as that of his students in Italy and others who received their training in Oxford – and, conversely, how his work contributed to the development of the anthropology of Japan in Oxford and elsewhere.

2 Japanology and Japanese Studies

The study of Japan through an anthropological lens needs to be placed in the larger context of a division between what can be generally outlined as 'Area-ology' versus 'Area-Studies' approaches or, in the case of Japan, 'Japanology' versus 'Japanese Studies'. While the former long predates the latter, these two approaches have existed alongside each other in almost all communities of scholars studying Japan since the 1950s. In many parts of the world, however, they inhabit virtually parallel universes, publishing in different journals, attending different conferences and, sometimes, even being placed in different departments within the same institution.

1 Amongst those whose work we *might* mention as part of the Oxford School are (besides the authors and Raveri): Rodney Clark (SOAS, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London); Okpyo Moon (Academy of Korean Studies); Mary Picone (CNRS, Centre national de la recherche scientifique); Lola Martinez (SOAS); Peter Cave (University of Manchester); Bruce White and Greg Poole (Doshisha University); Sachiko Horiguchi (Temple University); Ayumi Sasagawa (Waseda University); Swee Lin Ho (NUS, National University of Singapore); Hyun Sun Lee (University of Tokyo); Yuki Imoto (Keio University); Huiyan Fu (University of Essex); Ryotaro Mihara (Waseda University); Sebastien Boret (Tohoku University) and Andrea de Antoni (Ritsumeikan University).

In general, the Japanological approach has predominated in continental Europe; the Japanese studies approach in Anglo-Saxon countries. This makes the fact that Raveri got his training in an Anglo-Saxon country but spent his career in a Continental European one particularly significant.

Table 1 sets out, very simply, some of the key differences between the Japanological and the Japanese studies approaches. The core intellectual difference between them is whether a society is best studied in its own terms (an emic approach) or through a comparative lens (an etic approach). The former sees history as the key discipline and philology as the key tool; the latter sees sociology (in the broadest sense and incorporating social anthropology) as the key discipline and the use of universally applicable theory as the key tool. The former focuses on, and looks, for continuities; the latter discontinuities. The former assumes a society can only be studied in its own right; the latter that it should be understood using universally-applicable theoretical ideas about social life. In general, the former has a view of society as essentially based on consensus; the latter takes into account that a society must always find ways of dealing with conflict. Even more broadly, the former is often associated with the humanities; the latter with the social sciences.

The significance of taking a Japanological or Japanese Studies approach to a project is rarely explicitly addressed even if its impact is potentially considerable. To give just one example: the assumption that it is the past ('history') which determines the present (the Japanological approach) or the assumption that it is the present which writes the past (the Japanese Studies approach) lead to very different views of how we should think about and study contemporary Japan. Despite the fact that his work is deeply philological in nature, we argue that Raveri significantly also takes a Japanese studies approach to the use of history as can be seen in his major work *Il corpo e il paradiso* (1992) which, as Maraini (1993) points out in his review of the book in *Monumenta Nipponica*, sets the many and varied explanations for why some Japanese Buddhist hermits voluntarily transformed themselves into desiccated object immune to decay in their own historical and sociological contexts.

Table 1 Some heuristic dichotomies for thinking about research on Japan: The Anglo-Saxon (Etic) vs the Continental European (Emic) Approaches (drawn from Goodman 2020)

	(Japan)-ology	**(Japanese)-Studies**
Approach	Emic	Etic
Reference Point	Internal comparison	External comparison
Key Disciplines	History	Sociology
Key Tools	Philology	Theoretical terms
Assumptions	Continuities	Discontinuities
Moral Universe	Relativistic	Universalistic
University departments	Humanities	Social sciences

Raveri's work is distinctive, we argue, because it bestrides the Japanological and the Japanese studies traditions of work on Japan. In some ways this reflected the fact that as a graduate student in Oxford he had two supervisors: one, a social anthropologist, R.H. Barnes who had no specialist knowledge of Japan, the other, the scholar of pre-modern Japanese ethical traditions, James McMullen, who, at the time, had little background in social anthropology although he went on to supervise a number of anthropologists of Japan and increasingly drew on anthropological ideas in his own research (see McMullen 2020). Raveri's third official tutor in Oxford – in those days called a 'moral tutor' – was the pre-eminent historian of Japan, Richard Storry, who also had a major influence on his thinking. Given this background, we can more easily see why it is that Raveri's work draws so naturally on the work of both pre-modern and contemporary historians, philosophers, philologists and scholars of Japanese religion and ethics. It was this background, for example, which led to him challenging the widely-held prejudice in Oriental Studies at the time that the study of Buddhism meant the study of *Indian* Buddhism – and that the earlier the tradition of Buddhism that was being studied the better – and treating the study of Japanese Buddhism as equally legitimate in its own right (see Raveri 2002; 2017; 2015a; 2015b; 2020)

We also believe that there is something distinctively influential that he gained from his exposure to the debates which were taking place in Oxford's anthropological community in the late 1970s.

3 The Influence of British Social Anthropology and the Oxford School on Japanese Studies

The Oxford School of anthropology shares with other schools of British social anthropology a strong focus on personhood; how the relationship between the two elements of the person – self ('ego') and role ('persona') – is construed (see Hendry 1999 for an overview of the British approach to anthropology). It looks at how 'society' is constructed through the mobilisation of symbols and rituals. It examines who has control over those rituals and symbols by placing them in a political and economic context. It considers the importance of kinship for understanding nonkin as well as kin relationships.[2] The Oxford School is particularly interested, following the work of Evans-Pritchard, in the role of history; it eschews analyses which suggest that there is anything essentialist and unchanging about a society.

The Oxford School has always also been focussed on the role of fieldwork through the medium of the language of the societies being studied. Often fieldwork has been seen in terms of a year at a minimum, so that the anthropologist can see the full ritual cycle, but this has increasingly become modified as the world has been globalised and it has been possible to do fieldwork long-distance. At the core of the fieldwork project is learning to see the worlds of those being studied through their own eyes and gaining empathy, though not necessarily sympathy, with their world views. In the case of a highly literate and self-reflexive society like Japan, it also requires reading native accounts and analyses of their own society produced for indigenous readers; it is necessary to be able to read as well as speak and understand Japanese. Raveri spent three years at Kyoto University before he came to Oxford, so he was well qualified to draw on that experience within the Oxford system. The first two years of his university study had been in Florence, where Fosco Maraini, a multi-talented man who spent many years in Japan and claimed anthropology and ethnography amongst his skills, had clearly been an important influence.[3]

The empirical tradition of British anthropology, however, was under some attack in the 1970s and Raveri found himself in the middle

2 It is no coincidence that the best-known exponent of the thesis that the kinship system provides the idiom for other social institutions in Japan is Nakane Chie whose postdoctoral work in social anthropology was at the anthropology department at the LSE (London School of Economics) and who subsequently was a visiting professor at the SOAS before becoming the first female full professor at the University of Tokyo in 1970 and subsequently the first and only female member of the Japan Academy in 1995. Nakane (1973) argues that the kinship ideology of the household *ie* 家 system provides the idiom even today that structures many other aspects of social life and social institutions – education, welfare, arts, religion, politics, economics.

3 It was also Maraini who persuaded Raveri to return to Ca' Foscari to take up an Assistant Professorship before he had completed his doctoral studies in Oxford.

of these debates. The attack came primarily from French structuralist theory. At the risk of caricaturing, the French saw the British fixation on empiricism as limiting and unimaginative; the British saw the French structuralist approach as purely theoretical and ungrounded. In Oxford, these two traditions came to a famous head between Rodney Needham, who was, along with Edmund Leach and Mary Douglas, one of the major interpreters for a British audience of the ideas of Claude Levi-Strauss (though Levi-Strauss was later to repudiate Needham) and the disciples, such as Edwin Ardener, of the arch pragmatist and empiricist, E.E. Evans-Pritchard. The lines which were drawn between the two camps were very stark at the time in Oxford, not just intellectually but also physically, as reflected in the fact that Needham did not enter the Institute of which he was the professor for the last seventeen years of his tenure. Raveri though had a foot in both camps and was able to draw on both traditions in his work which added a distinctive and important flavour to it. Unlike previous scholars, for example, he was sceptical of some of the more essentialist claims in the work of the revered Japanese ethnologist, Yanagida Kunio, whose account of premodern and early modern Japanese social values was used by many scholars uncritically to explain so much of what was happening in modern, postwar Japan. Raveri was one of the first scholars to analyse the work of Yanagida and his school as a constructed tradition or even, *pace* Levi-Strauss, as myth (see Raveri 1984).

4 The Teaching of the Anthropology of Japan

How does training in social anthropology relate to the teaching of Japan? As we have seen, it gave Raveri a set of skills which allowed him – through detailed and close ethnographic study – to explore *any* aspect of Japanese society. As he discovered, it does not matter what aspects of Japan the anthropologist decides to study because they all lead to a deeper understanding of the society, an understanding that can be then taken to looking at other aspects.

Courses on the anthropology of Japan can be very broad indeed. Not all the readings for each of the topic needs to be anthropological, but they need to be 'anthropologised' by students who read them so that they can place them both in a broader understanding not only of how Japanese society works but also how society in general is a process in which persons construct the world around them and that world then comes to constrain them. It is this background which explains the depth and breadth not only of Raveri's own writings but also those of his students and others who have trained in this tradition and have worked on Japan.

5 Raveri's Contribution to the Development of the International Community of Anthropologists of Japan

Given the splits between Japanological and Japanese studies and within the anthropological community itself between British empiricists and Continental structural theorists, it is perhaps not surprising that, round the time that Raveri was in Oxford, British anthropologists who had worked in Japan were feeling a little isolated in both Japanese Studies and social anthropology. They were in short supply in both places, and while anthropological gatherings were dominated by people who had worked in Africa and other Commonwealth countries, the Japanese Studies associations were largely populated by historians. A conference of the EAJS (European Association for Japanese Studies), held in Raveri's alma mater in Firenze in 1979, began to open up new possibilities. It included for the first time a whole session devoted to the anthropology of Japan. By the time of the next gathering of the EAJS, three years later in the Hague, it was clear that Europe was home to several otherwise rather lonely anthropologists of Japan and a group began to make concrete plans to form an association.

An inaugural event was held at St. Antony's College in Oxford in 1984, supported by funds made available through the new professor of Japanese Studies, Arthur Stockwin, as part of a benefaction from the Nissan Motor Company. Although a gathering of around a dozen scholars had been expected, nearly 30 individuals from across Europe attended and it was decided to establish an organisation which became known as the Japan Anthropology Workshop (JAWS). Raveri gave a splendid paper on a subject relatively little known at the time, entitled "*Miira*: Techniques of Self-Mummification and the Problem of Immortality in Japan", which would form the basis of his book *Il corpo e il paradiso* (Raveri 1992) on the same subject, sadly never translated into English.

Japan Anthropology Workshops continued to be held after that initial gathering, first in a series of different European universities, then later in other parts of the world, and the European connection was reinforced when JAWS formally became the first subject-specific branch of the European Association for Japanese Studies in 1985 at its conference in Paris. In Berlin, in 1991 – an historic meeting that celebrated the new status of German unification – Raveri put together a panel on what was at the time a new subject, "Play". A collection of papers from that session was later published in a book (Hendry, Raveri 1992) which continues to be widely used as an introduction to the field.

In the meantime, Raveri had established himself in the Università Ca' Foscari in Venice from where he contributed through the Erasmus programme to a second very powerful set of links with anthropolo-

gists of Japan who worked in European universities. Founded by Jan van Bremen in Leiden as only the second Erasmus programme disciplinary group, the Japanese Studies group pulled together members from a wide range of disciplines. Indeed, the project that Raveri undertook that became a two-volume series, *Rethinking Japan*, which he co-edited with two Italian colleagues (Boscaro, Raveri 1991a; 1991b), based on a major symposium held in Venice in 1987, was dedicated to breaking down disciplinary boundaries; volume 2 was devoted to *Social Sciences, Ideology and Thought*.

The aims of the Erasmus programme when it was founded in 1987 were set out in its acronym (EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) and in the early years this movement was established through biannual meetings of staff members of the universities involved, who then organised academic visits for their students to each other's departments. Small conferences were also held, in turn, in each of the participating departments, and Venice was active from the start. A longer-term aim was that these students would become European citizens training and taking up positions in departments throughout the European Union, rather than being limited to their own nations, and graduates of Ca' Foscari now work throughout the member states.

To this day, meetings of the Japan Anthropology Workshop inevitably include Italian students who have very often chosen unusual subjects demonstrating their eclectic but sound knowledge of Japanese language and its broader cultural heritage. They have also completed the long-term in-depth research that characterised the Oxford school and provides them with the confidence in their chosen fields that Raveri also displayed when he was a student. When questioned about their own background, they almost always mention the influence of Massimo Raveri.

Bibliography

Boscaro, A.; Gatti, F.; Raveri, M. (1991a). *Rethinking Japan*. Vol. 1, *Literature, Visual Arts & Linguistics*. Folkestone: Japan Library Limited.

Boscaro, A.; Gatti, F.; Raveri, M. (1991b). *Rethinking Japan*. Vol. 2, *Social Sciences, Ideology and Thought*. Folkestone; Japan Library Limited.

Goodman, R. (2020). "How to Begin Research: The Diversity of Japanese Studies". Kottmann, N.; Reiher, C. (eds), *Studying Japan: Research Designs, Fieldwork and Methods*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 29-39.

Hendry, J. (1999). *Other People's Worlds: An Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology*. Oxford: Blackwells.

Hendry, J.; Raveri, M. (1992). *Japan at Play: The Ludic and Logic of Power*. London: Routledge.

Maraini, F. (1993). "Review of 'Il corpo e il paradiso: Esperienze ascetiche in Asia Orientale'". *Monumenta Nipponica*, 48(2), 276-8.

McMullen, J. (2020). "The Worship of Confucius in Japan", monogr. no., *Harvard East Asian Monographs*, 421.

Nakane, C. (1973). *Japanese Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Raveri, M. (1984). *Itinerari nel sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*. Venezia: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina.

Raveri, M. (1992). *Il corpo e il paradiso. Esperienze ascetiche in Asia Orientale*. Venezia: Marsilio.

Raveri, M. (2002). "Concetti fondamentali del buddhismo". Peca Conti, R. (a cura di), *Le religioni e le ragioni degli altri*. Napoli: Tecnodid Editrice, 47-64.

Raveri, M. (2015a). "Il desiderio è illuminazione. L'incontro di Lacan con il Buddhismo Zen". *La Psicoanalisi*, 56/57, 99-120.

Raveri, M. (2015b). "La contemplazione del paradiso nella tradizione buddhista". Testoni, I. et al. (a cura di), *Vedere oltre. La spiritualità dinanzi al morire nelle diverse religioni*. Torino: Lindau, 391-423.

Raveri, M. (2017). "Contemplare il Buddha/Pronunciare il suo Nome. I sensi dell'Assoluto". Raveri, M.; Tarca, L.V. (a cura di), *I linguaggi dell'assoluto*. Milano: Mimesis, 227-54.

Raveri, M. (2020). "Il riso degli dei, il sorriso del Buddha, la risata dei maestri zen". Bettini, M.; Raveri, M.; Remotti, F. (a cura di), *Ridere degli dei, ridere con gli dei*. Bologna: il Mulino, 103-58.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Philosophical Truth and Buddhist Wisdom
For a Dialogical Dialogue

Luigi Tarca
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract This essay offers a 'dialogical dialogue' between the philosophical and the Buddhist experiences. The first is represented by the philosophy of pure difference and pure positive, which shows how even truth, which characterises Western thought, is based on axiological assumptions, in particular that of the pure positive. The second is represented by Buddhist wisdom, specifically that explained by M. Raveri in his essay on Buddhism within Japanese society in the first centuries of the last millennium. Contradictions and conflicts, that seem to prejudice Buddhist conception and practice, appear instead, in the gaze of pure difference, as the true path that can lead humans to salvation.

Keywords 'Dialogical dialogue'. Philosophical truth. Buddhist wisdom. Philosophy of pure positive. Amidist Buddhism. Path to salvation.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Open access
Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/003

1 Introduction: For a Dialogical Dialogue

The way I have to make a small but heartfelt homage to my colleague and friend Massimo Raveri, a leading teacher and scholar, is to propose a dialogue between two paths of thought that are in some ways so distant but also, at least this is my belief, so close on some fundamental issues. A dialogue, but, more precisely, the idea is that of a 'dialogical dialogue', an expression that I take from Raimon Panikkar, whose *Opera Omnia* is in progress at the Jaca Book, Milan, edited by M. Carrara Pavan. This means a dialogue in which each of the two subjects adopts as his/her own point of view the other's one, and, in this way, he/she manages to achieve a more complete and right understanding of his/her own 'myth' (being the structure of thought that is presupposed by every single action and interpretation belonging to a certain civilization and culture). Such a dialogue, thanks to the fact that it is based on the ability to recognise the truth (and hence the value) of the other's positions, allows each of the two to see his/her own vision of the world from outside and so to really understand it and consequently adjust (correct) and improve it. In addition, this allows each of the two to help the other in giving birth to his/her own truth.

In this case, the dialogue will be between a typically Western philosophical perspective and a typically Eastern sapiential (soteriological, salvific) perspective, to be precise, a perspective of Buddhist matrix. The first will be represented by what I call the philosophy of purely positive difference, the second by some aspects of Japanese Buddhism presented in the important essay by Massimo Raveri titled *Contemplare il Buddha / Pronunciare il suo nome: I sensi dell'Assoluto* (2017).

First Part: The Philosophical 'Myth' and its Soteriological Value

2 Truth as 'Purely Positive Difference'

2.1 The Value of Truth

My 'myth' is the classically philosophical one. That is, according to its most traditional interpretation, a vision based on thought, knowledge, and rationality; in a word: on truth. In this way, traditionally it seems that the philosophical horizon is a logical one. For this reason, we often hear that (roughly speaking) Western thought is characterised by rationality and logic, while the Eastern one is free from this cage. In other words, the first would be logical, while the second would be soteriological, and each of the two would be deprived

of the values (merits) typical of the other. We know that this usual conception does wrong to both subjects. Indeed, it presupposes, on the one hand, that rational discourse cannot be salvific, and, on the other hand, that salvation cannot be rational. In the age of technology, the question takes on particular importance because technology can be seen as the extreme step of the logical, and therefore typically Western, approach. Thus, nowadays our question concerns, in particular, the problem of the salvific value of technology, or, vice versa, its limits from an ethical and soteriological point of view.

I want to present here a singular philosophical view which can constitute, in my humble opinion, a kind of 'magical point' in which the two things (rationality and soteriology) meet and even coincide. Since I am a Western philosopher, I will present this perspective by showing how rationality itself can be realised only on the condition of basing itself on a sapiential ground which presupposes the reign (scope) of values.

If you think about it, truth itself is originally defined in terms of values. Indeed, in the Western perspective truth is certainly considered a value, and not just a value but a value of universal significance: a 'universal' value. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that, as endowed with universal value, truth is affirmed (confirmed, and hence 'posed') by every entity and by every subject.

Therefore, another decisive point is that truth, insofar as it is affirmed by each entity, is affirmed (posed) even by any denial (a refusal which as such entails a negation) in all its forms. In consideration of this, we say that truth is safe (free) from the negative. Indeed, if what we mean by 'negative' is what suffers the damages (offenses) of negation, then truth, in as much as it is affirmed/posed by every entity and even by any negation, is positive even in relation to negation and hence is safe from negative. So, truth is not only (as posed) a positive but also a 'perfect' positive in the sense that, unlike the negative (i.e. differently from this), it is safe with respect to the damage inflicted by negation.

In conclusion, truth not only has a value trait in itself, but even its own value is the 'perfect' value, as it is in fact safe/free from the damages and threats of the negative. If, therefore, salvation consists in being safe from negative, then we could say that reaching truth means reaching salvation. We can hence affirm not only that truth possesses an essentially axiological (evaluative), and therefore ethical significance (that is a trait provided with value or disvalue), but even that in some sense truth and salvation are one. In this sense, at least with respect to what was said above, the West and East are also one; and just for this reason we can define this particular interpretation of truth as a 'magical point' where Western truth and Eastern soteriology are united and combined.

2.2 The Undeniable Truth and the Problem of Negation

However, there is a problem. Within the Western view, we usually express the fact that truth is safe from the negative by saying that it is 'undeniable' (non-deniable). In this way we express this circumstance in a negative way, that is by means of a negation. More precisely still, we understand this term (undeniable) in the sense that truth is the negation of its own negation, that is, of non-truth. So, we assume that the negation of the truth (untruth, non-truth) exists, and that truth is the negation of such un-truth (however we have then to interpret the meaning that must be attributed to the existence of a denial/negation of truth). In this way we are led to say not only that truth is confirmed/safe with respect to every negation, but that it is confirmed/safe by 'its own' negation, and consequently that salvation is obtained through the negation that truth itself operates against untruth.

But this is a very delicate step, which has very important consequences. The first and perhaps most relevant is that if truth takes the form of negation then it negates something which is necessarily its negation (we called it 'untruth'). In this way, however, since even untruth (like everything) confirms truth, we are obliged to say that truth, insofar as it negates something that affirms it, somehow comes to deny itself. So, truth itself is something contradictory and hence in turn negated, and therefore negative.

Moreover, this circumstance – the fact that truth, insofar as it denies (negates), denies itself – is confirmed, in a broader and more general way, by the fact that everything that denies something implies the denial of itself. Indeed, insofar as a whatever thing denies "something" – i.e. damages and destroys it (totally or partially, or at least threatens to destroy it) – it is in turn counter-denied (counter-negated) by the opposite pole, just the one it attacks. As now we will see better.

Negation includes a moment that, with reference to its Latin etymology (*nex*, *necis* = death, killing), I call 'necative' rather than simply 'negative'. Necative is hence what, inside the negative, is harmful. However, keeping in mind that what is harmful with respect to something ('x') is therefore in turn attacked/denied by 'x', we must say that what harms something harms itself too. In short, we can say that the necative is what is harmful and self-harmful, i.e. damaging and self-damaging (damaging and damaged), dangerous and self-dangerous, injurious and self-injurious (injurious and injured), noxious and self-noxious (or even "noxious and 'noxied'", we could say invoking the poetic license, or, better, the philosophical license). Inasmuch as both poles of negation (of 'negative') are attacked (hit and damaged, or even destroyed) by the opposite pole, each of the two poles presents itself as a suffering, painful subject, since it is a 'patient'

subject: 'patient' in an etymological sense, that is a subject who suffers (suffers the offenses of denial).

In conclusion, and in short, we could say: anything (and emblematically a speech, a discourse) that consists of a negation becomes something necative (harmful and self-harmful). So that also the discourse that expresses truth (let us say, for the sake of brevity: philosophy), insofar as it takes the form of negation, becomes in turn something negative (necative and self-necative). I usually summarise this by the formula "The negative of negative is negative". As such, truth (true discourse) disproves the character of the undeniability that defined it: it suffers negation, rather than being safe from negative. In other words, as far as the speech has the form of a negation, truth itself becomes a negative value (a disvalue); therefore, it comes to be defined by a trait opposite to that of the universal and perfect value that should define it.

A relevant consequence is that, in order to be safe from the negative value of the necative (what is harmful and harmed), truth must be something other than a negation, hence different from any negation of whatsoever reality. Therefore – and this point is absolutely decisive – truth must also be different from the negation of the negation itself, as well as of the negative itself (and even of the necative itself). So, truth can be defined as safe from negative only insofar as it is different even from the undeniable, for the very reason that this (the non-deniable) remains something negative (since it is negative towards negative). Well, this is possible only through what I call 'pure difference'.

2.3 The Pure Difference

Let us see better. Truth – always if intended like something safe with respect to the negative-necative – must differ from all that is negative-necative. But since this difference must be different from a negation, it must also be different from what I call 'the difference-negation': the difference which is a form of negation, i.e. which is a 'negative' difference. Therefore, it must also be different from the negation addressed towards negation itself, to negative itself. And this precisely means that it is a pure difference.

But how can we even conceive such a difference? This is possible only if we think of it as a 'completely' (totally) positive difference; a difference that is positive with respect to anything, and therefore fully positive also in relation to the totality of the negative; and precisely for this reason it is 'pure': pure difference. So, a typical feature of this aspect of the difference is the fact that, through it, the two different ones constitute each other (Heidegger: *Zusammengehörigkeit*). I could express this peculiar type of difference by saying that it gives

rise to a bipolarity characterised by the fact that the two poles that constitute it are defined by the fact that each of them, even if separated from the other, would present the same duality within itself.

A question arises here. If truth is different from the negation of the negative, how can we justify the fact that it prevails over the negative? (Pre-vails, i.e. is worth more than – or else, it has greater value than – untruth). The answer to this question is that being different from any negation not only does not prevent truth from being safe from negative but is precisely what solely frees truth from negative. Particularly interesting, in this context of discourse, is that this confirms the circumstance that the value of truth (its prevailing towards untruth) can be justified only by means of an axiological and ethical discourse. I will now briefly elaborate on this.

How can we, precisely from a logical point of view, establish that truth prevails over its own negation (i.e. untruth)? Well, this can happen only on the condition that truth coincides with the very criterion of value, so that untruth, in turn, coincides with the criterion of that which is a dis-value (that which has a negative value). More precisely, salvation from the negative can happen only on the condition that truth coincides with the very criterion of any preference, that which is with the positive itself. Indeed, truth prevails over non-truth only if it is the positive itself, and if the positive itself is defined as that which, compared to the negative, is worth more (more valid, pre-valent). Otherwise, in fact, we should introduce a *tertium* (a third element) which should act as a judge between truth and untruth, but this would be incompatible with the claim of truth to be the ultimate judge of every question. In other terms, truth can really pre-vail over untruth only if their opposition coincides with the same criterion that discriminates positive from negative, i.e. what is preferable from what is not preferable. Otherwise, the contrast between truth and its denial (which both denies and affirms truth) is unsolved.

It is worth noting that this remains true also if this discourse is opposed not by an opposed (contrary) discourse but by an opposed (contrary) attitude; for example, that consisting in opposing it with an obstinate silence or, in any case, an attitude that excludes the former as (in some sense) negative. This shows that practice itself, whatever it may be, seems to involve some form of an evaluative attitude. So, it is clear that this 'dispute' (contrast) between truth and untruth has a happy outcome only on the condition that the opposition is understood precisely in an axiological-evaluative sense. All this shows that the truth/non-truth opposition is, 'in truth', much more than a mere logical-linguistic question. It is, in fact, the 'magical point' in which the logical-rational dimension and the axiological-evaluative dimension come to coincide.

3 Pure Difference as Answer to Philosophical Questions

A significant confirmation of the value of this "magical point" (the pure difference) is that it is essential in order to give a satisfactory answer to all main philosophical questions, which for brevity we can now articulate in three different groups: 1) logical-rational problems; 2) onto-logical and metaphysical issues; 3) axiological and soteriological questions.

3.1 Logical-Rational Problems: The Principle of Non-Contradiction

On the one hand (that of rationality) the notion of pure difference allows us to correctly define the notion of the undeniable, which characterises truth. Truth can constitute a positive only to the extent that it is something different from all that is negating and henceforth negative; therefore, it is safe from negative only to the extent that it differs also from the undeniable, since this is negative, although towards negative.

Just as truth must be purely different from the undeniable, so it must be different from a discourse guided by the principle of 'non-' contradiction, since this too is a 'negative' principle, being a denial (negation) of contradiction. Therefore, only pure difference is an experience free from the contradictions that threaten to invalidate the perspective of undeniable and the logic of non-contradiction (Wittgenstein, Gödel, Tarski).

3.2 Onto-Logical Issues

On this basis, classical onto-logical and metaphysical problems also find an analogous solution.

As an example of such problems, we can take the case of the discourse concerning the whole totality (the All) that is Being. Let us think, for example, about the bipolarity between Being, understood as the set that includes all determinations, and a single determination. Well, it is immediately clear that the two elements that make up this bipolarity (Being / determination) are such that each of them carries within itself (involves) the other pole: Being (as distinct from individual determinations) is in its turn a particular 'determination'; and the single determination is, in addition to its being such, necessarily also Being (it necessarily belongs to Being).

If difference is understood as negation, then that 'A' differs from 'B' means that there is at least one property that belongs to 'A' but does not belong to 'B' and vice versa. But, since in our case one of the two poles is the whole (Being), to which any entity belongs, it is

not possible to find any entity that does not belong to it, so that (I repeat: if every difference is a negation) it is not possible to establish any difference between the whole (Being) and the single determinations. And, mind you, not even the determination can differ from Being. This depends on the fact that not even the lack, on the part of the single determination, of a particular property which belongs to the whole can constitute the element differentiating the part from the whole because, in this case, we should say that the whole would lack precisely the lack of a certain property. In fact, even the lack of something constitutes a property, so that even this specific property must belong to the Absolute and therefore cannot constitute the differentiating element between the two subjects at stake.

We have here a confirmation of the fact that only a logic that allows us to think about the reciprocal co-institution of two entities is able to think coherently about the relationship between the whole (Being) and its determinations. And, therefore, we have also a confirmation of the fact that the logic of non-contradiction, which can think of reality only as composed of such determinations that one is 'not' the other, goes here towards an essential limit. Because it can think of the difference between Being and determination only by denying that one is also the other, and therefore it can think of the dimension of Being, essential for philosophical thought, only as a contradictory notion.

Indeed, already in Parmenides' *Poem*, Being is the dimension characterised by the fact that, if it is defined negatively (that is, if the negation is referred to Being), it gives rise to a contradiction. Because, through this kind of negation (not Being / non-Being) comes to be excluded from Being something which instead must, by definition, belong to it (since Being is the dimension that includes and comprehends, or includes, everything).

3.3 Axiological and Soteriological Questions

Finally, the same happens at the sapiential level, that which concerns the difference between the positive and the negative, and precisely that which revolves around the figure of the Absolute, understood as what is perfectly (completely) positive and safe from any negativity. In this sphere, truth is the All-Positive.

In this case too, in fact, if difference is understood as a negation, it happens that the difference between the Absolute and the relative involves a contradiction, since it ends up making the Absolute itself negative, while the Absolute should instead be totally, perfectly positive. Indeed, the Absolute, if it is thought of as 'non'-negative, or even just as 'non'-relative, by this very fact comes to be something negative. After all, if difference is necessarily a negation, then also the

Absolute (the perfectly, totally positive), being by this very fact different from the negative, becomes non-negative (i.e. negative of the negative) and therefore negative in turn. Only if it is 'pure positive', that is, positive which differs by pure difference from the totality of the negative, can the Absolute be perfectly positive.

Hence, even in this circumstance, only pure difference makes possible a thought capable of thinking coherently about the Absolute. And, therefore, only this notion allows us to really think about salvation from the pain of life and evil, as it is the only one that allows us to really think about the positive difference between the first dimension and the latter. In conclusion, the pure difference is the relationship that the positive has with the negative because only in this way the positive can remain such (i.e. positive) even in relation to the negative. And this pure positive is what we can call the complete, total, perfect positive: the All-Positive.

3.4 The Philosophical Principle

For all these reasons we can say, in short, that the truth we are talking about is the one that can be summarised by the following formula: "Positive is op-posed to negative". That means: "Positive is positively, and hence purely, opposed 'with' negative". This truth is undeniable in the sense (above mentioned) that it is affirmed by any negation. Indeed, anyone who should oppose the principle of opposition would thereby confirm it. But, now it is clear that this principle must be understood in a sense that is not only logical or onto-logical, but also – we could say – axio-logical (and hence axio-matic too). So that the positive is what has more value than something else (with respect to which it is therefore preferable), while the negative is what, entailing its own refusal and therefore presenting itself as a dis-value, also implies something (the positive, in fact) which, since is endowed with value, is certainly preferable to it. Therefore, this point is what allows us to combine (com-pose) the two aspects, that of rationality and that of wisdom.

We can now understand better in what sense the pure positive, purely different from the totality of the negative, constitutes the 'magical point' in which onto-logical and soteriological dimensions are one.

3.5 Passage

As a 'magical point' of the coincidence of logical-rational knowledge with axiological-soteriological wisdom, I believe that this notion (the dimension of purely positive difference and pure positive, understood precisely as a place of co-belonging and mutual co-institution of de-

terminations) is a perspective capable not only of bringing to fulfilment the basic requirements (logic, rational, etc.) of Western philosophy but also those strictly metaphysical and soteriological that are typical of Eastern wisdom.

To this end, I will limit myself to making a very brief mention of two fundamental perspectives of Eastern wisdom. The first is the *Hindū* conception of *Advaita*, understood as a duality defined by the fact that any attempt to separate the two poles that constitute it, an attempt operated by splitting the duality into two things such that one is not the other, is doomed to fail, because each element of reality thus divided would carry within itself that same duplicity/duality. Understood in this way, the duality is the relationship through which each of the two poles integrally constitutes the other (co-institution).

In relation to this we could say that pure difference is precisely the 'between' which constitutes the proper nature of all 'things', which, regardless of their co-belonging with other entities (*pratītyasamutpāda*), are devoid of 'their own nature'. We could then speak, exploiting a Panikkarian neologism, of 'inter-in-dependence'. Here, a singular closeness emerges with the Buddhist perspective of the Middle Way, understood of course not as the banal moderation of common sense (without however wanting in any way to despise common sense), but as the essential reciprocal (mutual) constitution of realities, which gives rise to the impermanence that defines the Buddhist doctrine of *anattā* and *anicca*.

For all these reasons I think that the perspective of pure difference and pure positive is the one that allows the opening of a 'dialogical dialogue' between philosophy and other wisdom perspectives, which in our case are represented by Japanese Buddhism, precisely in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Raveri 2017, 227).

Second Part: A Dialogical Interpretation of a Buddhist Experience

I believe that the ultimate questions human beings have to face are characterised precisely by the fact that they deal with the dimension we are talking about; in other terms, I believe that all forms of wisdom represent, in some way, just this sphere. As proof of this fact, I will bring just a possible interpretation of the discourse made by Massimo Raveri in his above mentioned essay. I will therefore now show in what sense his writing can be read as an exemplification of the discourse I have suggested; of course, it will be up to him to say whether and to what extent this interpretation is correct.

4 Dichotomies and Pure Differences in a Buddhist Experience

The whole sapiential experience Raveri talks about is interwoven with a series of dualities that, interpreted in a 'negative' way, make the situation conceptually contradictory and practically conflictual. The fact that this experience, nevertheless, is assumed as the correct way to salvation, proves that here the transition to the dimension of purely positive difference takes place. In other words, I argue that all the problems (difficulties and then even real conflicts) we are witnessing are determined precisely by dualities (differences) understood (meant) in a negative (dichotomous-exclusionary) way; and, consequently, that they can be solved only thanks to a position capable to keep together the two different poles, but in a way (dimension) such that they come to be actually compatible (compositive / harmonious).

4.1 Enlightenment and Ordinary Life

Let us consider for example the central question of salvation. Here we have the duality between salvation, on the one side, and 'negative' (pain, suffering, death etc.) on the other side. From a slightly different point of view, we have the duality between the enlightened life (saved) and the life marred by the negative (the damned life, as we could call the experience of the other human beings, all the ordinary ones). This especially concerns the relationship between the experience of the Absolute (which is perfectly positive) and the relative-worldly human experience, marked by the negative (pain and death). The question is therefore "the sense of evil and man's ability to reach salvation" (Raveri 2017, 227), and hence also the practices through which this can happen, with particular reference to the practice of the "pronunciation of Buddha's Name" (Raveri 2017, 227).

Regarding this dichotomy, a main question is: does salvation concern only another life or just our present life? In other words: can we

"achieve salvation here and now" (Raveri 2017, 228)? We see that, within the negative logic for which affirming the truth of one choice implies denying the truth of the other, every answer becomes unacceptable. On the one hand, it is evident that there must be a 'difference' between the dimension of salvation and our life, full of pain, from which we have to save ourselves: there must be a difference between *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*. On the other hand, however, it is clear that salvation must also concern present life in some way. Here we have a duality which, if interpreted in a negative way, still leads to negative results. Furthermore, precisely what should constitute the dimension of salvation, with respect to that of perdition, appears as an element that in turn produces more perdition than salvation.

Another significant duality could be: does salvation concern everyone or only a few elected people? In both cases, major (relevant) difficulties arise. A difference there must be, because otherwise what sense could the devotee's fatigue and sacrifices have? And why should one follow the path of enlightenment rather than the ordinary way of living? Or why should we say that the former is better than the latter, that the one is preferable to the other? Contrarily, however, it happens that any dichotomy between the two experiences, which determines a contradictory exclusion between the two, ends up determining an *aporia* that ultimately leads to a conceptual explosion (a contradiction). If salvation concerns only a privileged few, then this seems to imply a superiority of these elected people, which opens a scenario of conflict with the others and a rift within the idea of universal salvation, precisely the salvation that Buddha had promised to all by his 'vows', especially from 17 to 20 (Raveri 2017, 233). On the contrary, if salvation concerns everyone, then it seems that we can no longer differentiate between good and wicked people, between saints and sinners, between righteous and unjust individuals (Raveri 2017, 251-2).

The central point of this question is precisely the difference between absolute and relative experience. On the one hand, indeed, there must be a difference between the two; on the other hand, however, the dimension of the Absolute must also fully include relative experience, so that it is difficult even to conceive of a difference between the two. Indeed, we shall see that the conclusion will be precisely a kind of identification of the two experiences. This is a clear example of what was said, i.e. that only a purely positive difference can really make the difference between the Absolute and the relative (worldly) thinkable.

4.2 Absolute and Language

Regarding the crucial problem we are dealing with, a particularly significant aspect is that relating to language. More precisely, the question concerns the possibility, for language, to express the Absolute.

Within our discourse, this point has a quite peculiar meaning precisely because it directly concerns negation. Indeed, it is usual to say that the sphere of language remains 'defined' by the presence of negation, and just this is a circumstance which seems to make it impossible for the language to witness a dimension that is precisely defined by the fact that it is fully, totally positive. From another point of view, how is a position that excludes language from the field of the Absolute even imaginable without having itself recourse to some form of language? In fact, every human thought seems to involve a language of some kind. Moreover, any human attitude, even those we can call 'non-linguistic' (whatever it may be), seems to involve some form of denial, as we have already seen above: even the refusal of language should be, just as refusing, in some way 'negative'. Therefore, it seems that the problem of wisdom is that of transcending the negative in general, therefore of transcending negative language rather than language as such. For this reason, a particular task of those who pursue salvation is to create a purely positive language, free from every negative.

I consider particularly relevant the fact that a conceptual dynamic of this type is also present in Western thought, and that even within a rational and logical thought the need to go beyond the language emerges in an incompressible way. An exemplary case of this fact is constituted by the *Proslogion* of Anselmo. In this masterpiece the Catholic monk, on the one hand (chapters 2 and 3), undeniably demonstrates God's real being (what we usually read, perhaps far from a correct interpretation, as the proof of God's *existence*, that is the existence of the Absolute: "id quo maius cogitari nequit"); on the other hand, however, he recognises that the true Absolute absolutely transcends everything we can think and say about It. In short, Anselmo recognises that God is "quiddam maius quam cogitari possit" (chapter 15): something greater than anything one can think of. In addition to this, we are today witnessing, at the top of Western thought (defined as logical and rational), an outcome that we can call 'mystical', thinking for example of Wittgenstein in particular, but also of certain traits of Heidegger's thought and even of Severino's *Oltre il linguaggio* (Beyond language). That is an outcome very close to the form of wisdom that characterises Buddhism.

As we read in Raveri's essay, the Madhyamaka tradition of Mahāyāna thought "resolutely denies that a relationship could be established between language and ultimate truth" (Raveri 2017, 228) because truth can be communicated to men only through particular

modalities and suitable means: *upāya* (228). Just this imposes a 'dichotomy' between "a 'conventional' and relative truth, *saṃvṛtisatya*" (228) and an absolute, infallible truth (*paramārthasatya*) (229). Within the former experience, truth itself remains always "covered" and "ineffable" (229). Within the latter, where truth is present, this requires, however, the "uprooting of thought and the death of the mind" (229). In short, we see here a sort of *via negationis* – "through a negative way" (229) – which at the end leads to "silence" (229).

But there is another way, the way of esoteric Buddhism (228). It passes through the improvement of language or, rather, leads to a radical transformation of the experience of language. From a certain point of view, absolute language is that in which it is just nature expressing itself through its own being, and, from this perspective, it can be said that everything is a word of the Absolute. This is an "esoteric" way of Buddhism (229), widely derived from previous Buddhist experiences – as that of Kūkai and the Body of the Law, the *Dharmakāya* (229), but also that of *tathāgatagarbha* (230) – that leads to understand the at the end "everything is a *monji*" (229). Further, a deep bond is recognised between the Buddha's 'languages' of truth and reality. At the same time, this means that, just in order to access this experience, human beings must elaborate a specific and quite particular language, a language based on symbols and rites (230), in turn also widely derived by the great Schools of Shingon and Tendai (228). Only this new experience, and this new language, leads to a conciliation of the two worlds, the relative one and the absolute one (230-1); and moreover of all other dualities, as those regarding exoteric and esoteric (231) or even the three Mysteries: body, voice, mind (231). Thanks to this conciliation, we can experience a language able to tell ultimate truth (234). Nevertheless, even this conciliation will become a matter of contention because it will be considered as an extremely sophisticated and therefore essentially elitist form of interpreting salvation.

4.3 Absolute and Senses

Closely connected to this aspect is a further point, one related to the possibility that the senses draw on the Absolute, i.e. that through senses we can achieve the Absolute. Again, if we refuse to admit (and hence if we negate) that it is possible to grasp the Absolute through senses, then it seems that we must somehow exclude sensible experience from the sphere of the Absolute; and, as we have understood, this is a problem. But, as we have seen, the dimension of symbols and rites offers the possibility of somehow grasping the dimension of the Absolute even through the senses (Raveri 2017, 230), and similarly the body also is in some way redeemed within this path of sal-

vation (231). From this point of view, we can say that everything belongs to enlightenment (230).

It is an extraordinary experience that leads to the recognition of a Sixth Element (230), which allows participation in Buddhahood and a re-evaluation of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine (230). All the same again here we have a kind of reconciliation: the components of reality are neither absolutely empty nor absolutely real (230-1). We can indeed find here an aspect typical of Middle Way.

4.4 The Buddha and the Devotee

In fact, it is an extra-ordinary experience, which for this reason precisely does not really concern 'ordinary' people and their sensitive experience; therefore, only a privileged, particular and exceptional being can see that "the world of illusion is the world of enlightenment" (Raveri 2017, 230) and can experience that salvation is "[h]ere and now, in this very life" (230). In short, all this requires an initiate (230).

However, the dichotomy that seemed to have been overcome, now returns to recur. Basically, it happens that the inevitable difference between the salvific-absolute experience and the relative one, to the extent that it gives rise to a dichotomy, leads to the creation of languages and practices built ad hoc and hence exceptional, extraordinary and difficult to access for 'mere mortals'. In this way, salvation is unattainable for ordinary men, and for this reason it ends up producing a conflict between the caste of the enlightened, who should bring salvation to everyone, and those who should be saved by them. This, the real world, far from being saved, sinks into even greater damnation.

It may be interesting to observe how a sort of Hegelian-type process can also be acknowledged here. Starting from the *kenmitsu* – the "exoteric-esoteric episteme" (227), and therefore from the synthesis between Buddhism and *shintō* – at first (Madhyamaka) we have a clear separation between the individual human experience and the dimension of the Absolute, and therefore of salvation. Later, we witness a sort of conciliation between individual and truth, but this remains an external, 'objective' reality (rites, esoteric wisdom, hierarchy, etc.). Finally, we find a path that leads to the identification of the Buddha Amida with the devotee: Amida's voice is the same as the devotee's (254), and this is precisely the absolute experience, that in which individual existence is one with the being of the Absolute (as we will see better at the end of this writing).

4.5 The Correct Practice

All this is closely connected to another important duality, that between the dimension of salvation (enlightenment), in the proper sense, and the practical one, namely that of human action. Just in relation to the question of practice, we have indeed a very similar contrasting/conciliatory dynamic.

We have a whole series of dichotomies. Particularly relevant then is the fact that a dichotomy appears even within the three *sūtra* themselves – "short", "extended", and "meditation *sūtra*" (Raveri 2017, 232) – which reveals some "discrepancy" between the four vows (Raveri 2017, 233), in particular as regards the relation between complex practices and simple faith. One perspective privileges meditation and monks' ways of life; for the other, on the contrary, faith seems to be sufficient, so that there is even a devaluation of meditation. Since these different ways of thinking became two different or even opposite spiritual paths, this called into question "the very meaning of the monastic choice" (227) and hence even "the spiritual power of the monks" (233). The drastic simplification introduced by the practice of *nenbutsu* (234) constitutes a reaction to the complex and therefore elitist forms of salvific practices proposed in the esoteric way, but, in this way, it leads to a drastic reduction of spiritual practices; even meditation changes its own meaning (233) and in any case loses its centrality (240). This led, in the long run, to the rejection of those complex practices – see, for example, the contrast between meditation and *mandala* (235; cf. 239) – and eventually to an extreme simplification for which the entire salvation can be obtained through the simple pronunciation of the Name of the Buddha also made a few times or even only on the verge of death (233).

The decisive problem of the relationship between faith and law arises here (243); we could speak of a contrast which opposes law and faith (234; cf. 235 and 243), which recalled the question of the "End of the Law" and of the new Buddha – Maitreya (237) and strongly proposed the relationship between sincerity, desire, and faith (241; cf. 249). Here we are moving in a direction that clearly goes beyond the law, therefore in a quite 'revolutionary' perspective (237-8). With its psychological and social atmosphere, it is characteristic of the dark ages (238), even then apocalyptic (237), with a typical need for transcendence (see for instance *tariki*) understood in an absolute sense (238). The contrast affected all spheres and gave birth to clearly opposed experiences that Genshin tried to distinguish but also to reconcile; these being *shōdōmon*, based on wisdom and the study of texts, on the one hand, and *jōdomon*, the gateway to the Pure Land, invoking the Name of Buddha Amida, on the other (Raveri 2017, 239). In the latter perspective, there is "a personal and direct bond of man with the Absolute, based on faith and not on wisdom, a bond which is

free and not mediated by any religious institution" (233). In this regard, it is reasonable to pose the problem of a possible proximity to the phenomenon of Protestantism and its conflict with the Catholic ecclesiastical institution in the European world.

The problem, precisely, is that of the duality between ordinary practice and correct practice, the only fit to achieve salvation. A figure like Genshin (238), through its style far from the esoteric language, emphasised the "novelty of the Amidist discourse" (238) that projects salvation in a dimension (*tariki*) transcendent this world (238). But it was Hōnen who, later, radicalised this process (239-40). His valorising the 18° vow, and in particular the practice of invoking the Name of the Buddha (240), led to interpret *nenbutsu* as a main road capable of leading directly to the Pure Land (240; cf. 232). Up to the point that, being the practice favored by its reference to the traditional conception of *kotodama* (241), it came to talk about it as "the *only* practice" (*senju nenbutsu*): the only 'effective' practice to salvation (240). We can speak, in this regard, of a real magic of the Name: simply pronouncing the Buddha's Name is able to provide salvation (241-2); it is a practice endowed with a real and extraordinary power.

4.6 Power and Institutions

So, it happened that the "new religious discourse" was "destined to lead to a direct attack on the dominant thought system" (Raveri 2017, 232). Indeed, this spiritual path is, objectively, against monastic power and its privileges. It questioned the political role of wise people (246), and the problem of power became central. As Raveri's essay also shows, in an effective, concise manner, it is not only a spiritual or theoretical contrast, since it had major implications in practical, social, and political life (227). In particular, the conflict concerned issues related to the sphere of hierarchy and hence, precisely, of power. It is the dimension in which the dichotomies we have encountered, and which could appear to be of an exquisitely and exclusively spiritual or in any case existential-individual nature, actually show themselves as a particular face of a wider sphere of contrasts. This is one which consists of real power struggles and, thus, of conflicts that have an inevitable component of hatred and violence (227).

Moreover, the conflict unleashed by the Amidist practice also called into question the very role of warriors (243). They too, at least in part, were conquered by the Amidist practice of *nenbutsu* (243). But, just for this, a problem arose: how can a man involved in the dynamics of power give up the world? (243). This problem evoked an old difficulty of Buddhist World vision relating to the abandonment of the world. To this problem too an original answer was found: the abandonment is not really about the world but about desire only (244).

However, this solution opened a drift that led (with an expression that evokes Nietzsche) "beyond good and evil" (245) and that, therefore, owned a 'subversive' character which sparked a strong reaction from institutional Buddhist Schools (245-6). All this determined a real "antagonism" (246), inevitably characterised by hatred – "Hate" (246) – and conflicts: a real *polemos* (war).

The Western scholar may be surprised to see how religious and spiritual issues have turned into bitter conflicts also in the Buddhist world, not only in the Western one, strongly characterised by the relationship between theological disputes and struggles for power or even real wars. But this circumstance only reveals that the issues we are here dealing with are the truly fundamental ones: they are questions that affect human nature in its deepest essence rather than cultural questions understood in an abstract and superstructural sense.

From the conceptual point of view, particularly interesting is the fact that the 'negative' dynamic seems doomed to reproduce itself indefinitely. For instance, the same Amidist 'simplification' somehow reproduces, in turn, a sort of esoteric dualism: "Esoteric Amidist discourse" (246), and then also, respectively, (Kakuban), a kind of new conciliation (246). From a historical and therefore more concrete point of view, we face here situations very similar to those we have well known in the West too, albeit, of course, with cultural protagonists other than Amidist devotee and Buddhist monks in general.

5 Conclusion: East and West in Face of Salvation

5.1 The Paradoxical Character of Solution

The way to salvation ultimately turns out to be a paradoxical way. In my view, the core of this paradoxicality is due to the relation between difference and negation: if difference is identified with a form of negation, then the unity of two different objects determines a contradiction. This question also emerges in the discourse we are considering, albeit in a marginal and somewhat covered way. I think for example of the theme of privative α, which, in Sanskrit, was "the sign of the One" which "founded the multiple and the transient", and since "as it affirmed, so it denied", it expressed "contradictory realities" (Raveri 2017, 247).

The situation appears to be contradictory, but insofar as it is experienced as 'the solution' to the problem of salvation, it is evident that it must be safe from negation and therefore also from self-negation and hence from contradiction too. Nevertheless, it clearly remains quite different from the ordinary world vision, and thus appears as paradoxical. In fact, the paradox affects practically all the points of

what we can call 'the Amidist solution'. For example, there is a vicious circle between faith and pronunciation of the Name since, to be effective, each of them seems to presuppose the other (248). But also the problem of the transcendentality of evil (248-9) is paradoxical; and, as we well know, this is an issue central in Buddhism, being connected to the problem of pain in the world.

As these paradoxical traits determine a sort of "surrender to the incomprehensible" (250), so that the Absolute is reached through an absolute faith towards an absolute transcendence (250), we can here interpret this as transcendence with respect to the negative and therefore to negation. A kind of utopian vision (250), yet clearly paradoxical, since the culmination of wisdom consists in understanding that just wisdom is an obstacle to salvation (250). Particularly significant symptoms of this paradoxicality are the questions of "wanting salvation" (250-1), and the paradox that one's salvation requires nothing less than a radical letting go of oneself (251). That is: the fullest and most complete realization of the human individual coincides with its total renunciation of itself. It is no coincidence that the moment of death plays a fundamental role in all this (242). Here we are faced with a new conception of death, as we see for example with regard to the theme of death and rebirth (241).

Connected to this point, and equally paradoxical, is the solution regarding the question of merits earned by actions in this life. In the end, it seems that there is no longer any relationship between merit and virtue, on the one hand, and reward, on the other. At a certain point it seems even that sinners (245) are saved in the same way, or even in a privileged way, with respect to righteous (251). Here we find ourselves placed beyond contradictions and beyond ethics: beyond good and evil (245). This shows that salvation depends on the grace of the Buddha rather than on the action of the devotee or humans (252); in other terms, it depends on a free gift (249) rather than a guarantee linked to the effectiveness of acting. That it is a paradoxically conciliatory experience rather than a negative one is confirmed by the fact that we are witnessing a conciliation of the Buddhist trinity: Śākyamuni, Amida and Dainichi (247); as well as a conciliation between the three esoteric Mysteries and the primacy of the Voice: *ichimitsu jōbutsu* (247).

Furthermore, the paradox is so radical that it cannot help but invest (affect) even the practice of *nenbutsu* (252-3), which ends up being interpreted as a "non-practice" and a "non-good" (253). So *nenbutsu* itself can be seen as a form of *hybris*: "an illusion of one's pride" because "to stop committing oneself to one's own salvation is the real commitment" (250-1). Shinran's word is an act "courageous and provocative" (251) and in some sense a reversal of his Master's (Hōnen) teaching.

It is precisely in this paradoxical context that the voice of the devotee is identified with the same voice of the Buddha (254), as we have

already said. So, the invocation is simply a thanksgiving (Raveri 2017, 253). The two entities, which initially formed the two poles of an irreducible duality, present now themselves as 'the same'. The saved and the savior, who in a negative logic constitute two absolutely opposite poles, now reveal themselves to be the same 'person'. Or rather – since a difference continues to exist – we could say that between them there is just 'a pure difference'. And just this is the most authentic language of the Absolute (Raveri 2017, 254); that is: pure difference between the Buddha and the devotee is the authentic voice of the Absolute. The concluding passage carries the word "unison" (254): "This unison – the humble voice of man and the voice of compassion of the Buddha that resounds in him – are, for Shinran, the most authentic language of the Absolute" (254). The voice of the Absolute is just the 'identity' (unison) of two 'different voices'.

We could then conclude that it makes sense to interpret Raveri's text as a discourse that admirably illustrates the transition from 'via negationis' to (if we may say so) 'via positionis': Shinran – the "stupid baldhead" *gutoku* (248) – does not judge, does not condemn, does not punish (252). He provides a solution to the problem left by his Master Hōnen. His 'purely positive' perspective stems from a radical pessimism (248-9): 'everything' is evil, and illusion in the human – in 'all' humans – and, in this sense, they are all the same, all on the same level. 'Salvation', meant as a dimension absolutely other than the totality of negative, is precisely a "gift" from Amida (249). The human individual who saves himself is now Amida himself, an expression of the unique mind (*isshin*) of Buddha (249). The individual is saved to the extent that he/she discovers that "since always he/she has been 'saved'" (254); therefore, he/she is saved beyond his/her own merits (250). That is, we could say, within the dimension of the 'absolute positive'.

5.2 Technology and Salvation

We can ask ourselves what a reflection of this kind means for the present time. A time that is characterised by the fact that every human phenomenon, on the one hand, happens within a cultural scenario that is now worldwide, and, on the other hand, has to deal with technology: the final outcome of logical-rational thought, which now presents itself as the subject that claims the right to provide a solution to 'every' problem, an answer to 'every' question.

We could say that technology is the culmination of the practice that claims to be effective and therefore able to guarantee the satisfaction of human individuals, and thus their salvation in the end. The lesson that we draw from the proposed discourse is that 'true salvation' is obtained only when this claim (the pretension to have some-

thing that is able to guarantee this result) is in turn abandoned. It is the paradox of salvation which is truly effective only if it renounces the claim of having a means (a practice) capable of guaranteeing the achievement of the end.

In an extremely synthetic and schematic way, we could say that today we are witnessing the conclusion of what has been called the Axial Age. By this term, we can mean the period in which human conscience (Lao-Tse, Buddha, Socrates, later Jesus and so on) awakens and poses the problem of liberation with respect to existing religious institutions, their 'mythologies', and in general with respect to language and therefore also with respect to power institutions. This liberation should lead humans, as far as possible, along the path of salvation from pain and from the fear of death too. In Western tradition, all this has increasingly taken the path of the affirmation of rational language, which finds now, and more and more, its fulfilment in technological operating. So today, in the so-called age of technology, the problem of the negative (that is, of pain and death) is faced by means of technological tools.

From a practical and historical point of view, we could say that technological action is showing a much higher and widespread effectiveness than that of all traditional forms of wisdom. Humans entrust their health and their salvation no longer to religious or spiritual practices but to scientific-technological instruments and institutions. But, on the other hand, the limits of this attitude become more and more tangible, and, above all, the risk that this path leads human life to an intensification of conflicts and pain is increasingly real. Not only that, but also with regard to the problem of death, the risk is that we shall end up only by shifting this problem is increasingly evident. In particular, the risk that we simply shall transfer that problem from substantially human individuals to forms of life that are no longer classically human but not for that less deadly and less painful; thus re-proposing the questions that are central to every sapiential tradition. The problem of pain and immortality too is today left to technology, but there is a very strong risk that this, interpreted in a negative way, that is as 'negation of necation', will lead to a situation very dangerous for 'normal' human and anthropological experience, for instance, the risk that technological evolution leads to what we can call 'the scrapping of the human', and that in this story the world of techno-scientists constitutes the priestly caste of our times.

From a spiritual point of view, technology presents itself as the complete fulfilment of the path indicated by Parmenides: fragment 8 (Diels-Kranz), verses 21 and 27-28 respectively. He says that, in truth "is becoming extinguished and passing away not to be heard of", and hence "coming into being and passing away have been driven afar, and true belief has cast them away": the overcoming of birth and death. But these are precisely the problems that have always been

at the heart of Buddhist reflection and to which this great experience has provided a whole series of reflections and practices which we can no longer ignore. For both traditions the central point is the positive/negative relationship, and the central question comes to be the relationship between the phenomena of pain, death and the like (suffering, violence, war, oppression, disease, illness, sickness, suicide, etc.), on the one hand, and that of salvation from all forms of negativity, on the other hand. Precisely, the question expressed by the op-position between the positive and negative, and hence by the purely positive (co-institutive) difference between the two.

Bibliography

Raveri, M. (2017). "Contemplare il Buddha / Pronunciare il suo nome: I sensi dell'Assoluto". Raveri, M.; Tarca, L.V. (a cura di), *I linguaggi dell'Assoluto*. Milano: Mimesis, 227-54.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist. Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

The Quest for Japanese Fascism: A Historiographical Overview

Federico Marcon
Princeton University, USA

Abstract 'Japanese fascism' is a historiographical construct rather than a historical reality. Whether Japan's sociopolitical developments in the 1930s and early 1940s can be legitimately and authoritatively defined as 'fascist' depends on the triangulation of three axes of analysis: historical reconstructions of institutional, political, social, and ideological processes; historiographical surveys of the palimpsest of interpretations historians have given to this period of Japanese history; and metahistorical analyses of the cognitive legitimacy of the category of 'fascism'. This essay focuses on the second axis, offering a historical survey of the historiographical debate on 'Japanese fascism' worldwide.

Keywords Fascism. Japanese Fascism. Japanese Imperialism. Second World War. Historiography.

> In every statement involving proper names or definite descriptions, the reader or listener is supposed to take for granted the existence of the entity about which something is predicated. (Eco 1994, 99)

1 Introduction

The idea of a 'Japanese Fascism' is a historiographical construct. Historically, there were no political parties or movements in Japan between the 1920s and the early 1940s that bore that name or that were so dubbed. There was no po-

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2021-01-14 | Accepted 2021-02-23 | Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/004

litical ideology that openly declared to follow the ideas of Mussolini's Fascism. Nor did the political regime of the 1930s and 1940s openly embraced fascism as governmental model. Fascist ideas, texts, slogans, and agents surely circulated in transwar Japan, enticing debates, confrontations, and imitations. But Fascism spread to many other countries before the war, including those that ended up fighting against the countries of the Axis in the Second World War (Ledeen 1972; Payne 1995, 129-354; Finchelstein 2010; Hart 2018). It is certainly possible to write a history of how Fascism attracted, inspired, or repulsed Japanese thinkers, journalists, authors, and political activists in the transwar period (Hofmann 2015). But a history of 'Fascism in Japan' is not equivalent to a history of 'Fascist Japan'. The debates and confrontations that Italian Fascism provoked in Japan is a historical topic distinct from the historiographical interpretation of the nature of the Japanese regime in the 1930s and early 1940s. Whether Japan underwent a 'fascist turn' in the course of the 1930s is a question of historical interpretation and political judgment, the legitimacy of which cannot be assumed but argued for – legitimation that, in turn, depends on the heuristic capacity of 'fascism' to operate as generic category, which is also something that cannot be assumed but must be argued for.

Whether or not Japanese politics and society in the 1930s and early 1940s can be legitimately and authoritatively framed as 'fascist' is an inquiry that requires the interaction and combination of three analytical perspectives: historical reconstructions of institutional, political, social, and ideological processes; historiographical surveys of the palimpsest of interpretations historians have given to this period of Japanese history; and metahistorical analyses of the cognitive legitimacy of the category of 'fascism'. This essay focuses on the second of these perspectives and offers a survey of some crucial historiographical genealogies of historiographical interpretation of Japanese politics and society in the transwar period. Historicising historical interpretations does not intend to defend an agnostic perspective that conceives of historical knowledge as, at best, relativistic or, at worst, ideological. It rather aims to reinforce the truth-value of historians' cognitive labour by analysing the mediating effect of their interpretations.

It goes without saying that a reluctance to attribute the qualifier 'fascist' to the Japanese political regime of the 1930s and 1940s does not immediately translate into an affirmation of its democratic nature. Japan developed into a reactionary, repressive, and aggressively expansive imperial power without the support of a revolutionary mass movement or coup d'état from above, without a charismatic leader, and without colour-shirted paramilitary squads. Japan developed into a corporate state, with original ideological myths and popular support, through processes that are distinct from those of western European countries, even though it ended up sharing with them structural analogies and eventually embracing them in a military alliance.

2 The Marxists

It was Marxism that developed the first theorisations of Japanese Fascism. In response to Georgi Dimitrov's report at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International of 2 August 1935, Marxist thinkers of all countries began investigations on the dissemination of fascist movements and ideologies worldwide (Dimitrov 1935). Dimitrov's statement originated from the admonition, given at the previous Congress of 1928, that "a new fascist offensive was under way and called for a struggle against it" (Dimitrov 1935). The Comintern elites felt it was necessary to investigate the manifest and disguised forms that fascism could take, on the premises that "in a more or less developed form, fascist tendencies and the germs of a fascist movement are to be found almost everywhere" (Dimitrov 1935). The struggle against fascism, for Marxists, was vital for two main reasons: first, 'fascism' represented the most sophisticated political form developed by monopoly capitalism in the context of a worldwide crisis of capital accumulation; second, fascism distorted people's understanding of class struggle, thus preventing the emergence of emancipatory revolutionary movements:

> [f]ascism aims at the most unbridled exploitation of the masses, but it approaches them with the most artful anti-capitalist demagogy, taking advantage of the deep hatred of the working people against the plundering bourgeoisie, the banks, trusts and financial magnates, and advancing those slogans which at the given moment are most alluring to the politically immature masses. (Dimitrov 1935)

Fascist elements, Dimitrov argued, were ubiquitous in all industrial societies. But it was far less clear the extent to which they occupied state institutions. In the cases of Italy and Germany the situation was clear: there,

> [f]ascism, appearing as an open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, and most imperialistic elements of finance capital, shakes off all the "democratic" cloaks masking the subordination of the state apparatus to the monopolies. (Dimitrov 1935)

On that model, I.A. Latyshev, a Russian historian and *Pravda* journalist who in 1952 defended a dissertation on "The Establishment of a Military-Fascist Regime in Japan on the Eve of the War in the Pacific, 1940-41", argued, echoing Dimitrov, that Japan was an "openly terroristic fascist regime", the specific character of which laid

> in that absolute monarchy was its form, while the leaders of the Japanese military came forward in the role of fascist dictators [and were] the most ardent servants of the *zaibatsu* and landlords, the cruellest butchers of the Japanese people. Therefore, in order to set off and underline the specific character of the fascist dictatorship in Japan, [we may] call it monarcho-fascist dictatorship, or military-fascist dictatorship. (Latyshev 1955a, 215-16; English transl. in Wilson 1968, 402)[1]

If Latyshev's study, together with the work of Y.I. Avdeyev and V.N. Strunnikov on Japanese imperialism, represented the orthodox views on Japanese fascism in postwar USSR and the template for orthodox Marxists worldwide, in the 1930s Marxist theorists hold conflicting positions (Avdeyev, Strunnikov 1962; see also Kirby 1981, 50-1). The famous study of the two Russian orientalists known as O. Tanin and E. Yohan, pseudonyms of historians O.S. Tarkhanov and Y.S. Iolk, *Militarism and Fascism in Japan*, published in 1934, rejected the notion that the Japanese "reactionary chauvinist regime" could be assimilated to the Western notion of fascism because of the "peculiarities of the social structure and the peculiar historical development of Japanese military-feudal imperialism" (Tanin, Yohan 1934, 266). Tanin and Yohan gave two arguments for that assertion. First, while Western European fascism was "primarily an instrument of finance capital", in Japan the reactionary regime was not only an instrument of "finance capital but also of the Japanese monarchy which represent[ed] a *bloc* of two class forces: finance capital and semi-feudal landowners" (267). Second, because of the less developed nature of Japanese democracy, the reactionary ruling elites made, on the whole, a "limited use of social demagogy" (267). Furthermore, Tanin and Yohan contended, the Japanese reactionary movement was split in two factions, one grouping together reactionary organisations of the privileged classes, the other consisting of "the reactionary chauvinist organisations among the intermediate social strata, principally small landed proprietors and the urban petty bourgeoisie" (Tanin, Yohan 1934, 272). This latter one was, "in its ideology, closer to West European fascism", but was to all effects cut-off from direct state power (Tanin, Yohan 1934, 272).

Tanin and Yohan confirmed in their study the thesis that Otto Kuusien, a Finnish historian and politician who had moved to the Soviet Union in 1918, had proposed to the Comintern just a few years earlier, in March 1932, in the immediate aftermath of the Shanghai

1 See also Latyshev 1955b and Kirby 1981, 51-2.

Incident (28 January-3 March 1932).[2] Published in the Comintern bulletin in the following May with the title "Extracts from the Theses of the West European Bureau of the ECCI [Executive Committee of the Communist International] on the Situation in Japan and the tasks of the Japanese Communist Party", the report emphasised the connection between Japan's predatory imperialist expansion abroad and the reactionary politics of the regime at home (cited in Degras 1971, 192-203).

> By entering the past of war, the Japanese imperialists are seeking to maintain and to strengthen the regime of the army-police monarchy, the regime of unparalleled and arbitrary violence against the working people, to reinforce bondage on the land, to lower workers' standard of living still more. (Degras 1971, 196)

Aggressive imperialist expansion and domestic reactionary authoritarianism were two expressions of the same political predicament, the result of an incomplete bourgeois revolution which maintained the hierarchical division of society intact from its feudal past. Rather than a fascist regime – expression of a realised bourgeois form of capitalist domination – Japan should be understood, for Kuusinen, as expression of "absolutist militaristic-feudalistic imperialism"(Degras 1971, 196).

Interestingly, a long essay introduced the first edition of Tanin and Yohan's study. The author was the Polish-born Communist leader Karl Radek (1885-1939), who would soon be incarcerated in a labour camp in Siberia during Stalin's purges.[3] In the essay, Radek praised the analysis of the two specialists but highlighted their mistaken interpretation of fascism, which determined their failure to recognise its presence in Japan. Fascism, Radek explained,

> develops on the economic basis of the domination of monopoly capitalism, which is no longer able to solve the main economic problems facing society, which is feeling the approach of the social revolution and which is experiencing an ever-deepening crisis. (Tanin, Yohan 1934, 14)

It was on account of this sense of impending revolution that fascism developed into a "dictatorship resting upon mass organisations, mostly petty-bourgeois", which "combine[d] the greatest terrorism against workers and revolutionary peasants with an unbridled social demagogy" (Tanin, Yohan 1934, 14). Following quite closely the interpre-

2 Influential for Tanin and Yohan was also the study of Japanese economic situation of the Soviet historian K.T. Eidus (1896-1972). See Kirby 1981, 39-42.

3 John Dower believes that O.S. Tarkhanov and Y.S. Iolk too ended up dead during Stalin's purges (Dower 1975, 37).

tation of Communists like Dimitrov, Trotsky, and Togliatti, Radek emphasised that fascism was not "simply a reactionary dictatorship", but a dictatorship that was expression of finance capital and "which has been able [...] to secure for itself the support of the petty bourgeoisie by means of a demagogic policy and mass mobilisation" (14). The case of Japan, according to Radek, was not dissimilar.

> The fascist parties in western Europe are, in their composition, petty-bourgeois parties. Their leading strata in them are to a large extent landowners, but they pursue a policy of defending the interests of finance capital, which represents the leading force of capitalist society which has reached the stage of monopoly capitalism. And the same holds true of Japan, although the leading role in the fascist movement of that country is played by the landowners and the higher bureaucracy. (Tanin, Yohan 1934, 21-2)

Japan's imperialism should be therefore understood in terms of finance capital extending its monopolistic reach in search of resources, cheap manpower, and controlled markets. Its only difference from European fascisms rested in the social composition of those who defended it: a mixture of finance capitalist, semi-feudal agrarian landowners, and state bureaucrats.

When the Soviet reports began to circulate in Japan – Matsubara Hiroshi and Mori Kiichi translated Tanin and Yohan's study in 1936 for the publisher Sōbunkaku – they exercised an enormous influence upon Japanese Marxists and their interpretations of the political situation of the 1930s. They also gave theoretical instruments for a controversy over Japanese 'fascism' among Marxist thinkers in the immediate postwar period. It was certainly a controversy over the interpretation of the origins of Japanese imperialism, but it was also a critique of the left's failure to avert Japan's descent into total war. As Germaine Hoston put it, "the controversies on the origins and nature of Japanese imperialism and 'fascism' allowed the Rōnō-ha and Kōza-ha to confront, in theoretical terms, the political events they had tried vainly to avert" (Hoston 1986, 256).

The differing interpretations of Japanese imperialism of the two factions of Japanese Marxism were grounded on divergent understandings of the events of 1868 and whether the social and political transformation of the Meiji Restoration could be interpreted as tantamount of a bourgeois revolution. The theoretical conflicts that divided the two factions of Japanese Marxists originated in the 1930s. The *Kōza* ('Lectures', or 'Symposia') faction, more responsive to Comintern directives, took its name from the seven-volume history of Japanese Capitalism, *Nihon shihonshugi hattatsushi kōza*, published by Iwanami Shoten in 1932-33. The *Rōnō* (Worker-Farmer) faction, made up of dissident and eclectic Marxists vis-à-vis Soviet orthodoxy,

took its name from the magazine *Rōnō*, published between 1927 and 1932. In the view of the *Kōza-ha*, Japan did not have a complete bourgeois revolution in 1868, which explained the resilience of feudal privileges among economic and political elites. As a result, there were no mature bourgeois institutions that could sustain the development of class consciousness and emancipatory movements, so that the semi-feudal power structures inside the modern state were protected by a retrograde consciousness. The *Rōnō-ha* activists, instead, argued that the Meiji Restoration, incomplete as it might have been in the immediate aftermath of the Boshin War of 1868-69, marked a revolutionary transformation of Japanese society into a full-fledged capitalist state, protected by institutions that could be conceived as analogous to liberal democracies. The different interpretations of 1868 of the two Marxist factions gave a different spin to their respective understanding of the intensification of Japanese military expansion in 1931. In that regard, the *Kōza-ha* activists maintained a closer adherence to the feudal interpretation of the militaristic character of the Japanese state given by Kuusinen's 1932 Theses: they

> established as orthodoxy the view that the Japanese formation was to be characterised as imperial absolutism (*tennōsei zattaishugi*), not, as some [*Rōnō-ha*] had been inclined to argue, a bloc of mixed class forces within which the bourgeoisie had been gradually establishing its hegemony. (McCormack 1980, 134)

The differing interpretations of the Meiji Restoration called for different political strategies. *Kōza-ha* scholar-activists like Noro Eitarō, Yamada Shōtarō, Hirano Yoshitarō, Hattori Shisō, and Hani Gorō, focused on cultural and political analyses, proposed a two-stage political programme that aimed at the development of democratic institutions and consciousness, on the basis of which a mature socialist movement could only successively develop. *Rōnō* activists like Hirabayashi Taiko, Sakai Toshihiko, and Yamakawa Hitoshi, among others, emphasised quantitative economic analyses and insisted on the incidental nature of feudal relics among Japanese society, which was solidly structured around a capitalist mode of production (see Satō 2015; see also Barshay 2004, 72-91 and Hoston 1986). The split between the two factions continued in the postwar period, when analyses of 'Japanese fascism' diverged on the basis of the theoretical stance of the two factions. What united the political thinkers of the two groups "in the context of the cold war, the Occupation's reverse course, and hostilities in Korea" was a deeply felt "desire to prevent its recurrence" (Hoston 1986, 261).

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, *Rōnō* thinkers strove to develop an original theory of Japanese fascism. Following the example of Sakisaka Itsurō and Takahashi Masao, who

in 1932 had published warnings on the strengthening of fascism in Japan, *Rōnō-ha* activists like Yamakawa Hitoshi, Ōuchi Hyōe, and Tasuchiya Takao, with the collaboration of Sakisaka and Takahashi themselves, analysed the transition from a liberal parliamentarism of the 1920s to fascism (see Sakisaka [1935] 1947). "Political power", Yamakawa wrote, "shifted from the grasp of the political parties, the proper representatives of bourgeois political forces, based on the combination of the military, bureaucracy, and zaibatsu" (cited in Hoston 1986, 261). Following quite faithfully Dimitrov's interpretive model, *Rōnō* activists conceived of fascism as the systematic combination of state power and monopoly capital, which for them was inevitable to preserve the interests of the capitalist shareholders in a time of systematic economic crisis at a global level. In the context of Japan, "the Rōnō-ha had willingly acknowledged that semifeudal 'remnants' existed in the prewar state" (Hoston 1986, 262), but these lingering elements – a mixture of agricultural landownership, patriotic military officials, and the Emperor worship – became integral part of the fascist transformation of the state.

The *Kōza* faction initially denied that Japan experienced a fascist phase precisely because of the presence of feudal holdovers. Kamiyama Shigeo, in particular, continued to insist, as he had done in the 1930s, that the emperor system was enough to explain the "absolutist reaction" of the war years (what he termed "absolutist monarchy", *zettai kunshusei*, or "emperor-system absolutism", *tennōsei zettaishugi*) (Kamiyama 1956). Soon, however, Kamiyama found himself in a minority position among fellow *Kōza* members. *Kōza* scholars like Shiga Yoshio and Inoue Kiyoshi, in fact, criticised Kamiyama's analysis and developed, in contrast to prewar positions, a new conception according to which in the 1930s Japan had indeed fostered a fascist transformation that was peculiar to Japan, and thus distinct from the cases of Italy and Germany. As Shiga explained:

> The development of Japanese finance capital and the intensification of its contradictions by the world economic depression caused fascism to grow dramatically between 1931 and 1945. Comrade Kamiyama has fallen into the position of explaining the essential difference between militaristic-feudalistic imperialism and fascism conceptually by means of a formula, so he cannot clarify the relationship between the emperor system and fascism. (Shiga 1949, 47-8; English transl. in Hoston 1986, 262)

Shiga concluded that, between 1931 and 1945, during, that is, the war years of Japan in Asia, "the absolutist emperor system came to be made to execute fascist tasks" (Shiga 1949, 47-8; English transl. in Hoston 1986, 262). Shiga's position was soon endorsed by theorists like Inoue Kiyoshi – who called the wartime regime an "emperor-system fascism"

(*tennōsei fashizumu*) (Inoue 1966, 3: 188) – Hattori Shisō, and Moriya Fumio, who further refined Shiga's analysis. Their analyses of fascism reduced the doctrinal gap between the two factions of Marxists theorists. Both *Rōnō* and *Kōza* Marxists now conceived of fascism as essentially an expression of monopoly capital, which assured its own existence via form of political dictatorship characterised by internal repression, external aggression, and exasperated nationalism in the form of emperor worship – whereby the formula "*tennōsei fashizumu*". As *Kōza* member Tanaka Sōgorō put it, "fascism in one form of dictatorship attempted at the time when capitalist society stands at the brink of disaster" (Tanaka 1960, 3; English transl. in Wilson 1968, 403).

The debate over Japanese fascism in the first decades of the postwar period was at the same time a theoretical attempt to come to terms with the catastrophe of the fifteen-year war and a political intervention on the future of Japan in the context of an intensifying cold war. The debate was carried on in a Marxian terminology and on the basis of a Marxist political dialectic of stage-development of base-superstructure forms. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, it dominated the intellectual landscape of historical research and gave political orientation to the majority of intellectuals. For Marxist theorists the analyses of monopoly capitalism, represented in Japan by the *zaibatsu* conglomerates that the Occupying Forces had just pretended to dismantle, served as a perspective through which it was possible to understand the Emperor-system (*tennōsei*) and the aggressive imperialism in Asia in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as to critically assess the continuation of prewar conservatism after 1945, in the context of the 'soft fascism' of Cold War capitalism. The association of arm forces, *zaibatsu*, political parties, and state bureaucracy that constituted the formal structure of Japanese fascism (for the *Rōnō-ha*) or emperor-centred absolutist fascism (for the *Kōza-ha*) in the 1930s became, for Marxist theorists, allegories that revealed the corrupted and authoritarian governance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), among whose leaders it was possible to count many war criminals – in particular Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke.

Despite doctrinal divergences among thinkers of different Marxist factions, 'fascism' maintained a clear conceptual consistency in their formulations. It stood for the name of an objective stage of sociopolitical development, characteristic of monopolistic capitalist economies in times of protracted crisis. As such, it stood for more than a political form or style of propaganda (superstructure): it was a universal category, the attribution of which depended on scholars' analyses of the socioeconomic development of Japanese society in the interwar period. Despite its many differences with European movements, 'Japanese fascism', as particular declination contingent of the sociohistorical conditions of Japan, fit in with the notion of universal fascism that the Comintern had defined in the 1930s.

3 Maruyama Masao and Japan's Fascist Modernisation

While *Kōza-ha* and *Rōnō-ha* theorists debated over 'Japanese fascism', the only non-Marxist analysis of Japanese imperialism that had great political bearing among Japanese intellectuals was that of Maruyama Masao, one of the most prominent political theorists of postwar Japan. His historical studies and political analyses had an unrivalled impact upon a variety of fields in Japan and abroad, from social and intellectual history to political science and philosophy. Soon after his graduation from the Law School of the University of Tokyo, in 1937, Maruyama Masao had served as researcher specialised in modern European political thought. During the Pacific War, he was mobilised and dispatched in the Imperial Army headquarters of Hiroshima, where he stationed until the blast of the atomic bomb. In the first years after the end of the war, his intellectual activity concentrated on two projects: first, to understand the intellectual and political reasons behind the advent of 'Japanese fascism'; second, to create the conditions for a democratic transformation of Japanese society.

Maruyama had assiduously pursued the first goal during the war years. It resulted in one of the most influential study of the political thought of the Tokugawa period, *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū*, completed in 1944 and published in 1947, and a series of essays on Japanese 'fascism', nationalism, and authoritarianism that would be later published in 1956-57 as *Gendai seiji no shisō to kōdō*.[4] Of these essays, the first two focused primarily on the question of 'Japanese fascism': "Chōkokkashugi no ronri to shinri" ("Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism", originally published in the May 1946 issue of *Sekai*) and "Nihon fashizumu no shisō to undō" ("The Ideology and Dynamic of Japanese Fascism", originally a lecture he delivered at the University of Tokyo in 1947 and later published as an article in 1948).

Maruyama's argument is well known: Japan had a defective modernisation, the causes of which had to be traced back to the Tokugawa period. It was in the writings of the Confucian thinker Ogyū Sorai, he argued, that Japan first developed an original form of political rationality, which 'secularised' ethics and politics away from Zhu Xi's deterministic metaphysics. This modernising impetus in thought further unfolded, in the early Meiji period, in Fukuzawa Yukichi's enlightenment project of individual growth and citizens' political autonomy. Alongside Sorai, however, the Tokugawa period saw also the emergence of an irrationalist form of ethico-political thought, originating in Motoori Norinaga, which insisted on Japanese natural con-

4 See Maruyama 1952 (English transl. in Maruyama 1974), and Maruyama 1956 (English transl. in Maruyama 1963).

nection with the deities and which developed in the mid-nineteenth century in those forms of emperor-worship (*sonnō*) and antiforeignism (*jōi*) that paved the way to the authoritarianism of the emperor-system and, eventually, fascism. The dialectic of "artifice" (*sakui*) and "nature" (*shizen*), of Sorai and Norinaga, and of modernising rationalism and irrationalist nativism, were, for Maruyama, constitutive of the political immaturity of Japanese citizens and pivotal to understanding the authoritarianism of its parliamentary institution in the interwar period (Maruyama 1952).

The intellectual template that Maruyama set up in his study of Tokugawa political thought was indispensable to explain his understanding of the divide between a "fascism from above" and a "fascism from below". As George Wilson later elaborated,

> [i]n a Japan lacking the tradition of a bourgeois-democratic revolution, fascism had to develop from above since mass energy, having never before been a main force in political change, could not serve to bring it to power. (Wilson 1968, 405)

In "The Ideology and Dynamic of Japanese Fascism" Maruyama proposed a three-stage developmental model of Japan's 'fascism' in which "fascism from above" and "fascism from below" interacted and reinforced each other. After an initial "preparatory" phase, between the end of the First World War and the invasion of Manchuria in 1931, which saw the emergence of an array of right-wing movements among civilians, a second phase, that of "maturity", spanning to the 26 February 1936 incident, saw those civilian movements becoming "concretely linked to with segment of military power", which became the "driving force of the fascist movement, gradually coming to occupy the core of the national government" (Maruyama 1963, 26). The third phase, that of the "consummation period", was the actual period of "Japanese fascism" that lasted until the end of the war, on 15 August 1945. In this phase,

> the military, now the open supporters of fascism from above, fashioned an unstable ruling structure in coalition with the semi-feudal power of the bureaucracy and the Senior Retainers on the one hand, and with monopoly capital and the political parties on the other. (Maruyama 1963, 27)

Distinctively from Italy and Germany, where fascist movements developed since the beginning as movements from below, in Japan civilian fascism and military-bureaucratic fascism were engaged into a complex dialectic of opposition and assimilation that eventually reinforced one another. This characteristic explained, for Maruyama, the marked difference between Japan and its two European allies. On

the one hand, the three forms of fascism shared an opposition to liberalism and parliamentarism, a stark antagonism against Marxism and capitalism (this last one only demagogic, being fascism, for Maruyama as well as for the Marxists, expression of monopoly capital), and aggressively expansionist policies:

> Japanese fascism shared the ideology of its Italian and German counterparts in such matters as the rejection of the world view of individualistic liberalism, opposition to parliamentary politics which is the political expression of liberalism, insistence on foreign expansion, a tendency to glorify military built-up and war, a strong emphasis on racial myths and the national essence, a rejection of class warfare based on totalitarianism, and the struggle against Marxism. (Maruyama 1963, 35)

On the other hand, however, the ideology of "Japanese fascism" had "distinctive characteristics". First, the "family-system tendency", in its institutional, economic, and ideological declinations of the "family state" (*kazoku-kokka*), of "entrepreneurial familism" (*keiei kazokushugi*), and, most importantly, of *kokutai* (the multilayered trope of the "national body"), descended directly from that late-Tokugawa emperor-worship that connected people's morality (*dōtoku*) with nature (*shizen*) and the gods (*kami*), of which the emperor (*tennō*) was human progeny (Maruyama 1963, 36-7). Second, "agrarianism" (*nōhonshugi*), which had common characteristics with the semi-feudalism conceptualised by *Kōza-ha* Marxists, represented a distinguishing characteristic of "Japanese fascism", emphasising the autonomist rural movement that dialectically counteracted the centralising and statist tendencies of fascism (Maruyama 1963, 37-50). The third characteristic was "panasianism" (*DaiAjiashugi*), "the ideal of the emancipation of Asian people from European colonialism, a task which had been upheld since the days of the Popular Rights Movement (Jiyūminken *undō*) in the Meiji era", which, however, "became inextricably tied up with the idea that Japan should seize hegemony in Asia in place of European imperialism" (Maruyama 1963, 51). A further common feature of European and Japanese fascisms was the organisation of mass consensus through the violent coercion of police forces and censorship, but also, at an ideological level, through the activities of middle-class "pseudo- or sub-intellectuals" – whose activities of propaganda and demagogy echoed Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual" (Maruyama 1963, 58).[5]

Maruyama Masao's theorisation of 'fascism' had striking similarities with the Marxist interpretation. They both conceived of 'fascism'

5 On organic intellectuals, see Gramsci 1975, 3: 1550-1.

in realist terms: it pointed to a distinct and real (in the ontological sense) form of political organisation, with both universal characteristics and local specificities. Also like the Marxists, Maruyama's analysis of fascism was propaedeutic to the construction of an authentically democratic consciousness in postwar Japanese society, of which he became one of the most prominent public advocates during social conflicts of the 1960s. For Maruyama, the analysis of "Japanese fascism" was indispensable to counteract what he called a chronic "system of irresponsibility" dominant in Japanese public sphere, which he conceptualised in the essay "Chōkokkashugi no ronri to shinri" as "the product of interaction between [...] common characteristics of mass society and the peculiar power structure of Japan" (Maruyama 1963, 1-24).[6] Finally, like theorists of the *Kōza-ha* and *Rōnō-ha*, he understood fascism as emerging in an economic context of monopoly capitalism. What distinguished Maruyama's 'fascism' from the Marxist's was that for him it pointed to a *political* form of power, whereas for Marxist theorists ultimately pointed to the socioeconomic condition of monopoly capitalism that constituted the base for the development of specific form of authoritarian political institutions (superstructure).

Despite doctrinal disputes and different interpretations continued, the notion that Japan underwent a 'fascist' phase in the 1930s remained hegemonic among Japanese intellectuals well until the 1970s. In that context, 'fascism', the heuristic legitimacy of which was never questioned, had a twofold function: one was historical, as it gave an interpretive meaning to the wartime experience of Japan that was to be regarded as a negative template against which a new model of democratic citizenship had to evolve in postwar Japan; the other was political, as it stood as a memento of the ever-present danger of political power to turn authoritarian, especially as the intensification of the Cold War confrontation with the Communist neighbours required that Japan bent to the requests of the United States (McCormack 2007).

4 Fascism during the Cold War

"In the 'thirties", George Wilson stated, "both Japanese and Western writers were quick to fasten on fascism as a label for the extremist patriotic group – civilian and military – that were appearing on the scene" (Wilson 1968, 408). So, for instance, in 1932 American journalist Thomas Arthur Bisson, sympathiser of the Chinese Communist movement, reported on "The Rise of Fascism in Japan" (Bisson 1932). The same year, Yoshino Sakuzō published a piece in English on

6 On the political implication of this view on the political activism of Maruyama Masao in postwar Japan, see Bronson 2016.

"Fascism in Japan" (Yoshino 1932).[7] In 1936, journalist William Henry Chamberlin described Japan as a "semi-fascist" state and anticipated its "natural alliance" between Germany and Japan. In Japan, he wrote, "intellectuals, always responsive to new foreign ideas and influences, were impressed by the sweep of Fascism in Europe" (Chamberlin 1937, 143). In 1937, W.B. Ashton compared Japanese political and economic systems to those of fascist states like Italy and Germany, pointing out the similar collectivisation of capitalist economy by monopolistic agents who operated in close collaboration with fascist elites inside the state apparatus (Ashton 1937, 42-3). E. Wilfrid Fleisher, after fleeing Japan in the summer of 1941, declared that the country had entered a fascist stage as a "collective dictatorship". A resident of Japan since his childhood, Fleisher moved back to the United States to work in the Foreign Office and, during the postwar Occupation, he became an investigator for Gen. Douglas MacArthur. In two texts he published in 1941 and 1942, Fleischer described Japan as "engulfed by the Fascist tide", and explained:

> Japanese insistently repudiate the term "Fascist" as applied to their national movement, contending that it is not a copy of Italian and German methods but a nationalism of Japanese origin, rooted in feudal days. Certainly Japanese Fascism has elements of its own, but in recent years it has looked principally to Germany for guidance in the establishment of a totalitarian state. (Fleischer 1941, 62)[8]

During the war years, and especially after Japan's alliance with Italy and Germany, Japan would be regarded as part of the fascist Axis, and yet, even in propaganda products like Frank Capra's documentary *Know Your Enemy: Japan*, the emphasis was in explaining how Japan's feudal samurai mentality had indoctrinated its population to accept sacrifice for the semi-divine emperor, rather than in 'fascism'. Interestingly, when all wartime commentators appealed to 'fascism' to clarify the nature of the authoritarianism and aggressive imperialism of Japan, they tended to refer to Nazi Germany, rather than Fascist Italy, as the model upon which Japanese 'fascism' unfolded.

In the postwar period, the situation flipped, especially in the West. If the majority of Japanese historians and theorists, most of whom of Marxian leaning, throughout the first two decades after 1945 supported the notion that Japan in the 1930s had indeed turned fas-

7 "The party politicians work under the orders of their paymasters, the plutocrats, and these orders are obviously to serve the interests of big business, while the little man, and particularly the farmer, is progressively impoverished" (Yoshino 1932, 194).

8 See also Fleisher 1942.

cist, quite the opposite was the interpretation given by European and American historians, independently of their political orientation. With the exception of Robert A. Scalapino, who coined the term of "military-fascism",[9] and Richard Storry, who adopted from Maruyama Masao the notions of a "headless fascism from above", the majority of Anglo-American historians rejected the attribution of 'fascism' for Japan. Edwin Reischauer, in *Japan, Past and Present*, opted to "organised ultranationalist movement" and of "military dictatorship with totalitarian tendencies" (Reischauer 1946). Delmer Brown, in his *Nationalism in Japan: An Introductory Historical Analysis* (1955), rejected 'fascism' as well, preferring locutions like "militarist ultranationalism" (Brown 1955). Albert Craig, too, favoured "militarism", although he acknowledged the similarities between Japan and Nazi Germany as an effect of their latecomer modernisation (Fairbank, Reischauer, Craig 1973, 682-725). John Hall rejected the notion of 'fascist Japan' and rather characterised it as a "defensive State" sustained by an "ultranationalist ideology", which mixed the authoritarianism of the Meiji constitution with the notions of "militarism" and "state socialism" (Hall 1970). Marius Jansen largely agreed with the interpretation of the first generation of American historians of Japan who, as members of the so-called modernisation theory school that formed in the context of the Hakone conference of 1960, were at the time responding to the predominantly Marxist Japanese academic historians and their consensus over a 'Japanese fascism'. "At first glance", Jansen argued,

> the course of Japanese history in the 1930s differs so radically from that of the decade before that it presumes a profound discontinuity. Terms like 'military takeover' or 'fascism' have been employed to emphasize that gap.

In truth, for Jansen, the situation was much more complex than the view of a fascism or militarism imposed from above suggested.

> Many of the development of the 1930s would in fact have been impossible without the development of mass culture and participation that had come before, and it is no less true that the military buildup and domination had powerful roots in the institutional pattern of the modern Meiji state. (Jansen 2000, 576)

9 Scalapino: "It is clear that there were some important differences between this Japanese 'Fascism' and its Western counterparts. In the first place, the concept of *der Führer* was absent in Japan. There was a great difference between a Hitler and a Tojo, and this reflected the complete lack of individualism in Japanese society. Moreover, Japanese 'Fascism', as was noted earlier, never approached a mass movement" (1953, 391).

As the Cold War intensified and Japan strengthened its position of strongest U.S. ally in an increasingly red East Asia, there was a mounting concern among Western historians of Japan to demonstrate the democratic and modern nature of Japanese society. This view was sustained in opposition to the prewar assessments about the political immaturity for democratic autonomy of the Japanese, still under the spell of premodern feudal power relations, which ostensibly explained Japan's fall into 'fascism'.[10] But it was also predicated against the notion that Japan did not have a tradition of liberal thought strong enough to resist the ideological appeal of communism.

Opposition against the notion of a 'fascist Japan', however, did not come only from liberal and conservative historians. It was defended and pursued by Marxist historians as well. E.H. Norman, reprising Tanin and Yohan's study, argued that Japan lacked some important distinctive characters of fascist dictatorships (Norman 1940). Jon Halliday, too, upheld Tanin and Yohan's interpretation and explained the ultramilitarism of the 1930s as an effect of lingering feudal relations. As he put it,

> to over-generalize is pointless. If every form of reaction can be termed "fascism", the word loses its meaning. Fascism can be only a *specific* form of reaction. It seems an open question whether the most valuable approach is indeed to try to compare Japan with the European fascist states. (Halliday 1975, 134)

Halliday's answer was negative. He insisted that "if Japan became a fascist country, then it must be possible to locate the transition" (Halliday 1975, 136). He showed that it was quite difficult indeed to do so. First, he argued, "bourgeois democracy in Japan was much weaker than in either Germany or Italy, and the left-wing movement was not comparable either". Second, "the system of imperial absolutism led to definite limitations on those who were fascists". Third, "the army certainly was more important politically in Japan than in Germany, Italy or even Spain, but it is by no means clear that it was qualitatively more important than it had been in the 1920s or even in the Meiji period" (Halliday 1975, 137). Finally, for Halliday "[t]he trouble with the term 'fascism' is that it forces any examination of Japan into a Eurocentric category", since "it is virtually impossible to examine the phenome-

10 This was the official view of the U.S. armed forces during the war, illustrated by Frank Capra in his propaganda documentary. It continued, however, during the 'reverse course' of U.S. Occupation. As George Frost Kennan, at the time personal adviser of Secretary of State George C. Marshall, admitted: "We should cease to talk about vague and – for the Far East – unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards and democratisation. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans, the better" (cited in Bove, Duhan Kaplan 1995, 32).

non without constructing such an examination in terms of comparisons with Germany, Italy, and Spain". So, for him "Tanin and Yohan [were] correct to talk of imperial absolutism" (Halliday 1975, 139).

In continental Europe, where the Marxist historiographical tradition was stronger than in the Anglophone world, historians were less hostile to the notion of a 'Japanese fascism', although they tended to qualify that interpretation by appealing to the distinct sociocultural context of Japan. For instance, in Italy economic historians like Franco Mazzei and Alessandro Valota linked the fascist origin of Japanese ultra-militarism in the pressures of monopoly capital, but, in a logic that reminded that of the Frankfurt theorist Friedrich Pollock, they stressed the "predominant role played by state capital" (Mazzei 1979, 108 and Valota 1980, 238-78). Franco Gatti argued that, despite the absence, in Japan, of a one-party politics (until quite late) and of a charismatic leader, the bureaucratic transformation of the state to accommodate the needs of monopoly capital and the supporting ultranationalist rhetoric of *kokutai*, of *kazoku kokka*, and of emperor worship, suggested that the attribution of 'fascism' to Japan was not so far-fetched (Gatti 1983, 256-64).

Between the late 1960s and throughout the 1980s, Anglo-American historians of Japan remained suspicious of the qualifier 'fascist' to describe transwar and wartime Japan. But if their immediate postwar predecessors understood fascism in terms of an objective developmental stage of modernisation, now historians looked at 'fascism' as heuristic model, the characteristics of which might or might not fit the case of imperial Japan. The first postwar generation of historians, Wilson argued, were moved by

> an almost intuitive conviction that Japan's rapid evolution from "feudalism" to "absolutism" and "capitalism" indicates the proximity of Japanese historical development to the pattern of early modern and modern Western history. This conviction had led some to conclude that Japan's history should have followed a pattern practically identical to that of modern Europe were it not for certain "peculiarities". (Wilson 1968, 408)

Wilson's articles on "A New Look at the Problem of 'Japanese Fascism'" signalled the passage from a developmental model to a structural-typological one. Not persuaded by the developmental explanation of both Japanese and American historians, Wilson "recommended turning to the possibility of drawing enlightenment from comparisons with the late-developing non-Western nations". Midway between a new developmental heuristic paradigm and an understanding of political forms through patterns or structures, he suggested to

> view interwar Japan as proceeding developmentally from the political stage represented by the precursory Meiji nationalist 'movement-regime' to a point where the 'extinction' of that regime's original dynamism, coupled however with the tenacity of its institutions and the onset of total war, brought a reassertion of authoritarian tendencies and a corollary restraint on the exercise of liberalism and individual freedoms. (Wilson 1968, 411-12)

The turn from a developmental analysis to a typological definition of 'fascism' is best exemplified in a provocative 'comment' article in the *Journal of Asian Studies* by two young assistant professors at Stanford University, Peter Duus and Daniel I. Okimoto. After rejecting the old developmental interpretations, both Marxist and non-Marxist, and asserting the unfitness of analytical models framed upon European history, the two historians urged that

> instead of remaining transfixed by the need to explain the aberrational phenomenon of fascism […] we need to press beyond the orthodox concerns of the past to formulate new questions, […] new models, and test these empirically with a broad spectrum of heretofore unexplored perspectives. (Duus, Okimoto 1979, 76)

If there certainly were fascist tendencies among minority movements, especially among military officials, for them the term that best explain the sociopolitical character of transwar Japan was "corporatism". The 1930s should therefore be regarded as a "formative period of a managerial state or polity, in which a dirigist bureaucracy became the central element in the formation and execution of national policy" (Duus, Okimoto 1979, 72).[11]

Duus and Okimoto echoed Gilbert Allardyce's rejection of the heuristic category of 'fascism', on account that

> only individual things are real; everything abstracted from them, whether concepts or universals, exists solely in the mind. There is no such *thing* as fascism. There are only the men and movements that we call by that name. (Allardyce 1979, 368; italics in the original)

Similarly, for Duus and Okimoto the question of 'fascism' ceased to be an eminently ontological problem, as it was in the developmental model of stages of earlier historiography, and became a matter of heuristic accuracy. Accordingly, the research on 'Japanese fascism' in the late 1970s through the 1990s generally relied on structuralist

11 For a critique, see McCormack 1980, 140-1.

terminology. If the epistemological approach changed, still the overarching majority of historians tended to reject the attribution 'fascist' to transwar-period Japan. Gregory Kasza rejected 'fascism' and opted for "military-bureaucratic regime" (Kasza 1988). Relying on Japanese historians who rejected the term – in particular on the work of the revisionist historian Itō Takashi (Itō 1976; 1978) – Kasza underlined the "conceptual fuzziness" ("fascism" applies to "the entire right wing"), the questionable Marxist "political motivation" behind the uncritical use of the concept, and the fact that "Japan differed from Europe", in that they lacked charismatic dictator, one-party politics, and grassroots origins.[12] Possible alternative conceptions, for him, were "imperial absolutism", "developmental dictatorship",[13] "wartime politics", and reliance on "historical nominalism", by which he meant the adoption of "native terms that were prominent in interwar political discourse" like "idealist right" (*kannen uyoku*) and "*kakushin*". Itō Takashi was the leading Japanese historian defending this "native nominalism", which Kasza endorsed in his own support of *kakushin*, a term that he renders as "renovationist authoritarian right" and that, for him, "fills an awkward gap in the comparative typology of rightist (and perhaps also leftist) political tendencies, and it also fills a void in the English language" (Kasza 2001, 231-2).[14] The conceptual operation in both Itō and Kasza's interpretation, however, was that of creating synecdochically a new heuristic category which was supposed to stand – instead of 'fascism', but from an epistemological perspective performing the analogous conceptual labour of generic 'fascism' – for the regime that Japan ended up developing in the 1930s and in the 1940s.

Ben-Amy Shillony, in his *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, emphasised the continuation of political institutions during the wartime, arguing that labels such as "totalitarian" and "fascist state" "are meaningful only if understood in their broadest and pejorative sense, as nicknames for highlighting the repressive and aggressive character of the state". But at closer look, Japan "possessed neither an official dogma nor an omniscient leader to interpret the truth", and oppression was never comparable "to the concentration camps

12 As in Yamaguchi 1980 (Kasza 2001, 186).

13 As in Wilson 1968 and Takabakate 1979.

14 "Alas", he polemically acknowledges, "there seems to be a law that political concepts must derive from English" (Kasza 2001, 231-2). See also Kasza 1984. *Kakushin* "has no equivalent in the English language. In the interwar context, it is sometimes translated 'renovation'. In the postwar context, it is often translated 'progressive' […]. Neither translation does it justice. *Kakushin* falls half way between 'reform', a modest change within an existing system, and 'revolution', the replacement of one system by another. *Kakushin* advocates would keep some features of the existing politico-economic system but change others fundamentally. They are selective revolutionaries" (Kasza 2001, 199).

and wholesale bloodshed of Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia" (Shillony 1981, 15-16). Similarly, William Miles Fletcher III researched on "common themes between European fascist movements and the New Order Movement in Japan", but because "there were few institutional similarities between prewar Japan and fascist Italy or Nazi Germany" he contended that "the Japanese state was not fascist" (Fletcher 1982, 163-4). Interestingly, even though they negated its heuristic accuracy, 'fascism' for these historians stood mostly for Nazi Germany rather than Fascist Italy, and the accuracy of such conceptual reductionism was never questioned.

Other US historians who, in the 1980s, rejected the attribution of 'fascist' to the Japanese state were Mark Peattie, Gordon Berger, and Richard Mitchell (Berger 1977; Peattie 1988; Mitchell 1976). They all engaged in a conversation with European specialists of fascism who were at the same time struggling to develop a typological profile of fascism that could be applicable to historical regimes beyond Italy. Stanley Payne, in particular, was receptive to the research of Kasza, Peattie, Mitchell, Fletcher and Shillony. In his encyclopedic *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* he concluded that "Japan had evolved a somewhat pluralistic authoritarian system which exhibited some of the characteristic of fascism, but it did not develop fascism's most distinctive and revolutionary aspects" (Payne 1995, 336). In an earlier review essays, Payne built upon Fletcher and Shillony to emphasise that fascism was deeply embedded in European intellectual traditions as it "stemmed from the intersection of the new doctrines of nationalism, militarism, and social Darwinism with philosophical and cultural currents of neoidealism, vitalism, activism, and the cult of the her". These intellectual strains, for Payne, became fertile grounds for the development of fascism in those countries where the "transition to mobilised liberal democracy" was interrupted by "military defeat and severe national frustration or status deprivation" (Payne 1980, 275). In contrast, Japan "had never experienced the degree of liberal democratic mobilisation that had earlier occurred in both Germany and Italy". In addition, it had "experienced only a few of the cultural influences which produced Fascism" (Payne 1980, 275).

An exception to Anglophone scholars' tendency to reject the notion of a 'Japanese fascism' came from the Australian historian Gavan MacCormack, who, while acknowledging the convenience of such label as *tennōsei* state, quite cautiously defended some advantages that the heuristic category of 'fascism' offered to understanding the socioeconomic developments of transwar Japan. For him,

> in so far as fascism is to be used as a generic term in history and the social sciences, and subject to real doubts as to whether it should be, it would seem to be widely agreed that it is a phenomenon of capitalism in a time of crisis, its historic role being to con-

> solidate bourgeois dominance by neutralising or crushing opposition and mobilising the active support of the masses. (McCormack 1980, 142)

If Japanese historians, he argued, should pay more attention to American criticism of the explanatory power of 'fascism', it was equally desirable that Western historians followed and understood the epistemological reason for the persisting use of 'fascism' in Japanese scholarship.

From an epistemological perspective, historians' interpretation of transwar Japan as fascist followed distinct heuristic perspectives in the research of the first and second generation of postwar historians of Japan. The first generation conceived of 'fascism' in terms of developmental stage in political structures, economic relations, and intellectual conceptions of the nation, which required of historians to recognise those sociocultural symptoms that could justify the assertion that Japan had indeed entered a 'fascist' stage of development. Obviously, developmental stages were differently conceived in the works of Marxist and liberal historians, in their respective variations – *Rōnō*, *Kōza*, aligned to Soviet orthodoxy, or heterodox for Marxist; of the so-called 'Modernisation school' or following Maruyama Masao's idiosyncratic Hegelianism. Both understood these stages ontologically, as actual conditions of those historical societies. The second generation of historians followed instead a typological procedure, whereby the attribution of the qualifier 'fascism' was determined by matching a generic ideal-type with the historical society under investigation. Whether or not Japan underwent a fascist turn, therefore, was no longer conceived in ontological terms, but as the result of a hermeneutic operation of the historian who read beyond the literal meaning of Japanese political institutions.

5 'Japanese Fascism' after the End of History

With the end of the Cold War, the question of 'Japanese fascism' has reappeared in a new form. Today 'fascism' no longer nourishes the ambition of describing a stage of Japanese sociopolitical development, nor does it define the typology of the Japanese regime in the transwar period. Its target is smaller in size and heuristic ambition. It is rarely called to qualify political institutions, economic organisations, or ideological forms in their entirety, but rather certain cultural and social practices, forms of thought, and patterns of sociability. This change in focus mirrors changes in the writing of history in general that occurred in the last thirty years, especially after the so-called 'cultural turn' and the many subsequent sub-turns it triggered. The institutionalisation of new genres of historical in-

quiry like post-colonial studies, environmental history, subaltern studies, the history of science and technology, gender history, transnational history, and media studies, among many others, gave space to new research questions, new methods, new approaches, and new interpretations of the past. Post-structuralism has undermined the credibility of 'grand narratives', giving space to micro-historical research that were for the first time able to shed new light in previously unchartered topics like gender construction, sexuality, cognitive practices, material histories, etc. This transformation comes also at a cost. If thick descriptions have offered new depths in the analysis of social dynamics, the capacity to talk about or even conceptualise historical change seems to have been imperilled today, especially since the Marxian analytical paradigm has lost, among historians, its cognitive and institutional legitimacy with the disappearance of really existing socialist states (the failure of which has been shrewdly exploited to delegitimise Marxian theory *tout-court*) and the global affirmation of a capitalist "end of history" (Fukuyama 1992). As a consequence of these transformations in society and in the forms of historical knowledge they sustain, the heuristic category of 'fascism' has changed as well. Its application is narrower, targeted at specific cultural and intellectual forms, or particular political and economic dynamics. The restriction of its field of applicability, however, has at times rendered its meaning and thus its heuristic function even fuzzier than before. As a result, 'fascism' has lost not only cognitive power, but also political efficacy, notwithstanding its resurgence in the wake of Donald Trump's presidency.

In Japan, the hegemonic presence of practicing Marxist historians began to wane in the 1980s. Despite their ideological commitment, the eminently empiricist approach (*jisshōshugi*) they embraced resulted in a systematic organisation of the documentary sources on Japanese history. But dissenting voices began emerging. Itō Takashi, as we have seen, joined forces with the Italian revisionist historian of Fascism Renzo De Felice, contending that the generic use of 'fascism' was nothing but a Marxist creation (Itō 1976; see also De Felice, Ledeen 1975). In response to that, Marxist historian Furuya Tetsuo developed a definition of 'fascism' that could apply everywhere in the world. Fascism was for him a form of dictatorship which strived to develop a "uniform organisation of the masses at the level of daily life", which could "completely eliminate the roots of resistance" and to "mobilise the people in accordance with the wishes of the authority" (Furuya 1976, 84-6; English transl. in Mark 2015, 18). Among the group of historians that would be later defined as practitioners of "people's history" (*minshūshi*), politically on the left but no longer committed to Marxism, Yoshimi Yoshiaki published in 1984 a people's history of wartime Japan, in which he demonstrated the widespread

popular support for Japanese militarist expansion.[15] Entitled *Kusa no ne no fashizumu* – recently translated as *Grassroots Fascism: The War Experience of the Japanese People* – the study, while aligning along the Marxist interpretation of transwar Japanese history as 'fascist', corrected the conventional vision of both Marxists and Maruyama Masao that 'Japanese fascism' was imposed from above, in the forms of a "militarist fascism" or "imperial fascism" (*tennōsei fashizumu*). For Yoshimi, who shared the documentary approach of *minshūshi* pioneers like Irokawa Daikichi and Kano Masanao, which strived to recuperate and reconstruct the historical experience of people detached from power, the fascist phase of Japanese modernisation was not violently imposed from above, but found in large sectors of the population support for the military efforts of the Japanese Imperial Army. Less clear, however, was the meaning and heuristic function Yoshimi gave the concept of 'fascism', which he did not define, but assumed.

Yoshimi's ground-breaking study, together with the waning of the institutional predominance of Marxist historians in Japanese research universities, opened up new research venues on wartime Japan. Among the vast bibliographical production, Suzaki Shin'ichi focused on fascism's appeal on state bureaucrats, who looked at Nazi Germany and, to a much lesser extent, Fascist Italy for new forms of administrative and technological solutions to improve the governance of the Japanese empire (Suzaki 1998). Most recently, Fuke Takahiro looked at the cultural and intellectual exchanges of Japanese right-wing activists and ideologues with Italian and German thinkers (Fuke 2010).

In the United States, as early as 1991, Andrew Gordon broke a decade-long reluctance to employ the concept of 'fascism' and utilised it, with keen attention "to avoid nominalist and Eurocentric snares", to scout for "analytic common ground" in specific social dynamics in Italy, Germany and Japan (Gordon 1991, 334-5). In *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*, he analysed changes in the relations between state and labourers in conjunction with the rise of militarism and imperialist expansion, which gave new nuances to the notion of "fascism from above" in Maruyama Masao and Yamaguchi Yasushi (Maruyama 1956; Yamaguchi 1979). What passed unnoticed to the reviewers of the book, most of whom critical of Gordon's adoption of 'fascism', was that in the book the term did not intend to describe, either ontologically or epistemologically, transwar Japan in general, but only certain forms of state intervention in labour relations in the context of empire building.

Harry Harootunian's *Overcome by Modernity* employed an even more contentious use of 'fascism', which did not label transwar Japan

15 On the history of *minshūshi*, see Gluck 1978 and 2007.

in general but rather named a recurring attitude among intellectuals like Miki Kiyoshi, Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, Yanagita Kunio, Kon Wajirō, and others, to criticise the alienating effect of modernisation and its technological and economic mechanisms in favour of a return to "authenticity, folkism, and communitarianism". "Fascism", for Harootunian, pointed to the ideological and demagogic nature of the critique of modernity in the works of these intellectuals, as the appeal to "overcoming modernity" (*kindai no chōkoku*) implied the actual reproduction of the technologically most advanced forms of repression and violence, both domestically and internationally (Harootunian 2000, xxvii-xxxi). Harootunian found inspiration in the critical strategy of the Japanese Marxist Tosaka Jun, whose *Nihon ideorogii ron* represented the most ambition form of *Ideologiekritik* in 1930s Japan. In this essay, Tosaka

> forcefully juxtaposed this image of modern life filled with new customs to the fictive abstractions of natural culture in order to reveal the utter bankruptcy of all those pronouncements claiming the eternality of Japanese culture. (Harootunian 2000, 118)

This Tosaka called "*Nihon ideorogii*" (or in the form of alternative conjugates like *bunkenshugi*, a neologism we can render with 'classicism', or *Nihon bunkashugi*, or 'Japanese culturalism'), a Heideggerian cultural essentialism that Harootunian unburies in the texts of different thinkers and describes as 'fascist'.

Julia Adeney Thomas, in her study of the ideological use of the concept of 'nature' (*shizen*) that sustained the modernisation of the Japanese state, has argued that

> [c]laims to immemorial harmony with nature have become part of the evidence adduced by those who see Japan as "traditional" in the 1930s, and "tradition" has in turn been one of the touchstones in the debate over whether Japan's ultranationalism should be characterised as "fascist". (Thomas 2001, 181)

The appeal to 'nature', in the ideological constructs of thinkers like Miki Kiyoshi, Nishida Kitarō, Watsuji Tetsurō, and Tanabe Hajime, among others, supported, according to Thomas, those conceptions of agrarianism, primeval communitarianism, and national characters that were constitutive of wartime ultra-nationalism and analogous to fascism (Thomas 2001, 181-8).

Alan Tansman has scouted the cultural production of the 1920s and 1930s in search of "fascist moments", and found "a wide range of cultural expressions that share an urge for aesthetic wholeness": the anesthetisation of violence, militarism, expansionism, a religious attachment to national community, among others, were all elements

that echoed similar ones in the European context (Tansman 2009a). In the edited volume *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, Tansman argues "for the presence of a fascist culture in Japan and for the presence of fascistic ways of healing the crisis of interwar modernity" (Tansman 2009b, 1). In his analyses of different literary works in the transwar period, Tansman uses "fascism" to highlight the effects of certain aesthetic texts "to enchant a culture stripped of its magic by modernity", thus becoming an ideological tool to propose "a reactionary response to modernity", paradoxically articulating "a vision of a modernity that was born in the West yet was resistant to Westernisation" (Tansman 2009a, 9, 14-15).

Other historians have recently employed 'fascism' to speak of political changes in Japanese modernity. Takashi Fujitani argued that a feminine character distinguished the Japanese nationalist ideology from European fascisms (Fujitani 1996, 172). Kenneth Ruoff, in his reconstruction of the wartime celebration of the 2600th anniversary of the foundation of Japan, argued that "in political terms, Japan in 1940 shared far more in common with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy than it did with the United States and Britain" (Ruoff 2010, 19). Janis Mimura argued for the heuristic value of "fascism's ideology, expansionist policies, and modern technocratic thrust – all of which Japanese fascism shared with its European counterparts". According to Mimura, fascism offered Japanese technocrats and ideologists "a means to overcome the crisis of capitalism and resolve the problem of class conflict and authority in modern industrial society" (Mimura 2011, 5). Historians of 'Japanese fascism', following Maruyama Masao, "have tended to emphasise the nativist, agrarian, and pan-Asianist visions" (Mimura 2011, 107-8). In contrast to such view, Mimura coined the term "techno-fascism" to refer to those "Nazi-inspired concepts of 'leadership principle,' 'living space,' and 'national land planning'" (Mimura 2011, 3) which appealed to state bureaucrats and industrial managers, but also "progressive intellectuals and politicians", all university-educated middle-class professionals, who "sought to realise a productive, hierarchical, organic, national community based on cultural and geopolitical notions of Japanese ethnic superiority" (Mimura 2011, 3). The late Aaron Stephen Moore also adopted the notion of "techno-fascism". In his study of the technological and ideological foundations of the Japanese empire, he argued that

> [w]artime Japan's technological imaginary represented a form of fascist ideology that employed familiar tropes of modernity and rationality rather than relying primarily on cultural appeals to spiritualism or ultranationalism. (Moore 2013, 7)

In his study, engineers and technocratic bureaucrats are the agents of fascism rather than philosopher, ethnographers, Shintō priests, or

Buddhist monks (Victoria 2006). In line with the research of Suzaki and Mimura, Moore demonstrated how technology "serve[d] as a system of power and mobilisation" in Japan not only during its imperial expansion between 1931 and 1945, but also in the postwar period, as it sustained Japan's industrial high-growth (Moore 2013, 226-39).

Reto Hofmann has researched on the cultural exchanges between Italy and Japan, and on the popularity of 'fascist' ideas in Japan between the 1920s and the end of the war. Hofmann, whose approach is one of the most sophisticated in the recent scholarship on Japanese fascism, searched scholarly texts, popular books, political documents, newspaper articles, theatrical pieces, monuments and artifacts to reconstruct the circulation, understanding, appeal, or refusal of the concept of 'fascism' as it was imported in Japan from Italy. Hofmann, however, acknowledged "fascism" to be "both nationally specific and structurally transnational" (Hofmann 2015, 3). Distinguishing a Fascism distinct of Italy, which he renders with capital 'F', and a generic, transnational fascism, which he renders with a small 'f', he defends the notion that Fascism, by moving around the world through cultural and intellectual exchanges, transformed into a generic political idea that could become inspiration to other political movements "to counteract the negative effects of capitalist modernity" (Hofmann 2015, 2). When the poet and journalist Shimoi Harukichi popularised Fascism in Japan in the 1920s, Mussolini and his movement enticed intellectuals and political activists as an exemplary strategy to kindle patriotism and organise consensus for the state (Hofmann 2015, 8-37). Articles and monographs on Fascism – *fashizumu* or *fasshō undō* were its Japanese translations – had initially a good editorial success. Moreover, Hofmann shows, between 1928 and 1931 the image of Mussolini was at the centre of a cultural boom: theatrical pieces, *manga* comics, and young-adult novellas popularised Mussolini as a moral hero, engaging him in a variety of fictional adventures that evidenced his courage, strength, patriotism, and moral rectitude. "Japanese critics of parliamentary democracy", too, found in Mussolini an "extraordinary man", an "iron man". As such, he was taken as an example to emulate (Hofmann 2015, 38-62). But political enthusiasm for Fascism rapidly waned and remained quite timid throughout the 1930s and hostile during the Ethiopian War of 1935-36, as were the diplomatic relations between the two countries until the signing of the Tripartite Pact, on 27 September 1940. In Japan, the strongest antagonism against Fascism came from ultranationalist groups and activists – Hofmann calls this heterogenous group, with a certain degree of conceptual trickstery, "fascists against Fascism" (Hofmann 2015, 80-8) – who rejected the notion of its universality and its adaptability to Japan. Japanese ultranationalists – the majority of whom ended up politically marginalised, imprisoned, or sentenced to death before the alliance with Germany and Italy in 1940 – preferred to insist

on terms such *kokutai*, *tennōshugi*, *nihonshugi*, or *nōhonshugi* rather than rely on imported foreign terms like 'fascism'.

The return of 'fascism' as heuristic category in the Anglophone historiography of the last twenty years evidences a profound change in its hermeneutic function. Today 'fascism' operates in a quite distinct manner than in the postwar era. It does no longer define a stage of development in an ontologically given teleology of modernisation, aimed at the final affirmation of either capitalist liberalism or communist socialism in accordance with the politico-metaphysical orientation of historians. It does no longer operate as an epistemic category that is capable of capturing the essential nature of the political system and social organisation of a specific historical context. It is rather employed to emphasise the character of *distinct* sociocultural phenomena.

In the process, the meaning of 'fascism' has become however more difficult to pin down. It may stand today for authoritarianism, statism, racial ethnocentrism, cultural communitarianism, or revolutionary conservatism; it can stand for the aestheticisation of violence, ultra-militarism, the worship of war and violence, for popular support of a charismatic leader, or for the demagogic ideology of antimodern modernism. It stands, in other words, for one or more characteristics that have been once associated with Italian Fascism or, more contentiously, with German National Socialism, without, however, presupposing or requiring an explicit comparison (or connection) with the actual historical experiences of Italy and Germany. More precisely, when 'fascism' is adopted to describe or explain certain characteristics of specific social, intellectual, economic, or political phenomena of transwar Japan (from bureaucratic technocracy and economic planning, to political discourses on the national community, philosophical investigations on the alienating effects of industrial modernisation, and the aesthetic appreciation of everyday life), the meaning historians attribute to this heuristic category is only loosely reconstructed comparatively from the contemporary historical situations of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany; it is rather derived from the typological domains that historians of fascism had previously conceptualised in generalised definitions of 'fascism'. Relying on the works on typological fascism of Payne, Griffin, Laqueur, Paxton, Mosse, and others, 'fascism' is now understood as a generic category, in itself bearing semantic values that are distilled in its definitions, but one-step removed from actual historical references to Italy (or Germany). In turn, since 'fascism' is genericised in this manner, it is no longer required of the historian to argue for its application in extra-European contexts, as it once was, because the definition of 'fascism' can be removed from the genesis of the term in the historically specific events of Italy between 1919 and 1945. That is why Mimura, Moore, Victoria, and others can attribute 'fascism' to the sociocultural phenomena they inquired even though

Japanese historical actors have adopted these from Nazi Germany rather than Fascist Italy. That is why Hofmann, after reconstructing the penetration of Italian Fascism in popular and intellectual discourses of 1930s Japan, can conceptualise the resistance against Italian Fascism by Japanese right-wing ideologues in terms of "fascists against Fascism" (Hofmann 2015, 80).

6 Conclusions

The changes in historians' understanding of Japan in the 1930s do not merely reflect the opening of new archives and perspectives. It also bears witness of the changes in historian's sociohistorical situation. During the Cold War, the use of 'fascism' as a discrete political ideal-type was convenient to historians of both Marxian and liberal (or conservative) leanings: for the first, 'fascism' represented an inevitable development of monopoly capitalism in a period of crisis of profit accumulation; for the second, it was a new political form delinked from and independent of capitalism. The return of populist and authoritarian tendencies in twenty-first century world politics, especially in those countries of Western Europe and North America that presented themselves as the champions of democratic liberalism during the Cold War, is calling for a rethinking of the heuristic advantages and disadvantages of the category of 'fascism'.[16]

Today's semantic encyclopedia justifies a genericised use of 'fascism'. And yet, its meaning – not only what the term refers to, but the internal consistency of the encyclopedia of definitions, characteristics, nuances, uses, and connotations that history has added to it – are more than ever uncertain and fuzzy. As Umberto Eco once put it,

> [i]t is pointless to say that Fascism contained in itself all elements of successive totalitarian movements, so to speak "in a quintessential state". On the contrary, Fascism contained no quintessence, and not even a single essence. It was a fuzzy form of totalitarianism. It was not a monolithic ideology, but rather a collage of different political and philosophical ideas, a tangle of contradictions. (Eco 2001, 72-3)

The fuzziness of its conceptual core makes it a malleable tool, but it also deprives it of heuristic efficacity, as Jon Halliday has pointed out (Halliday 1975, 134-6). Differently from other coeval political concepts like socialism, communism, democracy, and liberalism, 'fas-

16 See, for instance, Camus, Lebourg 2017; Snyder 2017; Berizzi 2018; Cusset 2018; Stanley 2018; Brown, Gordon, Pensky 2018; Gentile 2019; Temelkuran 2019; Traverso 2019; Giroux 2019; Ben-Ghiat 2020.

cism' is a term that had originally no meaning apart from the political movement it came to refer to as proper name. It had no inherent conceptual content, no set of ideas or notions that existed before the historical vicissitudes of the movement it named.[17] Today's encyclopedia understands 'fascism' or 'fascist' as referring to the violently autocratic, intolerant, or oppressive behaviour of a person, regime, or ideology; but this sense of the term is the result of the contingent historical development of the movement. The conceptual meanings we assign to 'fascism' today is nothing but the history of the regime it named, the character of which was the product not of a preexisting set of ideals, but of Italy's contingent situation between the two wars and of the opportunistic decisions of its leader.

The cognitive fuzziness of the category 'fascism' translates into heuristic weakness. Italian Fascism, like German National-Socialism, was symptomatic of the structural weakness of liberal democratic institutions that made them vulnerable to become totalitarian under certain socioeconomic conditions specific of the 1920s and 1930s. On the contrary, Japan did not undergo any revolutionary change: its economy developed corporatist dynamics and strong ties to the state since the Meiji period; the vibrant political debates and liberal tendencies of the Taishō period unfolded within the narrow limits of the authoritarian constitution of 1889; and the aesthetic currents that shared tastes and ideals with European Nazifascism can be traced in those countries that ended up fighting fascism (Griffin 2007). Furthermore, many of the elements that Japan developed in the 1930s can be more easily explained contextually, as effect of the transnational situation of conflicting imperialisms, expanding communist revolutions, anticolonial movements, economic crises, and total war.

Fascism's fuzziness translates also in political weakness. If analogously dangerous circumstances would arise today, evoking 'fascism', despite its convenience as boo word, would conjure up ultranationalists marching in the streets in unicoloured shirts, invoking their leader, war, and different forms of 'final solutions' for all social problems on the basis of some invented myths. In other words, it is

17 We can identify three distinct historical usages of the term 'fascism' – each with its own peculiar history. First, it is the *proper name* of a new political movement, of a regime, and, only much later, of an ideology specific to Italy. Second, it is the term that coeval antifascist activists and thinkers adopted and transformed, by metonymical procedures, into a generic term that inductively explained the common causes of the rise of distinct ultranationalist regimes and movements in the 1920s and 1930s. Third, it is the name of a metahistorical category that seeks to understand 'fascism', in synecdochical fashion, as a generic political ideal-type analogous to communism, socialism, and liberalism. The historians who utilised this metahistorical category developed all-encompassing definitions of a "fascist minimum" which they then deductively mobilised to categorise a variety of movements and regimes from the late 19th to the early 21st century, of which Italian Fascism was but one example.

perceived as a threat from *without* democratic institutions, whereas Fascism, like Nazism, as 'revolutionary conservatisms' originated *within* them. In other words, the genericisation of 'fascism' has the reifying effect of externalising a phenomenon that was born within democratic institutions. Fascism was not an invading pathogen, but an intrinsic neoplastic disease.

Bibliography

Allardyce, G. (1979). "What Fascism Is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept". *The American Historical Review*, 84(2), 367-88. https://doi.org/10.2307/1855138.

Ashton, W.B. (1937). *The Fascist*. London: Putnam.

Avdeyev, Y.I.; Strunnikov, V.N. (1962). *Burzhuaznoe gosudarstvo v period 1919-1939 gg*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Instituta mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii.

Barshay, A. (2004). *The Social Sciences in Modern Japan: The Marxian and Modernist Traditions*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Ben-Ghiat, R. (2020). *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Berger, G.M. (1977). *Parties out of Power in Japan, 1931-1941*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.

Berizzi, P. (2018). *Nazitalia. Viaggio in un Paese che si è riscoperto fascista*. Milano: Baldini & Castoldi.

Bisson, T.A. (1932). "The Rise of Fascism in Japan". *Foreign Policy Reports*, VIII(7), 196-206.

Bove, L.F.; Duhan Kaplan, L. (eds) (1995). *From the Eye of the Storm: Regional Conflicts and the Philosophy of Peace*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Bronson, A. (2016). *One Hundred Million Philosophers: Science of Thought and the Culture of Democracy in Postwar Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Brown, D. (1955). *Nationalism in Japan: An Introductory Historical Analysis*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

Brown, W.; Gordon, P.E.; Pensky, M. (2018). *Authoritarianism: Three Inquiries in Critical Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Camus, J.-Y.; Lebourg, N. (2017). *Far-Right Politics in Europe*. Transl. by J.M. Todd. Cambridge: Belknap Press.

Chamberlin, W.H. (1937). *Japan Over Asia*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

Cusset, F. (2018). *How the World Swung to the Right: Fifty Years of Counterrevolutions*. Transl. by N. Wedell. South Pasadena (CA): Semiotext(e).

De Felice, R.; Ledeen, M.A. (1975). *Intervista sul fascismo*. Roma: Laterza.

Degras, J. (1971). *The Communist International, 1919-1943. Documents*. Vol. 3, *1929-1943*. London; New York: Routledge.

Dimitrov, G. (1935). *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International*. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm. Print edition: *VII Congress of the Communist International. Abridged Stenographic Report of Proceedings*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939.

Dower, J.W. (1975). "E.H. Norman, Japan, and the Uses of History". Dower, J.W. (ed.), *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: Selected Writings of E.H. Norman*. New York: Pantheon Books, 3-102.

Duus, P.; Okimoto, D.I. (1979). "Fascism and the History of Pre-War Japan: The Failure of a Concept". *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 39(1), 65-76. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351158367–23.

Eco, U. (1994). *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

Eco, U. (2001). "Ur-Fascism". *Five Moral Pieces*. Transl. by A. McEwen. Orlando (FL): Harcourt Books, 65-88.

Fairbank, J.K.; Reischauer, E.O.; Craig, A.M. (1973). *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Finchelstein, F. (2010). *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945*. Durham (NC): Duke University Press.

Fleisher, E.W. (1941). *Volcanic Isle*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Fleisher, E.W. (1942). *Our Enemy Japan*. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co.

Fletcher, W.M. III (1982). *The Search for a New Order: Intellectuals and Fascism in Prewar Japan*. Chapel Hill (NC): University of North Carolina Press.

Fujutani T. (1996). *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

Fuke Takahiro 福家崇洋 (2010). *Senkanki Nihon no shakai shisō. "Chōkokka" e no furontia* 福家崇洋、戦間期日本の社会思想ー「超国家」へのフロンティア (Social Thought in Wartime Japan: The Frontier of Ultranationalism). Kyōto: Jinbun Shoin.

Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.

Furuya Testuo 古屋哲夫 (1976). "Nihon fashizumu ron" 日本ファシズム論 (On Japanese Fascism). *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi* 岩波講座日本歴史 (Iwanami Course: History of Japan), vol. 20. Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 79-136. https://furuyatetuo.com/bunken/b/36_nippon_fasizum_ron/chusyaku.html.

Gatti, F. (1983). *Il fascismo giapponese*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Gentile, E. (2019). *Chi è fascista*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Giroux, H.A. (2019). *The Terror of the Unforeseen*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Review of Books.

Gluck, C. (1978). "The People in History. Recent Trends in Japanese Historiography". *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 38(1), 25-50. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021911800139804.

Gluck, C. (2007). *Rekishi de kangaeru* 歴史で考える (Thinking with History). Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.

Gordon, A. (1991). *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

Gramsci, A. (1975). *Quaderni del carcere*. 4 voll. A cura di V. Gerratana. Torino: Einaudi.

Griffin, R. (2007). *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Hall, J.W. (1970). *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*. New York: Dell.

Halliday, J. (1975). *A Political History of Japanese Capitalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Harootunian, H.D. (2000). *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.

Hart, B.W. (2018). *Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books.

Hofmann, R. (2015). *The Fascist Effect: Japan and Italy, 1915-1952*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press.

Hoston, G.A. (1986). *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.
Inoue Kiyoshi 井上清 (1966). *Nihon no rekishi* 日本の歴史 (Japanese History). 3 vols. Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.
Itō Takashi 伊藤隆 (1976). *Jūgonen sensō* 十五年戦争 (The Fifteen-Year War). Tōkyō: Shōgakukan.
Itō Takashi (1978). *Taishōki "kakushin"-ha no seiritsu* 大正期革新派の成立 (The Establishment of the Taisho-Era Reform Faction). Tōkyō: Hanawa Shobō.
Jansen, M.B (2000). *The Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge (MA): Belknap Press.
Kamiyama Shigeo 神山茂夫 (1956). *Tennōsei ni kansuru rironteki sho mondai* 天皇制に関する理論的諸問題 (Theoretical Problems of the Emperor System). Tōkyō: Minshu Hyōronsha.
Kasza, G.J. (1984). "Fascism from Below? A Comparative Perspective on the Japanese Right, 1931-1936". *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19(4), 607-29. https://doi.org/10.1177/002200948401900402.
Kasza, G.J. (2001). "Fascism from Above? Japan's *Kakushin* Right in Comparative Perspective". Stein Ugelvik, L. (ed.), *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*. Boulder (CO): Social Science Monographs, 183-232.
Kirby, E.S. (1981). *Russian Studies of Japan: An Exploratory Survey*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
Latyshev, I.A. (1955a). *Vnutrenniaia politika iaponskogo imperializma nakanune voiny na Tikhom okeane, 1931-1941*. Moskow: Gespolitizdat.
Latyshev, I.A. (1955b). "Soviet-US Differences in Their Approaches to Japan". *Far Eastern Survey*, 24(11), 1163-73. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.1984.24.11.01p0213i.
Ledeen, M.A. (1972). *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936*. New York: H. Ferting.
Mark, E. (2015). "The People in the War". Yoshiaki Y. (ed.), *Grassroot Fascism: The War Experience of the Japanese People*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1-39.
Maruyama Masao 丸山眞夫 (1952). *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* 日本政治思想史研究 (Studies in Japanese Political Thought). Tōkyō: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai.
Maruyama Masao (1956). *Gendai seiji no shisō to kōdō* 現代政治の思想と行動 (Theories and Practices of Contemporary Politics). Tōkyō: Miraisha.
Maruyama, M. (1963). *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*. Edited by I. Morris. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Maruyama, M. (1974). *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*. Transl. by M. Hane. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.
Mazzei, F. (1979). *Il capitalismo giapponese. Gli stadi di sviluppo*. Napoli: Liguori.
McCormack, G. (1980). "1930s Japan. Fascist?". *Social Analysis. The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 5(6), 125-43.
McCormack, G. (2007). *Client State: Japan in American Embrace*. London: Verso.
Mimura, J. (2011). *Planning for Empire: Reform Bureaucrats and the Japanese Wartime State*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press.
Mitchell, R.H. (1976). *Thought Control in Prewar Japan*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press.
Moore, A.S. (2013). *Constructing East Asia: Technology, Ideology, and Empire in Japan's Wartime Era, 1931-1945*. Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press.

Norman, E.H. (1940). *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State: Political and Economic Problems of the Meiji Period*. New York: Institute of Pacific Relations.

Payne, S.G. (1980). *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*. Madison (WI): University of Wisconsin Press.

Payne, S.G. (1995). *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*. Madison (WI): The University of Wisconsin Press.

Peattie, M.R. (1988). *Nan'yō: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Reischauer, E.O. (1946). *Japan, Past and Present*. New York: A.A. Knopf.

Ruoff, K. (2010). *Imperial Japan at its Zenith: The Wartime Celebration of the Empire's 2600th Anniversary*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press.

Sakisaka Itsurō 向坂逸郎 [1935] (1947). "'Nihon shihonshugi bunseki' ni okeru hōhōron" 『日本資本主義分析』における方法論 (The Methodology of 'Analysis of Japanese Capitalism'). *Nihon shihonshugi no sho mondai* 日本資本主義の諸問題 (Problems of Japanese Capitalism). Tōkyō: Kōdosha, 3-36.

Satō Masaru 佐藤優 (2015). *Marukusu to Nihonjin. Shakai undo kara mita sengo Nihon ron* マルクスと日本人: 社会運動からみた戦後日本論 (Marx and the Japanese: Postwar Japan Through Its Social Movements). Tōkyō: Akashi Shoten.

Scalapino, R.A. (1953). *Reflections on American Relations with Japan*. New York: American Institute of Pacific Relations.

Shiga Yoshio 志賀義雄 (1949). *Sekai to Nihon* 世界 と 日本 (The World and Japan). Tōkyō: Gyōmeisha.

Shillony, B.-A. (1981). *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Snyder, T. (2017). *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. New York: Tim Duggan Books.

Stanley, J. (2018). *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them*. New York: Random House.

Suzaki Shin'ichi 須崎慎一 (1998). *Nihon fashizumu to sono jidai. Tennōsei, gunbu, sensō, minshū* 日本ファシズムとその時代: 天皇制, 軍部, 戦争, 民衆 (Japanese Fascism and Its Time: Emperor System, the Military, the War, the Masses). Tōkyō: Ōtsuki Shoten.

Takabatake Michitoshi 高畠通敏 (1979). "Taishū undō no tayōka to henshitsu" 「大衆運動の多様化と変質」 (The Diversification and Changes of Popular Movements). Nihon Seijigakkai (ed.), *Nenpō seijigaku 1977: 55-nen taisei no keisei to hōkai* 日本政治学会、『年報政治学１９７７：５５年体制の形成と崩壊 (Annals of Politics 1977: The Formation and Collapse of the 55-year System). Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 323-59.

Takabatake Michitoshi [1979] (2009). "Kyōkenteki tōgō to taishū undō" 「強権的統合と大衆運動」 (Power Integration and Mass Movements). Kurihara Akira 栗原彬 (ed.), *Takabatake Michitoshi shū* 高畠通敏集 (Collected Works of Takabatake Michitoshi). Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 133-59

Tanaka Sōgorō 田中惣五郎 (1960). *Nihon fashizumu shi* 日本ファシズム史 (History of Japanese Fascism). Tōkyō: Kawade Shobō Shinsha.

Tanin, O.; Yohan, E. (1934). *Militarism and Fascism in Japan*. With an Introduction by Karl Radek. New York: International Publishers.

Tansman, A. (2009a). *The Aesthetics of Japanese Fascism*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

Tansman, A. (ed.) (2009b). *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*. Durham (NC): Duke University Press.

Temelkuran, E. (2019). *How to Lose a Country: The Seven Steps from Democracy to Dictatorship*. London: 4th Estate.

Thomas, J.A. (2001). *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

Traverso, E. (2019). *The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right*. London: Verso.

Valota, A. (1980). "Imperialismo e fascismo in Giappone". Collotti Pischel, E. (a cura di), *Storia dell'Asia*, vol. 3. Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 238-78.

Victoria, B.D. (2006). *Zen at War*. Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield.

Wilson, G.M. (1968). "A New Look at the Problem of 'Japanese Fascism'". *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 10(4), 401-12. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417500005016.

Yamaguchi Yasushi 山口定 (1979). *Fashizumu. Sono hikaku kenkyū no tame ni* ファシズム: その比較研究のために (Fascism: A Comparative Study). Tōkyō: Yūhikaku.

Yamaguchi Yasushi (1980). "Fashizumu rongi no kikenna sokumen. Nihon ni 'Fashizumu' wa nakatta no ka" 「ファシズム論議の危険な側面 : 日本に『ファシズム』はなかったのか」 (Dangerous Aspects of the Debate on Fascism: Wasn't There 'Fascism' in Japan?). *Economisuto*, 29 July, 38-45.

Yoshino S. (1932). "Fascism in Japan". *Contemporary Japan*, 1(2), 185-97.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

The Localisation of Kumano Gongen Cult and Mountain Beliefs: From *engi* to *kagura*

Masataka Suzuki
Keiō University, Japan

Abstract This paper discusses the Kumano Gongen cult, which played an important role for Japanese religious beliefs and mountain beliefs. The first part is the analysis of the *engi* of Kumano in comparison with that of Hikosan in medieval times. The second part focuses on the localisation of Kumano Gongen cult tracing and explaining the shift from *engi* to *kagura* in medieval and modern times. This paper analyses the contents of the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* focusing on three themes: 1) mountain beliefs found in *engi* narratives; 2) the concept of *kami*; and 3) the diffusion and localisation of religious concepts about Kirime no Ōji, showing how the shift from Gongen to Ōji occurred.

Keywords Mountain beliefs. Pilgrimage. Ritual. Kagura. Engi. Shugendō. Kumano.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Peer review | Open access
Published 2021-10-18

10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/005

1 Introduction

This paper discusses the Kumano Gongen 熊野権現 cult, which played an important role for Japanese religious beliefs and mountain beliefs. The first part is the analysis of the *engi* 縁起 (accounts of sacred origins) of Kumano 熊野 in comparison with that of Hikosan 彦山 in medieval times. The second part focuses on the localisation of Kumano Gongen cult tracing the movement from *engi* to *kagura* 神楽 (ritual drama and dance) in medieval and modern times.

According to the original ground and traces (*honjji sujaku* 本地垂迹) theory, which developed after the mid-Heian period (794-1192), Japanese deities (*kami* 神) appeared as the incarnations of buddhas and bodhisattvas to save the people (*suijaku*), and, conversely, the buddhas and bodhisattvas were the original form (*honji*) of the Japanese deities. Many mountain *kami* were given the title of *gongen* 権現 (avatar), and *engi* were written to transmit the legends of sacred origins about these *gongen*. The oldest *engi* text of Kumano Gongen is the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* 熊野権現御垂迹縁起 (in *Chōkan kanmon* 長寛勘文, Chōkan 1, 1163), which is regarded as the primary *engi* for the Kumano deity. This *engi* focuses on the Hongū 本宮, one of the Three Places of Kumano (*Kumano Sansho Gongen* 熊野三所権現). The origin legends of the other two sacred places, Shingū 新宮 and Nachi 那智, differ from that of Hongū. In this study the oldest and fundamental text about Hongū is investigated.

This paper analyses the contents of the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* as a starting point and focuses on three themes: 1) mountain beliefs found in *engi* narratives by the comparison of *Kumano* and *Hikosan engi*; 2) the concept of *kami* (including local tutelary deities *jinushigami* 地主神, mountain deities *yama no kami* 山神 and fierce deities *kōjin* 荒神) in representations of nature; and 3) the diffusion and localisation of religious concepts about Kirime no Ōji 切目王子; this will entail an examination of the localisation of Kumano Gongen cult, the ox-bezoar talismans (*goōhōin* 牛玉宝印), the role of Kirime no Ōji performed by *kagura* and its relationship with hot water rituals (*yudate* 湯立) and mountain asceticism (Shungendō 修験道). I will show how the shift from Gongen to Ōji, and from *engi* to *kagura*, occurred.

2 Kumano and Hikosan *engi*

2.1 *Engi* Similarities

Comparing the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* (1163) about Kumano and the *Hikosan ruki* 彦山流記 (Kenpō 1, 1213), an *engi* about the Mount Hiko in Western Japan, I analyse the transformation of the mountain beliefs from the Heian to the Kamakura period (1192-1333).

The plot of the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* is as follows (Hanawa 1960, 242-3).

In the year of the tiger wood-yang (*kinoe tora* 甲寅), Kumano Gongen flew from the original place associated with Prince (*ōji* 王子) Shin 信 (also written 晉) to Mount Hiko 日子山 (also written 彦山) in Japan. He took the shape of a crystal octagon. After five years, in the year of the horse earth-yang (*tsuchinoe uma* 戊午), he moved to Mount Ishizuchi 石鎚 in the Iyo 伊予 province. After six years, in the year of the mouse wood-yang (*kinoe ne* 甲子), he transferred to Mount Yuzuruha 遊鶴羽 in the Awaji 淡路 province. After six years, in the year of the horse metal-yang (*kanoe uma* 庚午) he went to Mount Kiribe 切部山 in the Kii 紀伊 province. After fifty-seven years, in the year of the horse metal-yang, he reached Mount Kannokura 神蔵山 in the same province. After sixty-one years, in the year of the horse metal-yang, he moved to the Iwabuchi valley 石淵谷. Here the deities Musubitama 結玉 and Ketsumimiko 家津美御子 were venerated in two shrines. After thirteen years, in the year of the horse water-yang (*mizunoe uma* 壬午), he took the shape of three lunar discs and flew on the tops of three chestnut oaks (*ichii* 櫟) at Hongū Ōyunohara 大湯原 (also written 大斎原). After eight years, in the year of the tiger metal-yang (*kanoe tora* 庚寅), a hunter called Chiyosada 千与定 from Minamikawachi 南河内 in the Kumano area went up to the Iwata River 石多河 pursing a large wild boar and arrived at Ōyunohara. The hunter ate the wild boar that he found dead by the side of an oak and planned to spend the night under this tree. When he saw the three lunar discs on the top of the tree he wondered why it had left the heavens and was told, "I am the Gongen of the Three Places of Kumano. The first shrine is Shōsei Daibosatsu 証誠大菩薩. The two moons are the Ryōsho Gongen 両所権現".

The plot of *Hikosan ruki* is reported below (Gorai 1984, 463-5).

Hikosan Gongen vowed to save human beings (*rishō* 利生) in the east and, starting from the Yuèzhī 抛月氏 (Jp. *Hōgesshi*) land in China, moved east. He threw five swords from the country of Magadha in India. In the year of the tiger wood-yang (*kinoe tora* 甲寅) he crossed the sea from an ancient place associated with Prince Shin 晉 on Mount Tiantai 天臺山 (Jp. Mount Tendai) and arrived by boat at Ōtsu 大津 in the district of Tagawa 田河 in the province of Buzen 豊前.

Hikosan Gongen asked the local tutelary deity Kawara Myōjin 香春明神 for lodging but was refused. So he ordered Kongō Dōji 金剛童子 to eradicate all the trees on Mount Kawara and transformed it into a huge rock. Hikosan Gongen climbed up Mount Hiko and stopped at its middle reaches to negotiate with the local tutelary deity Kitayama 北山. Finally, Kitayama moved to Konomiyama 許斐山. In Konkō 金光 7 (587) year of the monkey fire-yang (*hinoe saru* 丙申), Hikosan Gongen descended in the Hanñya cave 般若窟 in the shape of an octagonal crystal. There he discovered the first of the five swords. After eighty-two years, in the year of the horse earth-yang, he went to Mount Ishizuchi and found the second. After eighty-six years, in the year of the mouse wood-yang, he moved to Mount Yuzuruha 楡靏羽山 in the Awaji province and found the third. After six years, in the year of the horse metal-yang, he arrived at Mount Kiribe in the Kii province and found the fourth. After sixty-one years, in the year of the year of the horse metal-yang, he discovered the fifth at the Iwabuchi valley. After two-thousand years, on the day of horse wood-yang (*kinoe uma* 甲午) in the year of the horse wood-yang he returned to Mount Hiko.

The contents in the *Kumano* and *Hikosan engi* suggest that these two documents might have influenced each other. Taking into account the similarities between their plots, these two *engi* reveal common features of the origin of deities and beliefs in those deities. And these deities played a pivotal role in Japanese religious beliefs about mountain.[1]

2.2 Direction. Eastward from the Origin Place

There is an eastward movement from China (or India) toward Japan, Kyūshū, and Kii province. Foreign deities become native deities by following the route of Buddhist transmission through the three areas of India, China, and Japan (Sangoku-Denrai 三国伝来). The starting point is located in India, which is imagined as an origin place of Buddhism in the West.

2.3 Caves and Rocks

In mountain beliefs, caves and rocks are the most important origin places. The Hanñya-cave on Mount Hiko is extremely important and is regarded as the Jewel-room Cave (Tamaya-kutsu 玉屋窟) in which resides the spirit of Hikosan Gongen. It is probable that the stone pillar located inside the cave was venerated as a manifestation of the crystallised octagonal body of Hikosan Gongen. The history of the

1 See the general explanation on the mountain beliefs in Japan in Suzuki 2015.

beliefs about this cave reveals a progression from water belief, via dragon worship, to the appearance of the jewel.

2.4 Reversal Between Centre and Periphery

The Gongen moves from India (centre) to China and eventually to Japan (periphery). While in Japan, he proceeds from the periphery toward the centre: Mount Hiko, Mount Ishizuchi, and Mount Yuzuruha are transfer points that direct one toward Kumano in Kii peninsula, which is the centre in the system of beliefs about mountains. But Hikosan Gongen do not goes to Kumano and comes back to his origin place located at Kyūsyū 九州. This is the dynamic reversal between centre and periphery.

2.5 Points, Lines, Area

Points, lines, and areas unify sacred landscapes and contribute to the sacralisation of the land. Kumano and Hiko Gongen arrive in the Kii province in the same year and proceed from West to South following 'lines' (Mount Kiribe → Mount Kannokura → Iwabuchi valley). After sixty years they transform these 'points' into an 'area', which is conceived of as a sacralised territory. There is a sort of qualitative transformation from 'points' (mountains), to 'lines' (pilgrimage routes), from 'lines' to 'area' (sacred territory).

2.6 Sacred Places as a Representation of Nature

The natural landscape of Kumano is a representation of a sacred place. Mountains, valleys, and forests such as Kiribe, Kannokura, and Iwabuchi, which gained significance due to their status as locations through which Kumano Gongen passed, constitute the essential elements of Kumano and are regarded as numinous sites. At Kannokura and Iwabuchi there are also traces of the cult dedicated to Shingū and Asuka 阿須賀, who were enshrined along riverbanks and seashores as the liminal place. These places testify to an early stage in the sacralising process of the Kumano landscape.

2.7 Water Belief

Water belief is central to *engi* narratives. Thanks to the divine power of Hikosan Gongen, a spring gushes from the Hanñya-cave on Mount Hiko. In the same way, as soon as Kumano Gongen appears,

water starts flowing at Ōyunohara. Water belief suggests the purifications and renewal of life (*saisei* 再生) and remind us of the pivotal role played by springs in mountain beliefs.

2.8 Moon Belief

Kumano Gongen appears in the guise of the moon at Ōyunohara. The shape of the moon of the twenty-third night (*nijūsan-ya* 二十三夜) resembles three bodies that progressively manifest themselves in the middle of the night starting from the East. This narrative corresponds to the visible figure of Kumano Gongen as the Three Places (Sansho Gongen 三所権現). The day in which Hikosan Gongen returned to Mount Hiko was the fifteenth day of the first month when the first full moon of the year appears in the sky. This day is thought to be a moment when the universe regenerates. The nocturnal landscape lit by the moon's glow as well as mountains are also important elements in Pure Land belief (*jōdo shinkō* 浄土信仰).

2.9 Four Stage Composition

These *engi* display a fourfold structure: 1) arrival of the foreign deity from abroad, 2) encounter with the local tutelary deity (*jinushigami*), 3) buddhification of the local deity and removal, and 4) indigenisation processes on the territory. At the end of these four stages the narration of the origins is concluded.

2.10 Logic of Place

A central element is the amalgamation of folk believes (*minkan shinkō* 民間信仰) (e.g., veneration of mountains) with Buddhism. What really matters are not doctrinal teachings, but rather the semiotic links that tie together different locations. Mountains are particularly suitable environments for connecting and merging different cultural discourses.

3 *Engi* Differences

There are also structural differences between the two *engi*.

3.1 Difference of Quality and Aim of the Text: Cosmology and Ideology

The *Kumano engi* was intended to serve as textual proof of the origins of the land in legal disputes over control of the fiefs. It is for this reason that it displays a strong administrative flavour, in which Ise 伊勢 and Kumano are described as two halves of a single territorial and intellectual body; it thus reflects the intentions of the aristocratic elites who sponsored the creation of this *engi*. On the other hand, *Hikosan engi* focuses on the legitimation of Mount Hiko, which had been emerging as a centre for mountain beliefs in western Japan. Competing with Kumano for the status of 'centre', the *Hikosan engi* emphasises the independence of Mount Hiko. This text was probably composed by Buddhist monks and its historical approach is based on the 'original ground and traces' (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹) theories. The *Kumano engi* prioritises ideology, while the *Hikosan engi* emphasises cosmology.

3.2 Narrative Differences About Sacred Places: Indigenous Assimilation and Continuity of Foreignness

Kumano Gongen's origin is in China, while Hikosan Gongen's origin is in the Indian country of Magadha. In the concluding part of the *Kumano engi*, a hunter arrives at Ōyunohara, where he is ordered to stop killing, starts serving the Gongen, and organises rituals on his behalf. On the other hand, the research of the five swords that Hikosan Gongen threw from India does not conclude at Kumano but at Mount Hiko. The act of throwing swords from China to Japan is a recurrent theme in the foundation stories of temples associated with eminent monks such as Kūkai 空海 (774-835) and Saichō 最澄 (767-822). The legend of the sword-throwing is also reported in the *Shintōshū* 神道集 (14th century) edited by an Agui 安居院 monk on Mount Hiei 比叡山 (Shintō Taikei Hensan-kai 1988, 35). After describing the return of Hikosan Gongen to Mount Hiko, the *engi* focuses on the relationships between Hōren 法蓮, the third founder, who saved Mount Hiko from decline, and the sacred place of Usa 宇佐. According to the *Chinzei Hikosan engi* 鎮西彦山縁起 (1572) (Gorai 1984, 474-7), the monk Zenshō 善正 arrived in Japan from the Northern Wei dynasty 北魏 in China and met with the hunter Fujiwara Kōyū 藤原恒雄. After this encounter, Kōyū repented for killing, received ordination, and became the first monk in Japan. The historical background

of these events is the third year of the reign of Emperor Senka 宣化天皇 (538), which is the same year that Buddhism was introduced to Japan, where it was initially perceived as a foreign element.

3.3 Narrative Differences About Sacred Places: Revelation or Hiding of the Deity's Name

How is it possible to narrate a sacred place? Kumano Gongen spent five years on Mount Hiko, six years on Mount Ishizuchi, and went to the Kii province after six years. Here the name of the deity is revealed to forests, rivers, and specific locations such as the Iwabuchi valley and Ōyunohara. The deities of mountains and forests venerated by the hunter communities are included within the *honji suijaku* system under the general name of local tutelary deities (*jinushigami*, 地主神). This is the reason why the hunter becomes a religious practitioner for Kumano Gongen. In the *Kumano engi* the revelation of the deity's name plays a pivotal role. On the one hand, Hikosan Gongen spent eighty-two years on Mount Hiko, six years on Mount Ishizuchi, and moved to the Kii province after six years. In his quest for the five swords, the Hikosan Gongen passed from mountain to mountain, but his name is never revealed, and after spending two-thousands years at Iwabuchi valley, he returned to Kyūshū. The main point of this narrative is to reveal a process, not an end. The climax of the *Hikosan engi* is the self-seclusion ritual (*sanrō* 参籠) performed by Gagen 臥験, a disciple of Hōren, in the forty-nine caves that resemble the internal court of the Tuṣita Heaven (Jp. Tosotsuten, 兜率天) or the empowerment (*genriki* 験力) of Hikosan Gongen that transforms Kongō Dōji 金剛童子 as his messenger. The focus of this text is on Buddhist ascetic practices and the revealing of his name is not important. It exhibits a strong Tendai esoteric influence. The *Kumano engi* emphasises the importance of the last sacred place, Ōyunohara, while the *Hikosan engi* emphasises the Hanñya cave, that is the starting point of the narrative. Even if the vector of narrative is opposite, water becomes a connecting and shared element between riverbeds and caves.

3.4 Differences in the Integration of the Indigenous Deities

In the case of the encounter between Kumano Gongen and the tutelary deity of that sacred territory, the clash is not intense. On the other hand, the encounter between Hikosan Gongen and the tutelary deities such as Kawara Myōjin 香春明神 or Kitayama 北山 is firstly characterised by strong opposition, which is later transformed into a permission. Kumano Gongen is represented flying in the sky from China to Japan, while Hikosan Gongen realistically arrives by boat,

which echoes the historical contacts between Japan and the continent. The *engi* of Kumano integrates different elements through imagination, while the *engi* of Hikosan combines them through logic.

3.5 Differences in Textual Form

The narrative content of the *Kumano engi* is simpler than that of the *Hikosan engi*, which adds many details about Hikosan Gongen's eastward movement. The time divisions of the *Hikosan engi* are based on exact calculations of the sexagesimal system (*eto* 干支), while the *Kumano engi* is more approximate and reports mistakes, such as the name of Prince Shin written with 信 instead of 晉. Generally speaking, the *Hikosan engi* is more accurate. The *Kumano engi* is usually thought to be the earlier of the two *engi*, but it may in fact be the later in some elements.

3.6 Historical Background

The sacred landscape, which is described in the *Kumano engi*, is limited to Hongū and does not include Shingū and Nachi, both of which are mentioned in the *Kumanosan ryakki* 熊野山略記 (Eikyō 永享 2, 1430) in which Ragyō Shōnin 裸形上人 is presented as the patriarch of the "Three Mountains of Kumano" (Kumano Sanzan 熊野三山) (Chiho-shi Kenkyūjo 1957, 425). The *Kumano engi* includes different narrative from other *engi* and illustrated stories (*otogizoshi* 御伽草子), such as the *Kumano no honji* 熊野の本地. In Kanji 寛治 4 (1090), a monk of Onjōji Temple (園城寺 Jimon-branch 寺門派), Zōyo 増誉 (1032-1116), became the superintendent (*kengyō* 検校) of Kumano Sanzan after serving as a guide (*sendatsu* 先達) for Emperor Shirakawa 白河 (1053-1129) in a pilgrimage (*gokō* 御幸) to Kumano. The alliance between Onjōji Temple and high aristocracy members marked the golden age of Kumano pilgrimage. On the other hand, an episode dated Kanji 8 (1094), which is reported in the *Chūyūki* 中右記, describes an uprising of the monks of Mount Hiko and the powerful coalition between Hiko and Usa. In Eireki 永暦 1 (1160) Emperor Goshirakawa 後白河 (1127-1192) dedicated a protective shrine to Kumano Gongen at Higashi-yama 東山 in Kyōto; it appears that Mount Hiko was an auxiliary fief under the control of Kumano. In Ōho 応保 2 (1162) there were tumults in the fiefs of Kumano Hongū in the Kai 甲斐 province, and a petition recorded in the *Chōkan kanmon* 長寛勘文 (1163) makes an explicit reference to the *Kumano engi*. It is probable that the *Kumano engi* was composed after the construction of the new Kumano Shrine on Higashi-yama, and after information about the situation on Mount Hiko was collected. It seems that the *Hikosan ruki* (1213) was writ-

ten in order to escape from Kumano's yoke, stressing as it does the fact that Hiko's tradition was older than Kumano's. Mount Hiko is associated with the Pure Land of the bodhisattva Miroku 弥勒 as the same as Mount Yoshino 吉野山 and Mount Oomine 大峯山 in the centre of mountain beliefs. At Hikosan some elements of Kumano influence are remained, such as the construction of *sūtra* mound (*kyōzuka* 経塚), the ritual invitation (*kanjō* 勧請) of a deity called Imakumano 新熊野, the engraving of the bodhisattva Seishi's 勢至 Sanskrit letter, main statue for the twenty-third night vigil (*nijūsan-ya*) in a cave. Moon belief (*tsuki shinkō* 月信仰) and Pure Land belief (*jōdo shinkō* 浄土信仰) exhibit a Kumano influence. The historical background had an important impact on the narrative structures of these two *engi*.

4 Kirime no Ōji

4.1 Positioning Kirime no Ōji

I will now focus on Kirime no Ōji to clarify the transmission and localisation of the *Kumano engi*. In both the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* and *Hikosan ruki*, Mount Kiribe is the first place reached by the Gongen in Kii province. The *Kumano engi* reports that the Gongen's abode was "a pine tree over the deep pool called Tamanagi 玉那木 on the northern marine coast and the west side of Mount Kiribe". Similarly, the *Hikosan ruki* reports that the Gongen established his residence "over the deep pool of Tamanagi at Mount Kiribe". The term *tamanagi* echoes the belief that divine spirits (*shinrei* 神霊) reside on *nagi* 梛 leaves (Podocampus trees), which were also regarded as the sacred tree (*shinboku* 神木) of Kumano. Mount Kiribe was later called Kirime no Ōji, one of the five *ōji* who were selected as important place among the ninety-nine *ōji* shrine, the retinues and messengers for Kumano Gongen.

In the *Shozan engi* 諸山縁起 (c. 1192) there is an interesting passage about Kirime no Ōji (Sakurai, Hagiwara, Miyada 1975, 102-3). It reports that during a pilgrimage from Ōmine 大峰 to Mount Aitoku 愛徳山, En no gyōja 役行者 met with an old man at Hosshinmon 発心門. According to the old man there were three sites at the foot of Mount Kumano where ascetics who climbed and descended the mountain were robbed of their getting merit by supernatural powers (*genki no rishō* 験気の利生). The three places were Hosshinmon, Taki no moto 瀧本 (瀧尻?), and Kirime. This was due to the fact that the tutelary deity of Kumano always opposed virtue. The old man explained to En no gyōja that during the ascetic practices on Mount Kumano it was possible to dispel this obstacle-deity (*kōjin*) by throwing soybeans, applying *nagi* leaves on the cap, and reciting the appropriate spells

near pine trees. He said that the *nagi* tree corresponds to the symbolic form (*sanmaya-gyō* 三昧耶形) of Kongō Dōji 金剛童子. After accomplishing ascetic practices on Mount Kumano by En no gyōja 役行者, his disciple Jugen 壽元 succeeded the position of ascetic practitioner after nine ascetic retreats on Ōmine, and then moved to Mount Hiko in Kyūshū. According to the *Shozan engi*, Kirime no Ōji corresponds to one of the Kumano obstacle-deities that prevent people's passage at three specific places. The *Ryōbu mondō hishō* 両峯問答秘鈔 reports that the violent-deities (*soranshin* 麁乱神) residing at Haraidono 祓殿, Hosshinmon, Takijiri 滝尻, and Kirime "could be blinded by throwing the scent of soybeans at their eyes" (Nihondaizōkyō Hensankai 1985b, 610). Haraidono was a place for ritual ablutions before entering Hongū, Hosshinmon was the site where pilgrims exchanged their old pilgrimage walking stick (*kongō-tsue* 金剛杖) for a new one, Takijiri was the entrance of the sacred territory and corresponded to the confluence of the Tomita 富田川 and Iwabune rivers 石船川, and Kirime was a veneration place (*haisho* 拝所) on the west coast of the Kii peninsula. Because all these places were important liminal points inhabited by tutelary deities, ascetics had to pacify (*ibu* 慰撫) the *kami* and make abstinence (*kihi* 忌避) to accomplish their ascetic practices. Kirime was regarded as a point of contact between the Kii peninsula and the other world (*takai* 他界).

4.2 Legends about Kirime no Ōji

According to the *Kumano mōde nikki* 熊野詣日記 of Jūshin'in jitsui 住心院実意 (Gorai 1976, 422), on the sixth day of the tenth month of Ōei 応永 3 (1427), before passing in front of the Kirime no Ōji shrine, the author made up his face with soybean flour, disguising his human form and imitating the sound of a fox's cry: "kō-kō". Thanks to this trick he could escape the peril. In the *Hōzō Ekotoba* 宝蔵絵詞 (Bun'an 文安 2, 1446) (Ishizuka 1970, 77-81) there is the story of a monk who was at a service for Kirime no Ōji (*Kiribe no Ōji* 切部王子 in the original text). Because the Ōji began to dislike the monk, an old pilgrim suggested that he "cover his body from the top of the head with bad smelling sardines (*iwashi* 鰯) and rotting *nagi* leaves" (Ishizuka 1970, 81). The Ōji could not stand the stink, flew into a rage, and cut the nose of the monk, who died immediately. When the Ōji returned to Kumano Gongen and reported the death of the monk, the Gongen immobilised the Ōji, cut his right foot, and exiled him to Mount Kiribe. Nevertheless, the Ōji started stealing the religious benefits (*fukusaiwai* 福幸) of the people who passed by his mountain during the Kumano pilgrimage. Seeing the sorrow of the pilgrims, Kumano Gongen summoned Inari Myōjin 稲荷明神, who decided to send his friend deity Akomachi あこまち to talk with Kirime no Ōji.

Akomachi told the Ōji that those people who made up their faces with soybean flour (*mame no ko* まめのこ) were his followers, and he made Ōji promise to not steal the pilgrims' religious benefits. Then Inari Myōjin reported to Kumano Gongen that Kirime no Ōji could not stand the smell of the soybean flour and from that moment all the Kumano pilgrims smeared their faces with soybean flour when passing by Mount Kiribe in order to avoid the attacks of the Ōji. From these narratives it is possible to understand that Kumano pilgrims imitated the cry of the fox because this animal was the emissary of their protective deity (*shugojin* 守護神), Inari Myōjin. Mount Kiribe is "the point of contact between the faith in Kumano and Inari", who agree to protect pilgrims (Nanami 1988, 91). Nevertheless, Kirime no Ōji obeys the words of the local deity Akomachi rather than Inari Myōjin. On the other hand, even if the monk who practiced ascesis at Kumano received divine protection (*kago* 加護) from Kirime no Ōji, in the end he was killed because he harmed a sacred tree of *nagi* leaves and used smelly foods, such as sardines. These legends seem to emphasise the negative attributes of Kirime no Ōji. Nevertheless, it is important to take into account that even Kumano Gongen was offended by the monk's behaviour and consequently punished him. Kirime no Ōji should be regarded as the original tutelary deity of Kumano, who has the power to pacify the fierce deities of nature (*araburu shizen no kami* 荒ぶる自然のカミ) and realise the ascetics' vows.

The visual representation of Kirime no Ōji in the *Kumano mandara* conforms to the legend, as the deity is depicted without the right foot while leaning on a stick (Yamamoto 2012). His external appearance is similar to Seitaka Dōji 制咤迦童子 in the retinue of Fudō Myōō 不動明王. Like Kirime no Ōji, Seitaka Dōji has the ability to control evil influences and transmits the rough nature of the mountain recesses. The single-foot image of Kirime no Ōji reminds us of the appearance of the mountain monster standing on one leg called Ippon datara 一本ダタラ, who is known in the Western and Southern parts of the Kii Peninsula, the upper part of the Kumano River, and the Totsukawa river 十津川 village in the Yoshino 吉野 province. In a valley close to the area of Kirime no Ōji there is a legend about an ascetic who saved an anthropophagous fierce spirit called *oni* 鬼 by chanting magic spells. According to the *Ryōbu mondō hishō* (Nihondaizōkyō Hensankai 1985b, 610), an ascetic was making a pilgrimage to a valley close to the abode of Kirime no Ōji in order to purify his body when a blue demoness approached the ascetic and confessed to him that she had accumulated a terrible karmic debt because of her habit of devouring human beings. The demoness begged for help from the ascetic, who recited the *Ōnakatomi no harae* 大中臣祓 purification formula and saved her by weaving a big sacred hemp (*ōnusa* 大幣) over her body.

In the vicinity of Kirime no Ōji there was a constant presence of various types of evil creatures. According to the *Shozan engi*, the tu-

telary deities of Kumano were violent deities (*soranshin*) with a rough temperament who transformed various places into dangerous spots. Nevertheless, the mountain ascetics who were empowered by performing ascetic practices had the ability to control these local deities, transforming them into protective spirits (*shugorei* 守護霊) and using them as tutelary servants, Dharma protectors (*gohō dōji* 護法童子). On Mount Kiribe ascetics obtained divine powers from Kumano Gongen and Inari Myōjin thanks to which they smashed the obstacles created by local deities and forced them to become protectors of the Dharma at the service of human beings.

4.3 Transformation to Dharma Protector

The whole Kumano pilgrimage was a ritual. Ablutions (*kori* 垢離) and purificatory rituals (*misogi harae* 禊祓) were diligently conducted at five important five place, Gotai Ōji 五体王子. Ritual drama and dances such as *kagura* 神楽 and *nareko-mai* 馴子舞 were dedicated to the deities. The goal of Kumano pilgrimage was not limited to obtaining rebirth in Amida (Amitābha)'s Pure Land (*gokuraku ōjō no jōdo iri* 極楽往生の浄土入り); it was also to purify oneself of misdeeds (*metsuzai jōka* 滅罪浄化) (*Ryōbu mondō hishō*, first volume, thirty-ninth chapter). Because of the progressive influence of the Shugendō tradition, elements of hard ascetic practice on mountains and in forests (*sanrin tosō* 山林抖擻) became fundamental to the Kumano pilgrimage. A Shugendō text (*Ozasa hiyōroku* 小笹秘要録) explains that the Kumano pilgrimage imitate the funeral ritual and enact the baby born ritual at the same time. It is also said that the Kumano pilgrims were constantly protected by Dharma protectors, Gohō Dōji (護法童子). In the sixth chapter of the *Keiranshūyōshū* 渓嵐拾葉集, which is dedicated to protective deities (*shinmyōbu* 神明部), it is reported that "in the Kumano pilgrims' language (*michi kotoba* 道詞) men were [called] *sao* サヲ, women *ita* イタ, nuns *soki* ソキ, and monks *sori* ソリ". The term *sao* referred to male shamans (*otoko miko* 男巫), *ita* to female shamans (*miko* 巫女), and even lay pilgrims were said to walk during the pilgrimage to Kumano in a state of possession (*hyōi* 憑依) because Gohō Dōji descended on their bodies in order to protect them. On the other hand, nuns and monks were called *soki* and *sori* because they had shaved (*teihatsu* 剃髪) and round heads (*enchō* 円頂) that were not suitable for possession.

On their way back to the capital, pilgrims stopped at Fushimi Inari 伏見稲荷 on the southern side of Kyōto, where they performed the ritual of the "Dharma protector dismissal" (*gohō okuri* 護法送り). The chapter "Yasuyori's pilgrimage to Kumano" (*Yasuyori Kumano mōde* 康頼熊野詣) in the *Engyō-bon* 延慶本 version of the *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 reports that "after offering paper streamers (*hōhei* 奉

幣) to the *kami*, [Yasuyori] greatly rejoiced, replaced the *nagi* leaves of Kirime no Ōji with the *sugi* 椙 (Cyptomeria) branches of Inari, and obtained the *kurome* 黒目". The changing from the *nagi* leaves to the *sugi* branches symbolised the obtainment of a rebirth in Amida's Pure Land after death and the shift to Inari Myōjin's protection for returning to the capital. The chapter "Kumano pilgrimage" (*Kumano sankei bon* 熊野参詣品) explains that the word *kurome* "refers to the lower upper birth (*jōbon geshō* 上品下生)" level in Amida's Pure Land. The character *me* 目 means 'eye' and, at the same time, a liminal point that marks the contact zone between the visible and the invisible world. Kirime no Ōji represented the entrance from a foreign country to the Kii peninsula, the starting point for approaching the sacred land of Kumano, the liminal point between sea and mountains, the forests where Dharma protectors and Inari Myōjini met and a multileveled extra-ordinariness that produced a variety of legends.

4.4 *Nagi* and *goōhoin*, Ox-bezoar Talismans

At Kirime no Ōji the *nagi* tree was considered a sacred tree. Both the *Kumano Gongen gosuijaku engi* and the *Hikosan ruki* make references to the *nagi*. In the *Shozan engi* the *nagi* leaves are regarded as bodily transformations (*hengeshin* 変化身) of Kongō Dōji that opposes the fierce spirits of the mountain. The term *sanmaya* 三昧耶 (Skt. *samaya*) means the symbolic forms that embody the vows of buddhas and bodhisattvas to save human beings and originally were sacred objects and ritual hand marks related with various buddhas and bodhisattvas. The interpretation of the *nagi* leaves as the symbolic form of Kongō Dōji had a special development of tree worship in the Kii peninsula. In the medieval period Kumano pilgrims used *nagi* leaves in their sleeves and hats as protective talismans (*gofu* 護符) for a safe trip (*dōchū anzen* 道中安全), and warriors did the same with their armour and helmets to dispel adversities (*sainan yoke* 災難除け).

The *nagi* leaves were believed to bring harmony between husband and wife (*fūfu enman* 夫婦円満). Because this leaf is narrow and full of parallel veins, it is easy to tear it horizontally, but it is difficult to do the same vertically. Therefore, it is called "power grass" (*chikara shiba* チカラシバ). Because the word *nagi* echoes the flat calm on the sea (*nagi* 凪), the same leaf was used to protect ocean voyages (*kōkai anzen* 航海安全). Itinerant female preachers (Skt. *bhikkhunī*) of Kumano (Kumano *bikuni* 熊野比丘尼) spread the belief in Kumano by distributing ox-bezoar talismans, *goōhoin* and *nagi* leaves. In the *Kii zoku fudoki* 紀伊続風土記 (1839) it is written that Kumano *bikuni* had their headquarters at Kirime no Ōji (Niita 1970).

It is highly probable that the belief in *nagi* leaves originated in the Kirime no Ōji area and subsequently spread to Kumano. At Hongū the

pilgrims were given ox-bezoar talismans together with *nagi* leaves to protect them during the trip. The ox-bezoar talismans displayed the characters of the issuing temple's name in the guise of crows, snakes, hawks, pigeons, or scolopendra, which were seen as emissaries of the Gongen, and were printed on rice paper using charcoal and wooden blocks. The red seal (*shuin* 朱印) of the ox-bezoar talisman was a source of incantatory power and reproduced the shape of a Sanskrit seed-letter (*shuji bonji* 種子梵字), in which resided the spirit of a specific deity. The ox-bezoars, which were melted in the ink, were thought to be powerful healing substances that protected against diseases. *Nagi* leaves and ox-bezoar talismans formed a sort of talismanic set that originated in the religious beliefs focused on the trees of the Kii peninsula. This type of talisman was not simply apotropaic or protective but was also a material representation of the emissaries of Kongō Dōji, Gohō Dōji, and other tutelary deities that contributed to spreading faith in the *ōji* of Kumano as Gongen's divine messengers (*shieki rei* 使役霊).

I would now like to turn to the transition from the Gongen cult to the Ōji cult, and from *engi* to *kagura*.

4.5 Kirime and Kakko-Kirime: The Localisation of Kirime no Ōji

Sacred dances such as *Nareko-mai* 馴子舞 are performed at Kirime no Ōji and the *Kii zoku fudoki* describes the top of the hill close to the old shrine dedicated to Kirime no Ōji as the 'residence of the drum' (*taiko yashiki* 太鼓屋敷). There was a deep connection between Kirime no Ōji and the drum, which reverberated in the place name where the ritual and festivals (*matsuri* 祭) on the behalf of this deity were held. Nevertheless, the *kagura* dedicated to Kirime no Ōji are few in number.

In the *Ōmoto kagura* 大元神楽 performed at the Ochi 邑智 district (present day Gōtsu 江津 city) in Shimane 島根 Prefecture there is a *kagura* dance called the *kakko-kirime* 鞨鼓切目 (刹面). In the Genna 元和 1 (1615) record of the *Ōmoto mai jukusho no koto* 大元舞熟書の事 the name of Kirime is written with the homophonous characters *kirime* 切女 (literally, 'cutting woman') (Ōchigun Ōmotokagura Hozonkai 1982, 175). In the present *Ōmoto kagura* the person who performs the role of Kirime no Ōji is called *ichi* 市, which indicates a female shaman (*miko*) that reveals her true identity while narrating the origin of the five elements (*gogyō* 五行). The drum (*kakko* 鞨鼓) descends from the sky to bestow harmony, while Kirime no Ōji, together with a celestial nymph (*tennyo* 天女), softly rings bells (*suzu* 鈴) and performs a dance to spread peace on earth (*tenka taihei* 天下泰平). A sacred poem (*kami-uta* 神歌) reads: "Stroking the bow's string (*tsuru oto* 弦音) of Tamaki no miya 玉置の宮 at Kumano, de-

mons (*akuma* 悪魔) draw back". This lyric refers to the purificatory function attributed to the sound of the bowstring's vibration. In the *Iwami kagura* 石見神楽, which is performed at the Hamada 浜田 city in Shimane Prefecture, a female shaman at the service of Kirime no Ōji explains the origin of the *kakko* drum that descended from the heavenly plain (*Takamagahara* 高天原) and became the Kumano treasure. When Kirime no Ōji appears, the female shaman dedicates some sacred poems to him and the deity reveals that his name is "trace deity" (*suijaku*). Striking the drum with a drumstick, Kirime no Ōji performs a dance for peace on earth, for the stability of the country (*kokka annon* 国家安穏) and puts a *nagi* leaf in a talisman. The sections dedicated to Kirime in the *Ōmoto kagura* and *Iwami kagura* can be regarded as ballads (*tan* 譚) about the origin of the first Japanese drum, the feminisation of Kirime (whose name is written as *kirime* 切女, 'cutting woman'), and sacred dances for the realisation of the vows (*gan jōju* 願成就) thanks to the drum percussion performed by female shamans. Even if the *kakko* was a Chinese percussion instrument played in Japanese court music (*gagaku* 雅楽), in the *Iwami kagura* 石見神楽 it is depicted as an ordinary drum. The peculiarity of the *Iwami kagura* ballad is that the origin of the drum is revealed by Kirime no Ōji. This feature points to the creative transformations of the Kumano Gongen cult that took place when it spread by various activities of nuns called *bikuni* and male preachers (*oshi* 御師).

4.6 Kirume and Mirume: The Localisation of Kirime no Ōji

Every year in November in the Okumikawa 奥三河 area (Aichi 愛知 Prefecture) there is a ritual (*Hana matsuri* 花祭) called '*kagura* of the eleventh month' (*Shimotsuki kagura* 霜月神楽).[2] The most important deities in the *Shimotsuki kagura* are Kirume no Ōji and Mirume no Ōji 見目王子. In this area the name of Kirime has slightly changed into Kirume. *Hana matsuri* were probably produced by Shugendō practitioners who came from Kumano and Suwa 諏訪 areas in the late medieval period. The model for the present *Hana matsuri*, which lasts for one day and one night, was the early Edo-period (1600-1868) *Ōkagura* 大神楽, which performed on four days at the special village involving various areas. It seems that the Shugendō practitioner Manzōin Suzuki family 万蔵院鈴木家 from the Toyone 豊根 village and his disciple Rinzōin Moriya family 林蔵院守屋家 were involved in organising *Ōkagura* (Yamamoto 1993, 98). The *Ōkagura*'s aims were the realisation of vows, the divine protection of newborns during growth (*umareko* 生まれ子), gratitude for reaching adult age

2 The concept of *shimotsuki kagura* is discussed in Suzuki 2011.

and becoming a member of the ritual group of the village (*kiyomari* 清まり), entrance into the sixty years old class-age, and pray for rebirth in the Pure Land (*jōdo iri* 浄土入り). *Ōkagura* was an important rite of passage for individuals through these three initiation-stages (Yamamoto 1993, 174).

Kirume plays the role of chief-deity (*shushin* 主神) in the *Ōkagura* and *Hana matsuri*. The first two written sources that mention Kirume in relation to these sacred representations are "Kirume Ōkami no inori" きるめ王神祈 section in the *Mikagura nikki* 御神楽日記 (Tenshō 天正 9, 1581) (Toyone-mura Kyōiku Iinkai 1985, 15-20), and the *Kagura goto* 神楽事 (Keichō 慶長 12, 1607) (Toyone-mura Kyōiku Iinkai 1985, 20-32). During the *Hana matsuri*, cutting-paper ritual decorations (*yubuta* 湯蓋; *byakkai* 白開) are placed over a cauldron (*kama* 竈) in the middle of the dancing stage (*maido* 舞処) where the religious practitioner (*hanadayū* 花太夫) makes a hot water ritual (*yudate*) in order to offer hot water to the deities. Various dances take place around this cauldron and at the end purification and rebirth (*umare kiyomari* 生まれ清まり) are achieved, with hot water being sprinkled on the people. In the first moments of the ritual performers purify their bodies under a waterfall and collect the water for the ceremony. Before entering the ritual lodge (*hana no yado* 花宿) religious practitioners make purificatory rituals such as the *Takane matsuri* 高嶺祭り and the *Tsujigatame* 辻固め outside to dispel evil influences and, once inside, the sequence of sacred dances follows this order: *Kami-iri* 神入り; *Kirume no Ōji*; *Ama no matsuri* 天の祭り; *Shime oroshi* 注連おろし; *Yamadate* 山立て; *Shima matsuri* 島祭り; *Narimono* 鳴物; *Kamado harai* 竈祓い; *Yudate*. The Shintō priest (*negi* 禰宜), nowadays the *hanadayū*, brings masks and a staff with sacred strips of cutting paper (*gohei* 御幣) to the 'deities' room' (*kanbeya* 神部屋) where he presents offerings, makes magic gestures for protecting the body (*kuji goshinbō* 九字護身法), and invites *kami* and buddhas to descend (*kami oroshi* 神降ろし) reciting invocatory formulae (*saimon* 祭文). The first deity that is invited to take a place within the paper strips for lodging the *kami* (*kamiza* 神座) during the *kami-iri* ritual is Mirume. The second is Kirume, who stands in opposition to the first one (Hayakawa [1930] 1971, 103). The deities that are considered to be particularly important for the *Hana matsuri* are the Mirume of the Sakauba 坂宇場 village, the Dragon King (Ryūō 龍王), and the mountain ascetics called *hijiri* 聖 of the Futto 古戸 village. Mirume is not only enshrined on *kagura* sites but also in front of few shrines specifically dedicated to his cult (Suzuki 2018, 85).

After inviting Kirume to descend to the *kamiza*, the paper strips are soaked in a sake cup and used to sprinkle sake on the bodies. In the past this ritual was performed after placing a white cotton curtain along the three corners of the *kamiza*, keeping the open side facing the northwest (*inui* 戌亥) (Hayakawa [1930] 1971, 109). Kirume

is understood to be a deity who comes from outside and protects the *kagura* performers as a supreme deity. On the other hand, Mirume lodged within the five-coloured paper strips (*goshiki hei* 五色弊) dangling from the ceiling of the *kagura* site and watched over the accomplishment of the entire ritual. Kirume is an invisible deity that is invited thanks to the magic power of invocatory formulae, while Mirume is visible thanks to the five-colours paper strips in which he resides. Kirume has the authority of a visiting deity (*raihōjin* 来訪神) coming from abroad, while Mirume manifests his omnipresence inside as well as outside the village. The *kiru* 切る and *miru* 見る parts of their names refer to the capability to cut (*kiru*) demons and visualise (*miru*) deities. They both constitute the centre of the *Hana matsuri* because of their enormous magical powers.

4.7 *Ama no matsuri* and *Yudate*: Ritual of Heaven and Hot Water

A feature of the *Hana matsuri* is that the ritual invitation of Kirume no Ōji and the *Ama no matsuri* dance take place at the same time. During the invitation of Kirume no Ōji in the Kobayashi 小林 village, a *negi* climbs up to the inner space between the ceiling and the roof of the *hana no yado* holding a five-coloured paper strip and a long-handled spear (*kenboko* 剣鉾). In this place he performs the *Ama no matsuri* and presents to the deity a set of seventy-five offerings (*shichijūgozen* 七十五膳) together with a sacred torch (*tōmyō* 燈明). Until the following day, when the ritual ends, these two *negi* take care of the fire in turn. In the past, the man who watched over the fire behind the ceiling during the night was often possessed by the deity (*kamigakari* 神がかり) due to the smoke and scarcity of oxygen. The *Shichijūgozen* ritual serves to venerate the mountain spirit, which is portrayed as a long-nosed goblin (*tengu* 天狗), providing offerings to all the mountain deities. On Mount Akiba 秋葉山 in the Enshū 遠州 province (present-day Shizuoka 静岡 Prefecture) during the night of the fifteenth day of December a secret ritual is performed in order to present *shichijūgozen* offerings to Sanjakubō Daigongen 三尺坊大権現 and all his retinue. When the last offering cup is donated to the deity, the wind starts blowing from the mountain. All the violent deities of the mountain are tamed thanks to the offerings on the behalf of the *tengu* that take place during this Shugendō ritual. Seventy-five (75, *shichijūgo*) is a symbolic number referring to the multitude of deities in the mountain area and to the concentration of mountainous forces. The *Shichijūgozen* ritual shows that the terrific power of nature still manifests itself through Kirume no Ōji and the seventy-five deities of the mountain that are venerated on this occasion.

After the ritual invitation of Kirume no Ōji during the *Shime oroshi*, the names of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the five directions

(Yakushi 薬師, Kannon 観音, Amida 阿弥陀, Shaka 釈迦) are invoked and a sacred rope (*shime*) is symbolically set up. The term *shime* has the important meaning of 'protective deity' (*shinmei* 神明). Then, five Cleriya trees (*sakaki* 榊) are placed at the five cardinal points of the site. This ritual is called 'creation of the mountain' (*yama tate* 山立て) and serves to transform the ritual site into an imaginary mountain. The sacred dances continue from the 'purification of the cauldron' (*kama barai* 竈ばらい) to the hot water ritual (*yudate*) during which hot water is offered to all the deities and for purificatory purposes. At this moment the hot water is humanised and after this it is called hot water father (*yu no chichi* 湯の父) and hot water mother (*yu no haha* 湯の母). This hot water ritual, which brings purification and rebirth (*umare kiyomari*), also has strong ties with Kumano. The invocatory formulae (*saimon*) of Kumano Gongen and Kirume no Ōji are recited during the *Yudate* ritual. During the *Yudate* performed in the *Ōmoto kagura* at Iwami and the *Izanagi-ryū* いざなぎ流 tradition at Tosa 土佐 specific invocatory formulae and divine poems are recited in order to create a conflation (*mitate* 見立て) between the hot water used in the ritual and the hot water of Kumano (Suzuki 2012, 247-69). Originally Kumano was called *yuya* ユヤ (literally, 'hot water field') and the sacred place at Hongū was called Ōyunohara 大湯原 because of the geographic and semiotic connections with the thermal springs (*onsen* 温泉) in the area. In the term *yu* there is also the meaning of 'preserving purity to serve the deities' (*itsuku* 齋) that underlines its sacred nature. Thanks to the diffusion of the *Yudate* ritual and its various meanings, the Kumano Gongen cult spread far.

4.8 Mt. Shirayama: The Pure Land Entrance

The term *kirume* キルメ is deeply related to the origins of the *Hana matsuri*. According to the description of *Ōkagura* in *Mikagura nikki* (1581), the "room entry" (*heya-iri* 部屋入り) ritual was repeated three times during which the invitation of Kirume no Ōji took place. The *Heya-iri* consisted of "entering the room holding a wooden staff with pendant strips of cutting paper (*gohei*) to pray toward the five directions". Thanks to the supernatural power of the *negi*, Kirume no Ōji was induced to escort the souls of the devotees (*ryūgansha* 立願者) toward the Pure Land of bliss (*hana no jōdo* 花の浄土). In the description of "Heya-iri" section in *Kagura goto* (1607), the *negi* stood in front of the people who prayed for rebirth in the Pure Land. He recited invocatory formulae and invited all the deities of the five directions while chanting the name of Kirume no Ōji as a specific ceremony to praise this deity (*tonozuke* 殿付). After the last *Heya-iri*, there was the ritual of 'bridge veneration from afar' (*hashi no haiken* 橋の拝見) during which the souls of the devotees crossed the Sanzu River

(Sanzugawa 三途川, river between this world and other world) and entered the Pure Land in Mount Shirayama 白山 (literally, 'white mountain'). The invocations say:

> Behind a screen of golden characters [*konji* 金字] the admirable ascetic called Matashirō 又四郎 descends from the sky and enters the room of a monk called Kegyō Shōnin 加行上人 [ascetics under practice] to take care of Matashirō, to take care of Matashirō.

Villagers entered Mount Shirayama as the imaginary Pure Land. Kirume no Ōji descended from Heaven with majestic forms after being ritually invited, and Kirume no Ōji faced Matashirō. But who was Matashirō? He can be interpreted as the supreme guide to escort the souls of the devotees to the Pure Land entrance or a visual representation of the religious concept of becoming a buddha in this actual body (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏) among lay people. According to the invocatory formula of *Hana no hongen* 花のほんげん (Hayakawa [1930] 1972, 437), the devotee who wants to be reborn in the Pure Land takes the seventy-five offerings (*shichijūgo zen*), overcomes all the obstacles and sufferings, safely crosses the Sanzu River, and gives these offerings to a buddha called Matashirō who is waiting in the central court of the golden *maṇḍala* (*ōgon no mandara* 黄金の曼荼羅). Yamamoto Hiroko 山本ひろ子 supposes that anointing rituals (*kanjō* 灌頂) such as the *Jingi kanjō* 神祇灌頂 or the *Kechien kanjō* 結縁灌頂 were performed in the recesses of Mount Shirayama. Nevertheless, Mount Shirayama had various meanings. It could be an abode for buddhas and *kami*, a mandalised territory, the other world, or the source of everything. The *kagura* stage was symbolically equated with a mountain (*yama* 山) and in the *Ōkagura* there was a sequence of sacred dances such as the *Yama odate* 山を立て, *Yama wo matsuru beshi* 山をまつるべし, *Yama wo tazune* 山をたづね, or the *Yama wo urikai koto* 山を売買事 in which *oni* (fierce deity of mountains) came out of the mountain (see the text of *Kagura goto*). Nature, and in particular rough mountains, were represented as the fundamental source of the *oni*'s power. For the Shugendō practitioners the *kagura* site represented a mountain for performing Shugendō ascetic practices who were empowered and could control multitudes of spirits and deities as well as bring believers' vows to fruition.

Kirume and Mirume were personifications of fierce deities in mountains. They were transformed into serving spirits (*shieki rei* 使役霊) that cut (*kiru* 切る) evil influences (*mamono* 魔物) and look (*miru* 見る) new worlds. Kurume and Mirume became the complementary deities with the functions of cutting and looking. The foreign deity Kirume no Ōji arrived at Kumano and formed a whole with the local tutelary deity realising the vows of the devotees. Kirume no Ōji combines the power of Buddhism with the power of nature. This herme-

neutic discourse favoured a transition toward a different worldview that reconstructed the fierce power of nature through a Buddhist lens (Suzuki 2018, 9-10).

4.9 Transformation of Ox-bezoar Talismans

Ox-bezoar talismans (*goōhōin* 牛王宝印) are intimately related to Kumano. Toward the end of the Heian period Kumano pilgrims received ox-bezoar talismans and *nagi* leaves as protective talismans for safe voyage (*dōchū shugo* 道中守護). The text of "Kumano Gongen no Koto" 熊野権現事 in the *Shintō shū* (Shintō Taikei Hensankai 1988, 35) reports that "the supernatural power (*gen* 験) is the jewel (*hōin* 宝印) for the pilgrimage". Therefore, ox-bezoar talismans were material proof of the Kumano pilgrimage that absorbed its force. The site for distributing these talismans was called Yuko 油戸 ('oil door') and was close to Hongū. This place was also called 'turtle's tail' (Kame no o 亀の尾). The *Ryōbu mondō hishō* reports that Yuko was the site where the turtle poured oil from its tail. It is possible that Kame no o was regarded as the place from which the essence of the mountain emanated. Ōyunohara at Kumano Hongū corresponded to the diamond altar (*kongō dan* 金剛壇), where the Buddha reached enlightenment in India, and Mount Ōmine was Vulture Peak (Ryōjusen 霊鷲山), where the Buddha preached the Dharma and which flew from India to Japan. The entire territory of Ōmine was compared to a turtle of which Yoshino was the head and Kumano the tail. The ox-bezoar talismans condensed the sacred authority (*reii* 霊威) of Ōmine and Kumano, which were equated to the land of the original Dharma in India, and which spread to various regions and resulted in multiple interpretations.

As protective objects, the ox-bezoar talismans dispelled evil influences, cured diseases, brought prosperity to the crops, and were used as writing paper for religious oaths (*kishōmon* 起請文). In the Shugendō tradition, the two first characters (Goō 牛玉, 牛王) of the ox-bezoar talismans are visually disassembled as 牛 + 王 = 生 + 土 to form the word *ubusuna gami* 産土神 ('local deity') (*Shugen hiyō gi* 修験秘要義, in Nihondaizōkyō Hensankai 1985a, 675-6). Therefore, the ox-bezoar talismans served to transform violent local deities (*ubusuna gami*) into protectors of the Dharma and allies of the Shugendō practitioners, who used them as possessing deities to deliver oracles (*takusen* 託宣). According to this process, the local obstacle-deities took refuge in the teachings of the Buddha and became the Dharma protectors (*gohōshin* 護法神) or guardians of temples (*garanshin* 伽藍神).

In the *Hana matsuri* of Okumikawa there is a different development of the ox-bezoar talismans. Concerning this, it is interesting to take into account two invocatory formulae, *Goō watashi* 牛玉渡し and *Shime no goō* 注連の牛玉, of the *Ōkagura* that were performed

until Ansei 安政 2 (1855). According to the text of *Kagura goto* (1607), the first day was dedicated to the ritual construction of the mountain, which was followed by the *Umareko* 生子 ritual for childbirth. In the end there was the *Bukki ryō no shime* ぶっきりょうのしめ ritual that served to finish the mourning (*bukki* 服忌) period and marked the birth of new children. The *Bukki ryō no shime* invocatory formula revealed the reason of the entire ritual. At the end of the second day the *Wakago no shime* 若子の注連 invocatory formula is chanted again and the *Shiki no goō watashi* しきの牛玉渡し ritual concluded the performance. During the distribution of the ox-bezoar talismans (*goō watashi*) the performers chanted these verses three times:

> Prostrating myself in homage, I make penitence for the harmful behaviour of the six faculties. I request the divine empowerment of Hachidai Kongō Dōji [*namu kimyō chōrai zange zange rokkon shōjo Hachidai Kongō Dōji shintō kaji sanpen* 南無帰命頂礼懺悔懺悔六根清浄 八大金剛童子 神道加持].

We can suppose that the first day of the performance corresponded to the *Umareko* ritual (or 'placement of the child under divine protection', *miko iri* 神子入り) and the second day to the *Kiyomari* 清まり ritual (or 'initiation to adulthood', *seinen kai* 成年戒) (Yamamoto 1993, 168). The chanting of the *Goō watashi* 牛玉渡し is the same of the recitation "*Oshime ni Hachidai Kongō Dōji* 御注連に八大金剛童子", which the Shugendō practitioners chanted while climbing mountains with special surplices (*kesa* 袈裟) made of sacred ropes of twisted paper (*kamikoyori no shime* 紙縒の注連). Thanks to the divine protection of Hachidai Kongō Dōji, which resided in the sacred rope, the Shugendō practitioners performed the symbolic mountain climbing as a process at the end of which they would be purified and united with Buddha. Yamamoto Hiroko analyses the songs of the *Shime no goō* 注連牛玉 ritual, which are reported in the *Shoshin kanjō dan* 諸神勧請段 of *Suwa kagura* 諏訪神楽, and supposes that the term "ox-bezoar" (*goō*) was referred to the paper surplice (*koyori-kesa* 紙縒袈裟) of the Shugendō practitioners (Yamamoto 1993, 169).

During the *Hana sodate* 花育て ritual of the *Hana matsuri* at Yamauchi 山内 (Aichi prefecture) two people appear to bring flowers with ritual wigs (*kōkazura* 神鬘) on the head and a paper strip with the writing "hanging sash" (*kake-obi* 懸け帯) around the neck; this symbolic use of paper strips to symbolise other items of clothing seems to echo the use of the word *goō* as a substitute for *kesa*. In the opening the *Shime wo hiraku* 注連を開く ritual, pollution (*kegare* 穢れ) is purified and the person who performs the ritual of the sacred rope is possessed. In the end he performs ascetic practices on the mountain – like a Shugendō practitioner – in order to obtain new powers and regenerate life (Suzuki 2020, 33-59). *Kagura* is

a *mise-en-scène* of the mountain ascetic practices during which the practitioner is protected by ox-bezoar talismans (*goō*), which correspond to Dharma protectors (*gohō*) and also to Kongō Dōji. After the mountain entry (*yama-iri* 山入り) ritual the practitioner performs once again the *Hana no jōdo* ritual to underline his future achievement of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land. All these cases show that a great variety of meanings are attached to the ox-bezoar talismans.

5 Conclusions

The Kumano cult presents various streams. A continuous creative power, which started with *engi* and developed to *kagura*, linked the Kumano cult with the Shugendō tradition and spread it to different areas. The Kumano cult developed different characteristics according to different localisation, and it has a unifying logic that brings together heterogeneous elements, *kami* and buddhas, foreign and local lands, female shamans and Shugendō practitioners, *engi* and *kagura*. It embraces multiple and complex combinations as well as different hermeneutic discourses. The most important way to analyse Japanese culture is to focus on the imagination of hybridity.

Bibliography

Chiho-shi Kenkyūjo 地方史研究所 (ed.) (1957). *Kumano* 熊野. Tōkyō: Geirisha.

Gorai Shigeru 五来重 (ed.) (1976). *Yoshino Kumano. Shinkō no kenkyū* 吉野・熊野信仰の研究 (The Study on Yoshino Kumano Beliefs). Tōkyō: Meicho Shuppan.

Gorai Shigeru (ed.) (1984). *Shugendō Shiryōshū II Nishinihon-hen. Sangaku Shūkyō-shi Sōsho II* 修験道史料集II西日本編—山岳宗教史研究叢書 (Shugendō Historical Records. Part II: Western Japan). Tōkyō: Meicho Shuppan.

Hanawa Hokiichi 塙保己一 (ed.) (1960). *Gunsho ruijyū*, *26 (Zatsubu)* 群書類従第二六輯 雑部. Tōkyō: Zoku Gunsho Ryuijyū Kansei Kai.

Hayakawa Kōtarō 早川孝太郎 [1930] (1971). *Hayakawa Kōtarō zenshū* 早川孝太郎全集 (Complete Works of Hayakawa Kōtarō). Vol. 1, *Hanamatsuri* 花祭. Tōkyō: Miraisha.

Hayakawa Kōtarō [1930] (1972). *Hayakawa Kōtarō zenshū* 早川孝太郎全集 (Complete Works of Hayakawa Kōtarō). Vol. 2, *Hanamatsuri* 花祭. Tōkyō: Miraisha.

Ishizuka Ichirō 石塚一郎 (1970). "Gosūkōin shinpitsu hozō ekotoba" 後崇光院宸筆宝蔵絵詞 (Hozō ekotoba Written by the Retired Emperor Gosūkōin). *Shoryōbu kiyō* 書陵部紀要, 21, 77-81.

Nanami Hiroaki 名波弘彰 (1988). "Insei-ki no Kumanomoude. Metsuzai, chinkon, gohōtsuke wo meguru girei to shinkō" 院政期の熊野詣—滅罪・鎮魂、護法憑けをめぐる儀礼と信仰 (Kumano Pilgrimage in Heian Insei Period: The Ritual and the Beliefs of Assassination, Appeasement and

Spirit Possession by Gohō). *Bungei gengo kenkyū. Bungeihen* 文藝言語研究・文藝篇, 13, 70-146.

Nihondaizōkyō Hensankai 日本大蔵経編纂会 (ed.) (1985a). *Shugendō Shōso I* 修験道章疏 I. Tōkyō: Meicho Shuppan.

Nihondaizōkyō Hensankai 日本大蔵経編纂会 (ed.) (1985b). *Shugendō Shōso II* 修験道章疏 II. Tōkyō: Meicho Shuppan.

Niita Yoshifuru 仁井田好古 et al. (eds) (1970). *Kii Zoku Fudoki* 紀伊續風土記. Tōkyō: Rekishi Toshokan.

Ōchigun Ōmotokagura Hozonkai 邑智郡大元神楽保存会 (ed.) (1982). *Ōchigun Ōmotokagura* 邑智郡大元神楽. Gotsu: Ōchigun Sakurae Machi kyōikuiinkai.

Sakurai Tokutarō 桜井徳太郎; Hagiwara Tatsuo 萩原龍夫; Miyada Noburu 宮田登 (eds) (1975). *Jisha engi* 寺社縁起 (Legends of Temples and Shrines). Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.

Shintō Taikei Hensan-kai 神道大系編纂会 (ed.) (1988). *Shintō Taikei. Bungakuhen I* 神道大系文学編 1. Tōkyō: Shintō Taikei Hensan-kai.

Suzuki, M. (2011). "Kumano Beliefs and Yudate *Kagura* Performance", in "Shugendō. The History and Culture of Japanese Religion", monogr. no., *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, 18, 195-222. https://doi.org/10.3406/asie.2009.1337.

Suzuki Masataka 鈴木正崇 (2012). "Yudate no imi to kinō. Tōyama Shimotsuki matsuri no kōsatsu" 湯立神楽の意味と機能—遠山霜月祭の考察 (Meaning and Function of Yudate *Kagura*: The Reflection on Tōyama Shimotsuki Matsuri). *Kokuritsu rekishi minzoku hakubutsukan kenkyū hōkō* 国立歴史民俗博物館研究報告, 174, 247-69.

Suzuki Masataka (2015). *Sangaku shinkō. Nihon bunka no kontei wo saguru* 山岳信仰—日本文化の根底を探る (Mountain Beliefs. Exploring of the Basic Foundation in Japanese Culture). Tōkyō: Chūōkōron-shinsha.

Suzuki Masataka (2018). *Kumano to kagura. Seichi no kongenteki chikara wo motomete* 熊野と神楽—聖地の根源的力を求めて (Kumano and *Kagura*. Searching out The Fundamental Power of the Sacred Place). Tōkyō: Heibonsha.

Suzuki, M. (2020). "A Critical History of the Study of Shugendō and Mountain Beliefs in Japan". Castiglioni, A.; Rambelli, F.; Roth, C. (eds), *Defining Shugendō: Critical Studies on Japanese Mountain Religion*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 33-59.

Toyone-mura Kyōiku Iinkai 豊根村教育委員会編 (ed.) (1985). *Kagura no denshō to kiroku* 神楽の伝承と記録 (Kagura Tradition and Record). Aichi: Toyonemura.

Yamamoto Hiroko 山本ひろ子 (1993). "Ō*kagura* 'Jōdoiri' 大神楽「浄土入り」(Big *Kagura* 'Entering the Pure Land'). *Henjōfu. Shinbutsu shūgō no sekai* 変成譜—中世神仏習合の世界 (Genealogy of Transformation. The World of Kami-Buddha Combinatory System). Tōkyō: Shinjyūsha, 95-224.

Yamamoto Yōko 山本陽子 (2012). "Kumano mandara ni miru shinbutsu no hierarukī. Mirume no Ōji wo chūshin ni" 熊野曼荼羅に見る神仏のヒエラルキー一切目王子を中心に (Hierarchy of Shinbutsu from Kumano Madala). Ōhashi Katsuaki 大橋一章; Shinkawa Tokio 新川登亀男 (eds), *'Bukkyō' bunmei no jyuyō to kunshyuken no kōchiku. Higashi Ajia no naka no Nihon* 「仏教」文明の受容と君主権の構築—東アジアのなかの日本 (The Acceptance of Buddhism and the Construction of the Right of Monarchies: Japan inside East Asia). Tōkyō: Benseisha, 321-47.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

The Multilocality of *Satoyama*
Landscape, Cultural Heritage and Environmental Sustainability in Japan

Giovanni Bulian
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract Using the versatile concept of multilocality, the paper analyses the close interrelation between Japanese landscape, cultural heritage and social construction of spatial meaning in the context of *satoyama* (mountain village). Originally intended as a peripheral space of subsistence within the rural economy, *satoyama* is considered today one of the main expressions of the Japanese local culture guided by identity mechanisms and based on complex discursive constructions of native place-based and environmental rhetoric. At the same time, the *satoyama* landscape has also become a transnational symbol promoted by the Japanese government which is used in national and international research programmes for environmental sustainability. The sense of multilocality of the *satoyama* landscape is here interpreted in its double identity value that can be put to a wide variety of political and cultural constructions of place.

Keywords Landscape. Japan. Satoyama. Cultural heritage. Environmental sustainability.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2021-01-26 | Accepted 2021-03-16 | Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/006

1 Introduction

Evocative, aesthetic and sensuous geographies characterised by intensely undulating mountainous areas, anthropised territories or the convoluted topographies of the coastline continue to be at the centre of a wide network of narratives focusing on the environmental and cultural history of the Japanese archipelago (Berque 1997; Mather, Karan, Iijima 1998; Totman 2014). The iconic rice fields have historically defined the "Japanese space" (Raveri 2006) as a symbol of national and social identity (Ohnuky-Thierney 1993), while the highly aestheticised mountains have played a key role in several religious imageries and ritual practices (Grapard 1982; Miyake 2005; Raveri 2006a; 2006b), also becoming a dominant symbol in contemporary mass culture (Earhart 2011). Regardless of the perspective from which it is approached, the Japanese territory still represents a complex, polysemic and ambiguous reality, often the object of social and cultural negotiations that place it within a broad debate that intertwines the most disparate humanistic and social disciplines focusing on the perception on space (Mather, Karan, Iijima 1998).

In this regard, the extensive and long-standing literature devoted to an analysis of space still poses many theoretical questions relating to the cultural construction of the territory, which is observed both in its anthropic and environmental dimension and understood as a complex set of political, economic, cultural and symbolic factors that relate to one another and to a certain environment (Buttimer, Seamon 1980; Tuan 1977; Cosgrove 1984; Low, Lawrence-Zúñiga 2006). This perspective is made more explicit by the widespread use of the term 'landscape' – which combines the word 'land' with the Germanic verb *scapjan*/*shaffen*, 'to transform', to convey the meaning of "transformed earth" (Haber 1995) – which has become an object of renewed interest in the social sciences (Soja 1989; Low, Lawrence-Zúñiga 2006). The landscape can be understood as a passive agent in relation to a complex cultural processing of space, whereby humans 'inscribe' their presence in a territory in an enduring way. At the same time, however, the landscape may be seen as an active agent, because it produces a sense of place (Feld, Basso 1996) and creates an identity bond between human experience and the local environments within which certain activities are rooted. The process of transformation "from space to place" (Casey 1996), therefore, implies that spaces are sets of elements used by social actors as an essential part of their social interactions (Tuan 1977). According to this perspective, the meaning of landscape – in the sense of transformed territory – would thus indicate a double interactive function: on the one hand, the social perception of the landscape plays a *passive* role in defining the quality of a place; on the other hand, the landscape plays an *active* role, because it influences man's quality of life.

This sense of reciprocity entailed by the landscape-man relationship leads to two main interpretive perspectives, which represent the two sides of the same coin. Basically, any analytical discourse on the landscape can be articulated according to a range of different landscape theories, which generally follow two main – and not necessarily mutually exclusive – approaches: a 'macro approach', that is, an analysis of the local territorial space in relation to the wider national or transnational context for the purpose of identifying the main connections between the organisation of certain territories and the sociocultural and economic structure; a 'micro approach', which focuses instead on how the landscape can become an 'inscribed place' through an interpretative process that transforms the landscape into an ever-evolving 'substantive property' based on different narratives and practices.

These two approaches show how the cultural construction of place can shed light on the concept of multilocality (Rodman 2006), a versatile tool for the creation of place meanings and "for understanding the network of connections among places that link micro and macro levels, as well as reflexive qualities of identity formation and the construction of place increasingly move around the globe" (Low, Lawrence-Zúñiga 2006, 13). Although the concept of multilocality (also known as 'bifocality') was originally used in relation to the phenomena of migration and diaspora (Clifford 1994), to highlight the different relationships that a person has within his/her country of origin and the current location of a mobile migrant, it can also be understood as a broader analytical tool. What should be emphasised is that the concept of multilocal landscape can be culturally 'reproduced' outside its original context, so as to become an exportable identity model subject to different political strategies, practices and ethnic narratives. As Rodman has stated, multilocality highlights "how different actors construct, contest and ground experience in place" (Rodman 2006, 212):

> a physical landscape can be multilocal in the sense that it shapes and expresses polysemic meanings of place for different users. This is more accurately a multivocal dimension of place, but multilocality conveys the idea that a single place may be experienced quite differently. (2006, 212)

Rodman concludes that the complexity of place is based "on connections, on the interacting presence of different places and different voices in various geographical, anthropological, and historical contexts" (2006, 216) and that it is used as a conceptual tool to understand the multiple ways of experiencing and interpreting place meanings for the various individuals interacting with a given landscape (2006, 216).

In order to contextualise the concept of the multilocality of landscape in Japan, it is necessary to start from some lexicological reflections: the most common term used to define a landscape in the Japanese language is *fūkei* 風景, which generally indicates a scenery, landscape or *paysage*. However, *fūkei* does not indicate only a visual experience or a portion of territory as it appears when encompassed by a subject's gaze. In this regard, on the basis of a series of interviews focusing on the concept of landscape in contemporary Japanese usage, Katrin Gehring and Ryo Kōshaka have stated that *fūkei* represents the most widely used term to define a landscape, distinguishing it from *keikan* 景観, a term that is instead used to describe any modern, man-made artificial landscape (2007):

> *Fūkei* can be described as referring to a traditional or cultural Japanese landscape, dominated by more natural elements. The interviewees described *fūkei* as a landscape dominated by elements like mountains, rice fields, trees, flowers and villages, as well as cult objects like shrines and temples and sacred natural elements. As one interviewee said, it is seen as "the typical landscape of Japan" showing natural and cultural elements associated with Japan. Furthermore, people tend to have strong personal associations with *fūkei*. First, *fūkei* is said to be a place of memories – personal or collective – as *fūkei* represents "past landscapes" or as one person said the "original landscape". Second, *fūkei* is described as the place of birth, as "home" or as a "place one belongs to". It may be these two aspects lead people to describe *fūkei* as a part of themselves emphasizing the interactions between themselves and this kind of landscape. In general, *fūkei* is described as a more emotional kind of landscape than that described by the term *Keikan*. It is associated with positive and warm feelings, and as two interviewees emphasized, with a sense of wellbeing. (Gehring, Kōshaka 2007, 278)

The term that best contextualises the concept of *fūkei* is *satoyama* 里山 (mountains near the village), a word composed of *sato* 里 (village) and *yama* 山 (mountain), and which represents a complex environmental and cultural model in Japan today. *Satoyama*, which originally referred to any semi-managed peripheral woodland area surrounding rural settlements, has now taken on a wider and more complex meaning: it is used to indicate the 'Japanese landscape', and has become a symbol of the national and international efforts to protect local territories and enhance human well-being, eco-justice, ecological awareness, the cultural heritage, policies of tourism enhancement and environmental protection. The *satoyama* landscape, then, has become part of the complex discursive constructions of environmental and place-based rhetoric concerning development regulations, environmental sustainability and the conservation of natural energy resources.

Starting from these initial premises, the present essay will offer a brief critical reflection on how the *satoyama* landscape today is subject to two different ideological forces: a 'centripetal force' that identifies the *satoyama* as the national, mass media symbol of local culture, intimately connected with the 'green Orientalism' and rarefied, nostalgic imagery associated with the *furusato* 古里 (ancient village); a 'centrifugal force', whereby the *satoyama* instead becomes a transnational symbol of cultural heritage and environmental sustainability. As we will see, the example of the multilocality of the *satoyama* landscape can therefore be analysed according to the two macro and micro approaches previously mentioned, which highlight how the landscape, regardless of its context, is essentially a 'text' (Duncan 1990) that must be interpreted as the embodiment of different value systems (Cosgrove 1984).

2 Defining a Landscape

Although the most common translation of *satoyama* is 'mountains near the village', it is generally considered a rather ambiguous one, because it overlaps with other terms that apparently express similar concepts. Basically, *satoyama* is defined as a liminal space set

> between the category of the cultivated and that of the wild, precisely on account of the particular type of cultivation that characterises it and the organisation, both material and symbolic, by which society has appropriated the forest. In turn, the type of crop in this ecosystem was conditioned by the type of vegetation.[1] (Raveri 2006a, 34)[2]

However, this definition, as will be seen below, is often juxtaposed to others that broaden and enrich the semantic field of *satoyama*. Today, the most common definition of *satoyama* falls within two different contexts of meaning that are complementary: on the one hand, *satoyama* indicates a cultural model that can be defined by a series of terms that highlight its identity value; on the other hand, the term *satoyama* indicates a particular type of environmental model which, up until the postwar period, was an integral part of the small-scale rural economy and which today is defined as the '*satoyama* landscape'. Below, these two categories are discussed in detail, by drawing attention to their most salient aspects.

1 Unless otherwise indicated all translation are by the Author.

2 One of the typical activities that still takes place today in the *satoyama* landscape is the rotating *yaki hata* (slash and burn) technique, still present in the rural areas of Kyūshū and Shikoku.

2.1 *Satoyama* as Cultural Model

Satoyama is generally used in various contexts (academic studies, environmental movements, literature, politics, etc.) and, in particular, is found in movies, radio programmes, musical albums, and in several television documentaries, such as *Furusato no yume* ふるさとの夢 (*Dream of my Hometown*, 2017) and *Furusato no mirai* ふるさとの未来 (*The Future of my Hometown*, 2020). Each episode in the latter documentary series features one village (*sato*) or hamlet (*shūraku* 集落) whose inhabitants are trying to liven up the local area by embarking on challenging new business ventures, in an effort to preserve their hometown (*furusato*). However, despite its large-scale mass media coverage, *satoyama* only became popular in the 1960s and originally had a different meaning. As Kazuhiko Takeuchi (2003, 9) has noted:

> The term *satoyama* was used as long ago as 1759 by a Kiso area assistant wood manager by the name of Hyouemon Teramachi, who described *satoyama* in a book entitled *Miscellaneous Stories of Kiso Mountain*. He described *satoyama* as mountainous landscapes close to rural villages […]. The person who revived the term in modern times was Tsunahide Shidei, a forest ecologist, who proposed the idea of *satoyama* in the early 1960s. He later explained that this term is just a modification of *yamasato* (village in the mountains) to *satoyama* (mountains near the village) so that everybody can understand the meaning. Based on this idea came the concept of the *satoyama* as an agricultural woodland.

The mass media has contributed to 'naturalise' *satoyama* which, along with *sato*, *furusato*, *shūraku* and *yama* 山, has created a complex identity horizon. Although these other terms often overlap, they each have a precise meaning that is, either directly or indirectly, linked to the rural imagery evoked by *satoyama*. As already mentioned in the introduction, *satoyama* is a term composed of two characters which indicate two different types of space or landscape. According to the *Kōjien* dictionary, the first term, *sato*, means:

> 1. Place where there are human settlements. […] 2. Synonym of *ri*.[3] 3. Antonym of *uchi*.[4] 4. Paternal home of a married woman or adoptive son, servant etc. see *satogaeri* 里帰り (return home, for example, during Bon festival in commemoration of the dead). 5. House

3 The term indicates the smallest land unit (fifty households) and it is associated with the Ritsuryō system, a historical legal system developed at the time of the Taika Reform (mid-seventh century).

4 An ancient term used to indicate officials' personal accommodation.

> other than parented home, where a child lives in exchange for payment of board and lodging. 6. Opposite to *miyako* [capital] and indicates provinces or countryside (*inaka* 田舎). 7. Synonym of *yūri* 悠里, *kuruwa* 廓.[5] 8. Upbringing [that one has received]. (Shinmura 2000, 1081)

Within these various definitions, there are two predominant meanings of *sato*: 'man-made place' and 'family place', which express the concept of a culturalised space, also including *satoyama* landscapes. In common contemporary parlance, *satoyama* is often associated with things like rice fields, folk religion (*minzoku shūkyō* 民俗宗教), small scale farming activities, and social cooperation. Consider, for example, the following definition of *satoyama* proposed by Yuko Honda and Toshihiko Nakamura:

> *Satoyama* and *satoumi* [sea village] have significant implications for culture. First of all, the Japanese word 'bunka' is a translation of the English word "culture". Culture is a derivative of the word "cultivate". 'Cultivating' activities include involvement and interaction with nature. *Satoyama* and *satoumi* have been created through these activities with nature. Hence, it would be fair to say that *satoyama* and *satoumi*, as well as human activities within them, comprise *satoyama* and *satoumi* culture. Human activities in connection with rice paddies are the most familiar *satoyama* and *satoumi* cultures in Japan [...]. The Chinese character *sato* (里) consists of two other Chinese characters: *ta* (rice paddy 田) and *tsuchi* (soil 土). *Ta* is the most commonly used Chinese character in Japanese family names. [...] Thus in *satoyama* and *satoumi*, people incorporated festivals and events into their daily lives through occupations which developed over a long period of time in harmony with nature. In this lifestyle, in addition to the feeling of awe inspired by nature, people learnt from nature and applied this learning to their everyday lives. Additionally, they established various cooperative systems to achieve a sustainable use of resources, using the land as a mosaic environment for production in various manners, which enabled the conservation of abundant biodiversity. The lessons from *satoyama* and *satoumi* cultures are important for the development of a sustainable society in the future. (Honda, Nakamura 2012, 40-1)

This description highlights how *satoyama* has come to describe sustainable ways of life and how it possesses a certain meaning in sociocultural milieus where it is associated with rural ways of life, regard-

5 Pleasure district.

ed as more harmonious and natural. The nostalgic desire to return to one's roots and to a rural idyll is built on representations of sustainable forms of consumption and production, living standards, and values that offer new moral, aesthetic and social relationships (Strathern 1982). In Japan, these images, projected from and onto specific rural localities, contribute to defining culture (*bunka* 文化), often through the dialectic between authenticity and inauthenticity, and to the negotiation and re-negotiation of identity values.

> Representations of both tradition and modernity in Japan have been tied up to indigenous conceptualisations of *bunka*, a notion that translates as culture and which emerged in the popular discourse of modern Japan during the Taishō era (1912-26). This idea was employed in part as a means of juxtaposing true culture qua superior, traditional lifestyle to emerging patterns of urban society, such as the increased involvement of women in the working world, that charactered the period […]. *Bunka*, however, was not simply the intellectual domain of those interested in preserving a real or imagined traditional society. As Tamanoi notes, the term was polysemic, used to represent not only something rural, genuine, and even modern; yet decidedly not urban. […] Indeed, in contemporary Japanese society, the polysemic nature of the term continues to be evident. In rural areas, in particular, *bunka* is a concept often employed in slogans devised to imaginatively represent a town's character to outsiders, and to remind residents that their town is at once technologically progressive and democratic, and to remind that their town is once technologically progressive and democratic, while retaining traditional values associated with the rural countryside. (Thompson, Traphagan 2006, 3)

In this regard, Christopher Thompson and John Traphagan have also argued that the terms 'rural' and 'urban', which are used to describe the relationship between national centres and peripheral areas (such as *satoyama*), are no longer relevant as analytical categories in the Japanese context, although they continue to be important for the way in which Japanese society conceptualises itself and the nation-state (Thompson, Traphagan 2006). An interesting starting point, in this respect, is the identification of the *satoyama* with the 'landscape of nostalgia' associated with *sato*. The various definitions given of *sato* highlight the strong sense of 'family place', which is also connected with *furusato* (Schnell 2008), a term that implies a spatial and temporal dimension:

> *Furusato* comprises both a temporal and spatial dimension. The temporal dimension is represented by the word *furu*(*i*), which signifies pastness, historicity, senescence and quaintness. Furthermore,

> *furu*(*i*) signifies the patina of familiarity and naturalness that objects and human relationships acquire with age, use, and interaction. The spatial dimension is represented by the word *sato*, which suggests a number of places inhabited by humans. These include a natal household, a hamlet or village, and the countryside (as opposed to the city). *Sato* also refers to a self-governed, autonomous area, and, by extension, to local autonomy. (Robertson 1988, 494)

Furusato, then, incorporates a dominant ideology which affirms that this is the authentic nature of Japanese society. It implies a process of romantic construction of the rural landscape, which can also be extended to the nation as a whole: *nihon furusato* 日本古里 (ancient Japanese village). According to Akatsuka, *furusato* refers to a "retrospective age" (1988, cited in Creighton 1997, 241) which entails a nostalgic view of the past.[6] In this regard, Jennifer Robertson has observed how *furusato* is also characterised by nativist and national political meanings:

> *Furusato* is a word, or signifier, whose very ubiquity may camouflage its importance for understanding and interpreting Japanese culture. By ubiquity I do not mean trivial or inane, but rather familiar: in other words, the ubiquity of *furusato* derives from the manifold contexts in which it may be appropriated, from the gustatorial to the political economic. My general thesis is that the ubiquity of *furusato* as a signifier of a wide range of cultural productions effectively imbues these productions with unifying? and ultimately nativist and national political meaning and value. *Furusato* can only be fully comprehended by observing both how the term is used ordinarily and how it has been appropriated by various members of, and interest groups in, Japanese society. The evocation of *furusato* is an increasingly cogent means of simultaneously fostering we-feelings and insideness at local and national levels. *Furusato* Tokyo, for example, is enveloped by *Furusato* Japan. The process by which *furusato* is evoked into existence is called *furusato-zuku-*

6 It is interesting to note that *furusato* could also be connected to *inaka* 田舎, a term used to indicate specific isolated regions of Japan, even if this term does not refer to any particular geographical location. *Inaka* can also be translated as 'province' and presents two important characteristics: first, this concept is defined in terms of negation; second, it refers to terms associated with it or derivatives. With regard to the first characteristic, the term *inaka* takes on a negative meaning, as it does not refer to any specific place, thus remaining in a completely imaginary dimension, such as *furusato*. This imagined 'elsewhere' brings us back to the second characteristic of the term *inaka*. According to the *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, *inaka* describes "the land and districts removed from cities" (Shōgakukan 2001, 451). Standard definitions suggest that *inaka* generally indicates that which is unrefined or uncivilised. *Inaka*'s sense of inferiority seems to derive from its lack of cultural sophistication and economic prosperity.

> *ri*, or home/native-place making. Ultimately, *furusato-zukuri* is a political process by which culture, as a collectively constructed and shared system of symbols, customs and beliefs, is socially reproduced. (Robertson 1988, 494)

Regardless of these linguistic nuances, the community-landscape link, expressed by the terms *sato*, *furusato* and *satoyama*, includes both socioeconomic and emotional factors: demographic hemorrhaging from rural areas and the sense of uprootedness have often involved an absence of place associated with the concept of "territorial anguish" (De Martino 1952), which affects individuals forced to leave their place of birth, their *sato*, their own space of lived experience, thus creating "the experience of a presence that is not maintained before the world, before history" (De Martino 1952, 60). Since the post-war period, the demographic transformation of rural areas has been too substantial not to arouse the concern of the Government, which has begun to intervene through policies aimed at re-adapting the economic and productive system of those areas to suit new needs, while also attempting to redefine the social system of rural communities. Depopulated areas are often described using the words *bukimi* 不気味 (sinister), *sabishii* 寂しい (sad), *akiya* 空家 (empty houses) and villages of death 死の集落 (*shi no shūraku*) (Matanle, Rausch 2011). Here too, *satoyama* is brought into play in the context of rural revitalisation policies, environmental activism and the recovery of small-scale economies.

Finally, a careful reflection must also be made on the term *yama*, which today is often commonly associated with *satoyama*, and has different, overlapping meanings. According to the various etymological interpretations, *yama* means "mountain", "forest", or "place where men do not live" (Ōno, Satake, Maeda 1974, 1315; Raveri 2006). It was originally used to emphasise the agricultural unproductiveness of areas excluded from the rice paddy ecosystem. *Yama* is part of the complex symbolic organisation of productive and settlement spaces. As Massimo Raveri has observed:

> in Japanese culture, mountains are sacred spaces par excellence. To understand its sacredness, we must start from the paddy field, because it is the focal point of the technical organisation and of the social and symbolic logic according to which Japanese society has interpreted its ecosystems throughout history and which has led it to identify the mountain as a 'separate' spatial dimension, an 'other' space, with characteristics that embody the connotations of the "sacred". [...] Two cultural spaces correspond to these two ecosystemic spaces. Traditional Japanese society draws a first general distinction: on the one hand, the space structured by man, *sato*, the village and the cultivated countryside that surrounds it, considered as a unitary spatial dimension; on the oth-

> er, the space of the wild mountain, *yama*. Japanese tradition draws a contrast between the ordered and the disordered, the realm of man, who controls nature, and the natural realm, in which man does not interfere. (2006b, 287)

Yet, *yama* is closely linked to a traditional model of classification of the rural landscape, based on a precise symbolic geometry. According to the so-called 'model of radiant space', typical of sedentary societies, the centre – the productive and settlement space (*sato*) – is surrounded on all sides by concentric spatial bands: the rice fields (*ta* 田) and other common places (*no* 野), the surrounding woodlands (*satoyama*) subject to exploitation by the local community, steep mountainous areas (*dake* 岳) and *okuyama* 奥山 (deep mountains), remote mountains that are considered otherworldly. In this regard, Keisuke Matsui has proposed a model of the Japanese rural landscape divided into a series of spatial units (2014, 34):

> A *sato* is a residential space comprising housing, an *ujigami* (guardian god), temples, tombs, and various small shrines. It plays a part not only in the everyday lives of people but also in festivals and religious ceremonies. The village border includes stone monuments and a stone Buddha, which is used for disaster prevention ceremonies. A *Ta* is space used for farming where rice and other fields are located. Common places for the villagers to obtain building materials, fuel, and fertiliser include a *no* and a *satoyama*. Those residing in a *Sato* work at a *Ta* and obtain living necessities at the *no* and *satoyama*. These three spaces form the living space of the people who reside in the community.
>
> The spaces in which those people who are not related to the community may gather include a *Hara*, *okuyama*, and *dake*. […] *Hara* is an uncultivated, primitive field in front of a *Ta* that can spread beyond the gathering space to form a city. An *okuyama* is situated behind the *No* and *satoyama*, where descendants of mountain people ousted by those growing rice were once residents. A *dake*, placed even further back, is a steep mountainous area and the source of rivers. It was regarded as a sacred place that led to heaven and a place to train monks of Mountain Shugendō. A *dake* was understood to incorporate the nature of another world.

The definitions given by Massimo Raveri and Keisuke Matsui therefore highlight the perceived radical otherness of mountains with respect to agricultural areas, confining the former to the dimension of the sacred and the religious. What is interesting to note, however, is that the cultural perception of mountains – their conceptualisation and symbolic organisation, i.e. the 'idea of the mountain' – seems to derive not from mountain themselves, but from the intermediate

and liminal space between paddy fields and mountains, where local communities used to interact with the surrounding natural environment: the *satoyama*. In this regard, Catherine Knight, drawing upon Kitamura (1995, 116), has pointed out that

> it is the nature of the *satoyama*, rather than the 'wild nature' of the *yama* (mountainous forests) with which the Japanese have formed an affinity over the centuries. Further, […] it is the Japanese interaction with this category of half-cultivated nature that has been instrumental in shaping the Japanese view of nature (*shizenkan*) and that has led to the much-vaunted Japanese "love of nature". As evidence of this, [Kitamura] points out how it is *satoyama*, rather than *yama*, that forms the backdrop to the majority of Japanese folktales (*mukashi-banashi*). […] the folktales frequently feature activities such as wood-cutting, picking of fruit or chestnuts from the woods, and *yama-batake* (cultivation of crops in mountain fields) – all activities associated with the *satoyama*. Similarly, it is the animals that frequent the *satoyama*, such as foxes, rabbits, *tanuki*, rather than those that inhabited the upland forests of the *yama*, such as wolves, bears and serow, which most commonly appear in folktales.

To conclude, regardless of whether the *satoyama* by now has been completely absorbed into the nostalgic imagery of the *furusato* or, what is relevant to note is that this term still reflects its cultural heritage, which is processed through different forms of rediscovery and enhancement. In this regard, it is useful to keep in mind some of Tim Ingold's reflections on how to imagine the landscape and on how its past can be recontextualised in the present:

> We may distinguish, then, at least three ways of imagining the past in the landscape. There is the *materialising* mode, which turns the past into an object of memory, to be displayed and consumed as heritage; there is the *gestural* mode, in which memories are forged in the very process of redrawing the lines and pathways of ancestral activity, and there is the *quotidian* mode in which what remains of the past provides a basis for carrying on. Each, moreover, entails a different sense of the present. In the present of the materialising mode, the past appears as another culture: a 'foreign country' […]. The gestural present is a generative movement that remembers the past even as it presses forward, since to go forth along a line of life is simultaneously to retrace the paths of predecessors (Ingold 2000, 148). In the quotidian mode, by contrast, the very immediacy of the present eclipses the past as the latter sinks into the inconspicuous and unremarked ground of the everyday. What, then, of the future? Are there as many ways of imagining the future in the landscape? (Ingold 2012, 8-9; italics added)

2.2 The *Satoyama* Landscape as an Environmental Model

Based on the interpretative approach of landscape ecology, the *satoyama* landscape may be seen as a wider and more defined spatial context than the individual term *satoyama*, which is constrained by the contemporary linguistic context. Even if the contemporary *satoyama* landscape is the result of political changes in forest management in the mid-twentieth century, the term dates back to the seventeenth century, when it was used to indicate a range of different ecosystems, collectively called '*satoyama* landscapes'. These included agricultural lands, grasslands, secondary forests, irrigation ponds, and even human settlements (Takeuchi 2003). Takeuchi has proposed the following definition of *satoyama* landscape:

> *satoyama landscapes* include not only the mixed woodlands, but also the *yatsuda* (special type of paddies) and the small rivers and artificial ponds used for irrigation. Mixed woodlands of *satoyama* that are very near rural settlements and distributed on mountains, hills, and uplands as major geomorphic sites are very important in the rural villages to be used for coppice woodlands agricultural woodlands. On the other hand, narrow valley bottoms developed by dissecting low-relief mountains, hills, and uplands are known locally as either *yatsu* or *yato*. Further downstream is the alluvial lowland zone, which is a major location of paddy field agriculture. The paddy fields developed on the narrow valley bottoms use springs coming from the valley head. This type of rice paddies is called *yatsuda* ヤツダ or *yatoda* ヤトダ. (Takeuchi 2003, 15)

> Management of both *satoyama* and *yatsu* is also necessary to conserve the complementary wildlife habitats of plants and animals that live in the hills or in the uplands, and those that live in the wetlands. This contributes to maintaining the high biodiversity in the secondary nature. It must be noted that secondary nature has been maintained by the traditional farming activities both managing the *satoyama* and cultivating the *yatsuda*. Nowadays, as the role of the *satoyama* as coppice or agricultural woodland has decreased, it has also broken the tight connection with the *yatsuda*. Further, because of the decrease in the number of farmers and the low price of rice, many farmers have abandoned the both the *yatsuda* and the coppice woodlands. (Takeuchi 2003, 15-16)

From this brief description it is clear that the *satoyama* and the *yatsuda* have played an important role for the subsistence and small-scale economies of local communities, while at the same time providing an ideal habitat for wildlife. Starting in the postwar period, the function of *satoyama* has declined as the result of technological,

demographic and socioeconomic factors: the use of chemical fertilisers, electricity, oil and gas has made *satoyama* economically less important as a source of fuel-wood, organic fertiliser and charcoal. Moreover, the urbanisation and industrialisation process has led to a steady depopulation of rural areas, especially the upland one, radically transforming the social and economic context of rural Japan. The latter now presents itself as peripheral area, afflicted by problems such as demographic aging, due to the sharp decline in births, unemployment and the emigration of young people to urban areas in search of better work prospects. This, in turn, entails a lack of generational turnover in economic activities in the primary and in the secondary sector. In the rural areas of Japan, the economic and demographic crisis has been decisive with respect to the politically sensitive issue of the reorganisation of the productive sectors linked to the exploitation of *satoyama* ecosystems.

As a result, near urban centres, large *satoyama* woodland areas were destroyed during the Sixties and Seventies in order to create so-called 'bed towns' or satellite commuter towns, especially in the vast conurbation of Tōkyō and Ōsaka. The impact of land degradation on landscape and the degeneration of the *satoyama* ecosystem have become critical factors in the increasing incidence of human–wildlife conflict in Japan. As Catherine Knight has observed:

> This makes the *satoyama* woodlands around villages more attractive to wildlife, because they provide a source of high-energy foods, such as persimmons and chestnuts, and because reduced visibility makes the *satoyama* a safer refuge for animals. This, combined with the degradation and fragmentation of the mountainous forest itself, means that wild boar, monkeys, bears and other wildlife are increasingly venturing into depopulated rural settlements and causing damage to crops and property and, occasionally, injury to humans. This is an added burden for the increasingly ageing rural population and has led a not insignificant number of smallhold farmers to abandon farming altogether. (Knight 2010, 425)

In the Sixties and Seventies, the increase in urban development and the environmental crisis it entailed led to the establishment of many environmental organisations focusing on the conservation and regeneration of *satoyama*. However, this interest in the values of ecology and local culture is not limited to NGOs; rather, the protection of the environment and of the health and well-being of local areas has also become a salient theme in the initiatives of the central and prefectural governments, such as, for example, the National Strategy for Biodiversity of the Ministry of the Environment. One of its key objectives is to rebuild a stable relationship between the environment and local communities by selecting 'important *satoyama*' in order to de-

velop specific models of environmental management. In the following paragraph, we will briefly examine how *satoyama* landscapes have become part of the contemporary Japanese cultural heritage and how the concept of landscape today is largely associated with the *satoyama* identity model when it comes to governance strategies for the promotion of the environment and social well-being.

3 The Concept of *Satoyama* in a Global Context

Satoyama has gradually become a key element related to the notion that the common good and collective interests are to be promoted through planning programmes focused on landscape regeneration. In recent years, the importance of *satoyama* has been widely recognised and efforts to promote it have been made by the central and prefectural governments: for example, the 2004 revision of the Cultural Property Act, under which the *satoyama* landscape can be designated as a cultural asset, acquiring the role of *bunkateki keikan* 文化的景観 (cultural landscape) which, according to the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, is considered "indispensable for understanding the lifestyle of the Japanese people" (Agency for Cultural Affairs 2009, 40). Cultural landscapes of special environmental and cultural value may be further designated as *jūyō bunkateki keikan* 重要文化的景観 (important cultural landscapes).

These premises serve to introduce some reflections on programmes for the enhancement of the cultural and environmental heritage associated with Japanese landscapes – collectively identified by the term *satoyama* – which adopt an approach based on holistic research planning and environmental education. Contemporary Japan has developed complex interdisciplinary research projects on environmental sustainability, such as the Japan Satoyama Satoumi Assessment (JSSA), commissioned in 2000 by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. This research project aims to identify the state of global ecosystems, also evaluating the consequences of their changes and their impact on humans, and providing a scientific basis for future interventions aimed at their conservation. The JSSA represents an international effort jointly initiated by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan and the Institute of Advanced Studies of the United Nations University, whose main purpose is to analyse the relationship between local communities and terrestrial and marine-coastal ecosystems, respectively indicated by the Japanese terms *satoyama* and *satoumi*.

These two terms describe ecosystemic landscapes that have become the subject of applied research activities aimed at managing and maintaining both the environmental context and the culture of local communities. Projects and activities mainly focus on understanding the environmental and cultural heritage, restoring ecological services

and improving livelihoods. At the heart of these projects, therefore, lies the creation or maintenance of resilient areas through the restoration or reconstruction of habitats essential for the functioning of local ecosystems. A key point for understanding the ethical principles of these projects is the biodiversity protection policy that enhances the historical and cultural heritage of local communities. These projects highlight the distance between the technical approaches of biological studies associated with the management of environmental resources, and those based on the experiences of the stakeholders themselves, who should be conscious protagonists of resource management. Working on different levels of analysis, JSSA projects provide important qualitative and quantitative methods both to capitalise on local ecological knowledge and to promote environmental and social sustainability.

Finally, a separate reflection should be devoted to the so-called Satoyama Initiative, an international interdisciplinary project that aims to promote sustainable use and biodiversity of *satoyama* in Japan. Sprung from joint collaboration between the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) and the Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOEJ), the Satoyama Initiative focuses on biodiversity conservation through the revitalisation and sustainable management of "socio-ecological production landscapes and seascapes" (SEPLS), in order to realise "societies in harmony with nature" (UNU-IAS, IGES 2019, 6). The main purpose of these projects is to promote

> the conservation of SEPLS around the world, entailing a range of activities including expanding the body of knowledge about how the relationship between humans and nature should function in a wide variety of production landscapes and seascapes from both social and scientific points of view.[7]

The strategic use of these secondary landscapes, according to the Ministry of the Environment, will contribute

> to the exclusive balance of nature by supporting the natural regeneration of the environment and sustainable use of natural resources. This wise use of natural resources and the environment is the product of the traditional wisdom of Asia. (Ministry of the Environment 2009)[8]

The interdisciplinary approach adopted in these programmes represents an analysis model that is in many respects innovative, and which

7 https://satoyama-initiative.org/concept.

8 https://satoyama-initiative.org/case_study/#start.

has also begun to spread internationally (Yanagi 2019). An example is the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI), "one of the major institutional components under the Satoyama Initiative, which is a partnership established to promote the cultural and environmental activities identified by the Satoyama Initiative" (UNU-IAS 2019, 2). One of the most relevant cases in which the *satoyama* model has been associated with a different habitat is coppice woodlands, which have historically been used in England for various environmental applications (e.g. charcoal production for metal smelting, wattle fencing or the collection of timber for building purposes) (Buckley 2020). However, given the vastness of interdisciplinary cultural and methodological contents related to *satoyama* studies, and given the rapid evolution of this research field, it is worth quoting the brief overview of the most recent studies provided by Itō, Hino and Sakuma:

> The term *satoyama* landscape has been used to distinguish the broader meaning from the narrower one. The area comprising *satoyama* landscape is estimated to be approximately 60,000-90,000 km2, or 20% of Japan's land mass (Tsunekawa 2003). Similar traditional landscape or land-use systems are found in Korea, China, Indonesia, Spain and southern Africa (Takeuchi 2010). Park et al. (2006) studied Korean village groves called *maeulsoop* or *bibosoop*, that provide habitats for cavity nesting birds. Kumar and Takeuchi (2009) compared agroforestry in western India and *satoyama* in Japan. Rackham (1986) described the history of sustainably used English woodland. Bélair et al. (2010) compiled examples of sustainable land use systems worldwide. Mason and MacDonald (2002) studied the responses of ground flora to coppice management and discussed which management system was preferable. (Itō, Hino, Sakuma 2012, 99)

Clearly, the extensive search for environmental models similar to the *satoyama* landscape has highlighted an important aspect of the new environmental and sociocultural research policies in global context. However, although the Satoyama Initiative has the merit of using the ecosystem model of the *satoyama* landscapes as a reference point to promote sustainable economic growth and to counter the decline of biodiversity around the world, it has not yet fully clarified the reasons for the decline of the traditional ways of managing these territories, which are less economically productive than more modern methods. In this regard, Knight states:

> The obvious difficulty with the idea of '*satoyama*-like landscapes' becoming a model of sustainable natural resource management and protection of biodiversity is that it does not address the forces that have led to the increasing neglect of the se environments in the first place – i.e. rural depopulation, urbanisation, industrialisation,

> and, in many developing nations, alienation of indigenous peoples from their land. Nor does it address the fact that while the traditional land-uses invariably have a lesser impact on the environment, they are also more labour-intensive and less productive (at least in the short term) than more modern methods of agriculture. It is for these reasons, among a number of others, that these traditional forms of land-use are being neglected in many countries, and without addressing these factors, no amount of convention-holding or expounding on the merits of *satoyama* (however worthy a model it may be) is going to reverse the trend towards more intensive (and economically profitable) land-use. (Knight 2010, 434)

Beyond the criticism raised concerning the actual results obtained by specific projects sponsored by the Satoyama Initiative, it can be affirmed that a key aspect of these programmes is that they are mainly based on a specific geographical and cultural construct – the *satoyama* landscape – which is globally 'reproducible' and culturally assimilated to '*satoyama*-like landscapes'. This means that the search for an ecologically sustainable solution that is economically viable and ethically fair towards local communities, is mainly based on an "emotional vision of *satoyama*" as defined by ecologist Yumoto Takakazu (Yumoto 2011). This particular view of the *satoyama* is directly connected to the still dominant environmentalist and eco-religious rhetoric of nature and connectedness to place: as a Japanese scholar complained during a UNESCO International Symposium, "It is a pity that the traditional idea of the Japanese nurturing the natural world under the guise of the worship of 8 million gods has largely not been maintained in recent times" (Iwatsuki 2006, 92). According to Masami Yuki,

> This particularly romanticised vision of *satoyama* relies on an historical narrative by which 'pre-modernity' or 'native society' lived peacefully with nature, and this harmony was lost with the advent of modernity. This harmony with nature, in turn, has led to various environmental problems, a perspective that – as Yumoto points out – can be read as a particular type of Orientalism turned 'inside-out'. (Yumoto 2011, 17; also cited in Masami 2015, 85)

Masami concludes that Yumoto's analysis points toward a "*satoyama* Orientalism whereby the glorification of nature emerged out of the development of new methods for its exploitation" (Masami 2015, 85). As previously seen, these methods are directly based on the culturally-bound and socially mediated interpretations of Japanese *satoyama*:

> As we can see in German Romanticism in the 19th century, the call for a return to nature developed as a response to modernity even within the West itself. Europeans and Americans who were

> critical of modern civilization's attempt to conquer and rule nature projected an idealized image of "coexisting with nature" onto Native Americans or the East, especially Japan. This projection of what they saw as lacking in themselves onto an 'other' turned the Orientalist's ostentatious claims of superiority inside-out. The idealized projection of coexistence with nature was taken up by some Japanese intellectuals as something worth working toward. In other words, they wanted to cast themselves in the idealized Orientalist image that had been projected upon them. At the same time, and also within Japan, an idealized image of "coexistence with nature" was projected onto the native people of Hokkaido, the Ainu. […] One of the aspects of that Orientalism might have been the topic of *satoyama*. (Yumoto 2011, 17-18; also cited in Masami 2015, 87)

4 Conclusions

Satoyama may be regarded as a multifaceted place inscribed within real or symbolic constructions that are the product of specific social, environmental and cultural circumstances. It is capable both of satisfying cultural and environmental needs, and of conceptually empowering the social construction of spatial meaning. Yet, as previously seen, the multilocality of the *satoyama* landscape could be interpreted as a 'reproducible model' that has progressively assumed a central position in international scientific debate, also reflecting certain neo-traditional conservationist paradigms focused on the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature, and connected with the Japanese cultural perception of nature – an aspect that has not been highlighted here, as it has already been widely studied (see, e.g., Asquith, Kalland 1997).

However, these two aspects point to a final key element in relation to the cultural complexity of the *satoyama* landscape, an element connected to the complexity of the environmental issue from both a the technical-scientific and an ideological-political perspective. Besides the fact that the *satoyama* landscape has become part of a larger cultural puzzle, what is interesting to note is that it could also reflect, either directly or indirectly, a certain reactionary ecological ideology which took hold in Japan starting in the Second World War. According to Richard Reitan,

> the key objective of reactionary ecology in Japan (and deep ecology contributes to this) is to bolster a narrative of a homogeneous ethnic community at one with a sanctified nature, where 'nature' signifies the particular Japanese landscape and a unique Japanese culture. (2017, 12)

Furthermore, Reitan argues that

> there is also an effort in reactionary ecology to locate environmental degradation (and the excesses of capitalism generally) geographically outside of Japan. For example, in the East-West (or Japan-West) binary discussed above, Japan is set apart from "Western civilization", defined in terms of a monotheistic Judeo-Christian religious tradition and a will to dominate nature. By situating the roots of global environmental crises in an imagined 'West' from which Japan is detached, reactionary ecology positions Japan outside the conditions of environmental exploitation. Yet, reactionary ecology seeks not only to distance Japanese culture from these problems, but to uphold and disseminate the "Japanese view" as the solution. (2017, 11)

This type of ideology is therefore historically rooted in the question of identity in relation to nature. Within it, it is possible to identify a tension between models of action inspired by the principle of rationalisation of human action and principles of an ethical-political nature. It could thus be argued that the question of the multilocality of the *satoyama* landscape also reflects this type of ideological orientation in some way, although this hypothesis may seem misleading, since it has not yet been fully accredited. However, considering all the various ethnic and Orientalist meanings that the *satoyama* landscape has today, it is worth asking whether this concept might be the centre around which a new form of conservative environmentalist universe gravitates.

Bibliography

Agency for Cultural Affairs (2009). "Our Treasure Cultural Landscapes to Future Generations". *Administration of Cultural Affairs in Japan*. http://www.bunka.go.jp/bunkazai/pamphlet/pdf/pamphlet_en_01.pdf (2020-11-12).

Akatsuka, Y. (1988). "Our Retrospective Age". *Japan Quarterly*, 35(2), 279-86.

Asquith, J.P.; Kalland, A. (eds) (1997). *Japanese Images of Nature: Cultural Perspectives*. Richmond (UK): Curzon.

Bélair, C. et. al. (eds) (2010). *Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in Socio-Ecological Production Landscapes: Background to the 'Satoyama Initiative for the Benefit of Biodiversity and Human Well-Being'*. Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Berque, A. (1997). *Japan: Nature, Artifice and Japanese Culture*. Yelvertoft Manor (UK): Pilkington Press.

Brown, D.R.; Yokohari, M. (2003). "Ideological Contribution of Satoyamas". Takeuchi et al. 2003, 1-7.

Buckley, P. (2020). "Coppice Restoration and Conservation: A European Perspective". *Journal of Forest Research*, 25(3), 125-33. https://doi.org/10.1080/13416979.2020.1763554.

Buttimer, A.; Seamon, D. (eds) (1980). *The Human Experience of Space and Place*. London: Routledge.

Casey, E. (1996). "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena". Feld, S.; Basso, K. (eds), *Sense of Place*. Santa Fe (NM): School of American Research Press, 13-52.

Clifford, J. (1992). "Diasporas". *Cultural Anthropology*, 9(3), 302-38.

Cosgrove, E.D. (1984). *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. London: Croom Helm.

Cotton, M.; Pradyumna, P.K.; Iijima, S. (1998). *Japanese Landscapes: Where Land and Culture Merge*. Lexington (KY): The University Press of Kentucky.

Creighton, M. (1997). "Consuming Rural Japan: The Marketing of Tradition and Nostalgia in the Japanese Travel Industry". *Ethnology*, 36(3), 239-54. https://doi.org/10.2307/3773988.

De Martino, E. (1952). "Angoscia territoriale e riscatto culturale nel mito achilpa delle origini". *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, 23, 52-66.

Duncan, S.J. (1990). *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duraiappah, K.A. et al. (eds) (2012). *Satoyama. Satoumi Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Socio-Ecological Production Landscapes of Japan*. Tōkyō; New York; Paris: United Nations University Press.

Earhart, H.B. (2011). *Mount Fuji: Icon of Japan*. Columbia (SC): University of South Carolina Press.

Feld, S.; Basso, K. (eds) (1996). *Sense of Place*. Santa Fe (NM): School of American Research Press.

Gehring, K.; Kōshaka, R. (2007). "'Landscape' in the Japanese Language: Conceptual Differences and Implications for Landscape Research". *Landscape Research*, 32(2), 273-83. https://doi.org/10.1080/01426390701231887.

Grapard, A. (1982). "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religion". *History of Religions*, 23(3), 195-221. https://doi.org/10.1086/462897.

Haber, W. (1995). "Concept, Origin, and Meaning of Landscape". Von Droste, B.; Plachter, H.; Rossler, M. (eds), *Cultural Landscapes of Universal Value. Components of a Global Strategy*. New York: UNESCO, 38-42.

Honda, Y.; Nakamura, T. (2012). "Rice Cultivation and Culture". Duraiappah et al. 2012, 40-1.

Ingold, T. (2000). *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge.

Ingold, T. (2012). "Introduction". Janowski, M.; Ingold, T. (eds), *Imaging Landscapes: Past, Present and Future*. Farnham (UK): Ashgate, 1-18.

Itō, H.; Hino, T.; Sakuma, D. (2012). "Species Abundance in Floor Vegetation of Managed Coppice and Abandoned Forest". *Forest Ecology and Management*, 269, 99-105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2011.12.017.

Iwatsuki, K. (2006). "Sacred Forests Connected with the Temple Shrines of Japan". *UNESCO-MAB Proceedings of the Tokyo Symposium, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Symposium Conserving on Cultural and Biological Diversity: The Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes*. Paris: UNESCO, 90-2.

Kitamura Masami 北村 昌美 (1995). *Shinrin to Nihonjin. Mori no kokoro ni semaru* 森林と日本人—森の心に迫る (Japanese and Forests: A Study of the Spirit of the Woods). Tōkyō: Shōgakukan.

Knight, C. (2010). "The Discourse of 'Encultured Nature' in Japan: The Concept of *Satoyama* and its Role in 21st-Century Nature Conservation". *Asian Studies Review*, (34)4, 421-41. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2010.527920.

Kumar, B.M.; Takeuchi, K. (2009). "Agroforestry in the Western Ghats of Peninsular India and the *Satoyama* Landscapes of Japan: A Comparison of Two Sustainable Land Use Systems". *Sustainability Science*, 4(2), 215-32. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-009-0086-0.

Low, M.S.; Lawrence-Zúñiga, D. (eds) (2006). *The Anthropology of Space and Place*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Masami, Y. (2015). *Foodscapes of Contemporary Japanese Women Writers: An Ecocritical Journey around the Hearth of Modernity*. New York: Palgrave.

Mason, F.C.; MacDonald, M.S. (2002). "Responses of Ground Flora to Coppice Management in an English Woodland: A Study Using Permanent Quadrats". *Biodiversity Conservation*, 11, 1773-89.

Matanle, P.; Rausch, S.A. (2011). *Japan's Shrinking Regions in the 21st Century*. New York: Cambria Press.

Mather, C.; Karan, P.P.; Iijima, S. (1998). *Japanese Landscapes: Where Land and Culture Merge*. Lexington (KY): The University Press of Kentucky.

Matsui, K. (2014). *Geography of Religion in Japan: Religious Space, Landscape, and Behavior*. New York: Springer.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005). *Ecosystem and Human Well-Being: General Synthesis*. Washington DC: Island.

Ministry of the Environment (2009). *The Satoyama Initiative: Toward a Rural Society in which People and Nature Live Together in Harmony*. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAcS6px3WEg&feature=related.

Miyake, H. (2005). *The Mandala of the Mountain: Shungedō and Folk Religion*. Tokyo: Keio University Press.

Munn, N. (1990). "Constructing Regional Worlds in Experience: Kula Exchange, Witchcraft and Gawan Local Events". *Man*, 25(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.2307/2804106.

Ohnuky-Tierney, E. (1993). *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.

Ōno Susumu 大野晋; Satake Akihiro 佐竹昭広; Maeda Kingorō 前田金五郎 (1974). *Iwanami kogo jiten* 岩波古語辞典 (Iwanami Ancient Language Dictionary). Tōkyō: Iwanami.

Park, C.-R.; Shin, J.-H.; Lee, D.-W. (2006). "Bibosoop: A Unique Korean Biotope for Cavity Nesting Birds". *Journal of Ecology and Environment*, 29(2), 75-84. https://doi.org/10.5141/jefb.2006.29.2.075.

Rackham, O. (1986). *The History of the Countryside*. London: Phoenix.

Raveri, M. (2006a). *Itinerari nel sacro*. Venezia: Cafoscarina.

Raveri, M. (2006b). *Paradisi e labirinti. La montagna sacra in Giappone*. Barbero, A.; Piano, S. (a cura di), *Religioni e sacri monti*. Ponzano: Centro di Documentazione dei Sacri Monti, 287-300.

Reitan, R. (2017). "Ecology and Japanese History. Reactionary Environmentalism's Troubled Relationship with the Past". *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, (15)3, 1-18.

Robertson, J. (1988). "*Furusato* Japan. The Culture and Politics of Nostalgia". *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 1(4), 494-518. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf01390685.

Rodman, C.M. (2006). "Empowering Place. Multilocality and Multivocality". Low, S.M.; Lawrence-Zúñiga, D. (eds), *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell, 204-23.

Schnell, S. (2008). "The Rural Imaginary. Landscape, Village, Tradition". Robertson, J. (ed.), *A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan*. Oxford: Blackwell, 201-17.

Shinmura Izuru 新村出 (ed.) (2000). *Kōjien* 広辞苑 (Wide Garden of Words). Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.

Shōgakukan 小学館 (ed.) (2001). *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大辞典 (Japanese Language Dictionary). Tōkyō: Shōgakukan.

Soja, W.E. (1989). *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. New York: Verso.

Strathern, M. (1982). "The Village as an Idea. Constructs of Village-ness in Elmdon, Essex". Cohen, P.A. (ed.), *Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 247-77.

Takeuchi, K. (2003). "*Satoyama* Landscapes as Managed Nature". Takeuchi et al. 2003, 9-16.

Takeuchi, K. (2010). "Rebuilding the Relationship between People and Nature. The Satoyama Initiative". *Ecological Research*, 25, 891-7. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11284-010-0745-8.

Takeuchi, K. et al. (eds) (2003). *Satoyama: The Traditional Rural Landscape of Japan*. Tokyo; New York: Springer.

Tamanoi, M. (1998). *Under the Shadow of Nationalism: Politics and Poetics of Rural Japanese Women*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Thompson, S.C.; Traphagan, W.J. (2006). "The Practice of Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Japan". Thompson, S.C.; Traphagan, W.J. (eds), *Wearing Cultural Styles in Japan: Concept of Tradition and Modernity in Practice*. Albany (NY): State University of New York, 2-24.

Tokoro Mitsuo 所 三男 (1980). *Kinsei ringyoshi no kenkyū* 近世林業史の研究 (Research on the Modern History of Forestry). Tōkyō: Yoshikawa kobunkan.

Totman, C. (2014). *Japan: An Environmental History*. London: I.B Tauris.

Tsunekawa, S. (2003). "Transition of *Satoyama* Landscapes in Japan". Takeuchi et al. 2003, 41-51

Tuan, Y.F. (1977). *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. London: Edward Arnold.

UNU-IAS, United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies (eds) (2019). *Understanding the Multiple Values Associated with Sustainable Use in Socio-Ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes (SEPLS).* Tokyo: United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability.

Washitani, I. (2003). *Satoyama Landscapes and Conservation Ecology*. Takeuchi et al. 2003, 16-23.

Yanagi, T. (2019). *Integrated Coastal Management in the Japanese Satoumi: Restoring Estuaries and Bays*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Yumoto Takakazu 湯本貴和 (2011). "Joshō. Nihon rettō ni okeru 'kenmeina riyō' to jyūsō suru ga banansu" 序章:日本列島における「賢明な利用」と重層するガバナンス (Preface: 'Wise Use' and Layered Governance in the Japanese Archipelago). Yumoto Takakazu (ed.), *Kankyōshi to ha nanika* 環境史とは何か (What is Environmental History). Tōkyō: Bunichi Sōgō Shuppan.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Researching Shamanism in Contemporary Japan

Silvia Rivadossi
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract This paper takes its cue from Massimo Raveri's studies and interests, especially concerning Japanese shamanic practitioners and the relationship between media and religion. By further broadening his analysis with more recent data, this paper suggests how a study of contemporary Japanese shamanism could be undertaken, within the theoretical framework offered by critical discourse analysis. Through the suggested examination of the multiple discourses on shamans conducted in peripheral and central areas of the country, it would be possible to reach a better understanding of both shamanism and contemporary society, overcoming essentialist views.

Keywords Shaman. Japanese shamanism. Discourse analysis. Polythetic class. Contemporary Japan.

1 Introduction

Massimo Raveri has opened up several paths for those who, especially in Italy, are interested in the anthropological study of Japanese religions. His prose and tone have always been able to captivate the reader/listener's attention, making him/her eager to learn what comes next and what lies behind the narrative. No wonder, then, that in 2006 a lecture which Raveri gave in Bologna, where I was in my first year of university, opened my eyes and mind, making me aspire for more knowledge in the field of religious studies, especially with regard to the role of the shamanic actor.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2021-01-14 | Accepted 2021-03-05 | Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/007

What follows thus stems from two main aspects of Raveri's work: on the one hand, I will set out from his studies on *itako* イタコ (blind female shamans) and on forms of direct communication between humans and other-than-human beings; on the other hand, I will refer to his interest in how contemporary religiosity is being shaped through the use of different media and different languages. In his works and researches, Raveri emphasises the need to take into account narratives and images produced and spread through the most advanced technologies and media in each particular period of time.[1]

At the root of this paper there lies a third aspect indebted to Massimo Raveri's work and insights, namely the theoretical concept of polythetic classification, which enables the scholar to overcome the risk of essentialism and universalism, a risk so keenly felt in the field of shamanism studies.

The concept of 'polythetic class' was borrowed from the domain of the natural sciences by anthropologist Rodney Needham, who applied it – together with Wittgensteins's concept of family resemblances[2] – to anthropology. His aim was to define a category characterised by the fact that, in his words,

> among the members of such a class there is a complex network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing; sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. (Needham 1975, 350)

In other words, each member of a class conceived in this way must possess certain characteristics, but none of these must necessarily be present in every member of the class itself. Presenting the benefits of such a classification, Needham explains that

> [polythetic classes] are likely to accommodate better than monothetic the variegation of social phenomena: they have [...] a high content of information, and they carry less risk of an arbitrary exclusion of significant features. (358)

Moreover, we must bear in mind that, as underlined by Fitz John Porter Poole, a polythetic way of conceiving reality

1 During his class in History of Modern and Contemporary Japanese Thought for MA students at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, great attention was paid to the topic of the relationship between media and religion. The same theme was mentioned during a seminar Raveri co-organized in 2016, "Languages of the Absolute", which resulted in a publication (Raveri, Tarca 2017).

2 It must be noted that Jonathan Z. Smith has been critical of Needham's combination of Wittgenstein's family resemblances with the concept of polythetic class, since the two stem from different premises and different fields. See, for example, Smith 1982, 1-18; 2000.

> is sufficiently flexible to accommodate new knowledge without the monothetic necessity of modifying definitions and redrawing boundaries every time an anomaly arises. (Poole 1986, 427)

In studies on shamanism and shamanic actors, such an approach would be essential and could allow us to bypass the problems raised by the best-known and most widely used definition of the word 'shaman', namely that provided by Mircea Eliade. The main problem with his definition is the fact that it is monothetic and thus built around what Eliade perceived and conceived as the essence of shamanism, a sort of static and immutable nucleus.

On the contrary, analysing and understanding shamanism as a polythetic class would enable us to give voice to the multiplicity of its aspects and to create a dynamic description, closer to the reality of the practice.

As Wittgenstein wrote in what is probably the most widely quoted part of his work on family resemblances, the strength of a rope lies in the fact that its fibres overlap: there is no need for them to go through the rope's entire length. Applying the metaphor to the definition of what a 'shaman' is and does, in order for the definition to be effective and strong, there is no need for certain elements to be present everywhere and always. It suffices that they be present here and there, and that they overlap and be intertwined.

For these reasons, I believe that studying (Japanese) shamanism as a polythetic class might produce more valuable results than the use of a rigid classification and definition, structurally unable to encompass the variety of actors and practices found on the field.

Raveri offers compelling descriptions of the *itako* and her rituals: through his words one can picture what is going on – the colours, the sounds, the atmosphere, and the participant's reactions. There are two aspects, though, that could be further developed.

The first concerns the use of the term 'Altered States of Consciousness' (ASC), which is problematic since it depends on the absence of a clear definition of the term 'consciousness'. As a consequence of this vagueness, it is also difficult to define what can be considered an alteration of consciousness: for example, can we describe sleep and dreams as altered states of consciousness?

Looking for a way to solve the problem, some scholars have proposed reading the acronym differently.

Ruth-Inge Heinze, for instance, has chosen to use the word 'alternate' instead of 'altered', since

> the term 'altered states of consciousness' carries negative connotations […] while the term 'alternate states of consciousness' better describes the progression of states which an individual experiences in descending or ascending order. (Heinze 1991, 159-60)

The problem of the word 'consciousness', though, remains as she does not provide a clear definition of the term.

A better solution is the one advanced by Graham Harvey, who suggests reading ASC as an acronym for 'Adjusted Styles of Communication':

> In contrast with the common claims that shamanism is fundamentally a matter of achieving, controlling and utilizing altered states of consciousness (ASC), it is preferable to think of shamans as adjusting their styles of communication. In animist cultures, shamans are (among other things) ritual leaders who mediate with other-than-human persons by means of respectful etiquette. The advantages of this reconfiguration of 'ASC' are that it avoids claims about individuals' immediate experiences (which are likely to be inaccessible) and focuses attention on shamanic practices, actions, or performances – which are central to the concerns of those who employ shamans and may be seen as signs of the relationship between shamans and those who possess or help them. (Harvey, Wallis 2010, 14)

Shifting our attention away from the individual experience of the alteration of consciousness (which – as already noted – cannot easily be defined), the claim that the defining characteristic of shamans is the use of a particular style of communication enabling them to mediate with other-than-human entities seems quite reasonable, especially if one considers contemporary shamanic practices.

A second step, which can lead the research on Japanese shamanic actors to broaden and deepen our knowledge and comprehension of the topic, concerns the view and the description of the shaman as 'marginal'.

This is evident in many studies, where the shaman is perceived as a liminal figure, marginal to social life. Lori Meeks has made it one of her aims to show that this perception and description of the *miko* 巫女 – the term mostly used to refer to Japanese shamanesses – in relation to pre-modern Japan is highly stereotypical and that, instead, the *miko* was everything but marginal to the social and religious sphere.

The reason that explains why such prejudice is still present in many works by different scholars has to do with the lack of in-depth studies on the role and characteristics of shamanic actors in pre-modern Japan. As Meeks shows, this is the consequence of two main historical facts: on the one hand, *miko* have not left any sources from which we can now reconstruct their activities. Moreover, it is necessary to bear in mind that the role of shamanic actors strictly complied with codes and rules from the late Nara period through the Meiji Restoration when practices and beliefs were banned as superstitions, to the Constitution of 1947, which granted religious freedom, thus also allowing the shamanic practices which had previously been suppressed.

As a result, the majority of studies on Japanese shamans have contributed to spreading the view that such practices have remained homogeneous and unchanged since prehistoric times, thus consolidating two ideas:

> (1) the idea that Japan has a timeless 'folk religion' comprised of ill-defined superstitions practiced in rural areas, and (2) that this folk religion can be neatly separated from the more intellectual and theoretically systematic traditions of Confucianism and Buddhism. (Meeks 2011, 210)

An accurate historical reconstruction of the role and characteristics of the *miko*, therefore, would help lend substance and depth to the various practices and actors involved. It would promote a broader understanding of the topic, also by illustrating the relationships established in the social and religious spheres in each of the historical periods under investigation. This would help us move beyond static and flat descriptions, making room for the multifaceted complexity of shamanic practices.

Meeks moves towards this goal by analysing various sources to understand the role of *miko*, since – as previously noted – they did not write about their activities and thoughts.

> Evidence of their activities, then, must be gleaned from third-party sources: from literary and visual sources that depict *miko*, for example, or from institutional records, state histories, or courtier journals that mention them. The study of *miko* in premodern Japan thus requires scholars to reach beyond the traditional boundaries of religious studies, to consider large bodies of literature, and to search through relatively obscure or unexamined records. (Meeks 2011, 212)

Meeks considers many sources clearly showing that the *miko* was neither marginal to social life nor to the religious sphere, where she actively cooperated with other actors, such as Buddhist monks.

Meeks' study should be taken as a reminder of the need to always consider each object of inquiry in relation to historical, socio-cultural and economic processes, to avoid essentialist analyses, and to fully consider the web of relations with other actors and objects.

2 Analysing Shamanism in Japan as Multiple Discourses

In order to study (contemporary) shamanism without the risk of producing essentialist and static descriptions, a useful theoretical framework could be the one offered by discursive approaches to religion, in the specific form of critical discourse analysis. Broadly speaking, the aim is to show how concepts taken for granted – such as that of 'shamanism' – are, in fact, nothing but historical constructs. A universal form of shamanism does not (and cannot) exist. Therefore, instead of trying to define what shamanism is and means universally, it is more fruitful to analyse what people, in a specific historical and cultural context, think it is and what meanings they assign to it. This will lead us to consider the various discourses produced in different times and spaces and to analyse "the rules and dynamics of attributing meaning to texts and concepts and of establishing shared knowledge (explicit or tacit) in a discourse community" (von Stuckrad, Wijsen 2016, 2).

The term 'discourse' is understood here in light of Kocku von Stuckrad's definition:

> A discourse is a communicative structure that organizes knowledge in a given community; it establishes, stabilizes, and legitimizes systems of meaning and provides collectively shared orders of knowledge in an institutionalized social ensemble. Statements, utterances, and opinions about a specific topic, systematically organized and repeatedly observable, form a discourse. (von Stuckrad 2015, 433)

My suggestion, then, is to demarcate and critically study the various discourses on contemporary shamans, while always being conscious of their historicity.

> What a group of people in a given situation regards as accepted knowledge is by no means arbitrary; it is the result of discursive formations that critical scholarship can reconstruct and interpret. (Von Stuckrad 2013, 12)

In doing this, since discourse is an analytical category, the role of the scholar in delimiting its boundaries should not be forgotten.

One last key point to consider when engaging in critical discourse analysis is the fact that "there is a reality – physical and social – *outside* of discourse that is reproduced and changed discursively" (Hjelm 2011, 140; emphasis in original). It is necessary, therefore, to also investigate the (power) relations between the specific discourse under study and the social, economic and political context.

This approach to the topic of (Japanese contemporary) shamanism will reveal the existence of two main broad categories of discourses,

and the mutual relationship between them. The first category comprises discourses produced in academia, while the second is characterised by discourses created outside the academic context by practitioners, their clients, artists, or the media. It is important to know and analyse both, if possible simultaneously, especially because discourses in the second category usually depend on those in the first, which are commonly regarded as possessing a symbolic capital with the power to legitimate every discursive formation.

From this symbolic capital a hegemonic power derives that it is necessary to acknowledge. One of the main aims of a critical discourse analysis of this topic should be to show that practices which are considered and described as 'fake/inauthentic' by some scholars need to be taken into account in order to reach a better understanding of what is going on in the contemporary world.

A reflection on the terminology used is also required: 'shaman' and 'shamanism' can only be employed as academic tools, as heuristic concepts to describe certain actors and practices.

Shamanism can thus be analysed as a wide category composed of multiple discourses – produced in different historical, social and cultural contexts – that might overlap and intermingle. It is the scholar's responsibility to represent these multiple realities that exist simultaneously and that are created by the term 'shaman'.

In order to identify and illustrate the elements characterising the discourses in question and to reconstruct the processes of formation and legitimation of knowledge, it may be fruitful to combine the theoretical approach of discourse analysis with the method of multi-sited ethnography outlined by George Marcus, who writes:

> Ethnography moves from its conventional single-site location, contextualized by macro-constructions of a larger social order, such as the capitalist world system, to multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies such as the 'local' and the 'global', the 'lifeworld' and the 'system'. (Marcus 1995, 95)

What the ethnographer must do, in Marcus' view, is to follow people, things, ideas and relationships across different sites. However, I acknowledge that, as other scholars have argued, Marcus' multi-sited approach is problematic in its presupposition of the existence of a whole that can be encompassed by studying its parts. What an ethnographer can do is consider the complexity of reality as such, without attempting to reduce or simplify it. Not simplifying complexity, therefore, means maintaining an awareness of the network in which everything exists and of the elements that are part of it, as well as of the inevitable partiality and arbitrariness of one's vision. Marcus' approach does not address the issue of the inevitable role of the ethnographer in choosing and circumscribing the boundaries of his/her

fields. To solve this problem, Matei Candea suggests reframing the method by substituting the term 'multi-sited' with 'bounded field-site' or 'arbitrary location', since "the relevant boundaries to the analysis are not fixed a priori, they are 'discovered' on the ground" (Candea 2007, 171). With these improvements, the ethnographic method designed by Marcus can effectively be used to study the various discourses on shamanism, considering different media, texts, and contexts as multiple sites of observation and participation.

From the earliest studies on Japanese shamanism, scholars have focused their attention and efforts on those actors found in the extreme peripheries of the country. It was there that Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu found what they thought to be the true essence of Japanese spirituality, and where Hori Ichirō himself went in search of those characteristics that he thought were once common throughout the archipelago. The centre of the country, on the contrary, has been under-studied and under-represented by scholars, being perceived as a modern and technological place where a loss of 'tradition' had inevitably taken place. However, it is clear that the centre has produced – and continues to produce – discourses on shamans, which need to be taken into account if one is to truly understand the meaning of the word 'shaman' in contemporary Japan and what practices are offered and sought.

Researching shamanism in contemporary Japan thus requires us to draw a distinction between what happens in the centre and in the peripheries, but, at the same time, it is essential to acknowledge that the two contexts are part of the same network and share a close relationship.

3 Researching the Discourse on Shamans in Peripheral Areas

As mentioned before, discourses on Japanese shamans produced by scholars, both within and outside Japan, have mainly focused on the situation in peripheral areas of the country, namely Tōhoku and the Ryūkyū Islands. Consequently, the main actors recognised and defined as 'shamanic' in both regions are well represented in literature from the fields of religious studies and anthropology, although it must be noted that there are very few recent contributions.

Concerning the northern periphery, it is the *itako* who, since the sixties, is the most studied and researched actor.[3] Conversely, the shamanic figure that has captured the interest of scholars in the south-

3 See, for example, Hirayama 2005; Ivy 1995; Kawamura 1994; 1999; 2003; 2006; Knecht 2004; Miller 1993; Murakami 2017; Naumann 1992; Ōmichi 2017; Sasamori 1995; Satō 1981.

ern islands is the *yuta* ユタ.[4] We should bear in mind that the terms *itako* and *yuta* are simply the most commonly used: there are other terms used to refer to similar practitioners in the two geographical contexts. Concerning the Ryūkyū, it is also necessary to consider the fact that, alongside with *yuta*, other female religious specialists are active with similar roles, although they are usually not defined as 'shamans' by scholars, who prefer to use terms such as 'priestess', since they do not experience possession or ecstasy and their main role is to perform rituals to maintain the connection between the community and its natural environment, imbued with divine characteristics. Outside the academic world, however, these practitioners are sometimes referred to as 'shamans', which shows the overlap of the two terms and roles. In exploring the formation of discourses on shamans this (mis)understanding should also be considered.

Whereas in the northern part of the country the number of shamanic actors is rapidly decreasing, in the southern peripheries, although certain islands are losing their spiritual specialists, others are witnessing an increase in the number of shamans. This often occurs in forms that differ from what is considered to constitute the 'tradition', as Shiotsuki shows (Shiotsuki 2012, 271-423). If one wishes to research the discourse on shamans in the peripheral areas of the country, it is thus necessary not only to explore and deepen the discourse built around the more traditional actors, but also to analyse and represent the new forms of practice that are emerging, and which entail the use of new technologies and the re-creation of roles, rituals and definitions.

The latest study on the discourse on *itako* by Ōmichi Haruka (2017) should be taken as an example of how to effectively conduct a discursive study of the topic. Indeed, it is fundamental to also take into account – as Ōmichi does – the representations of shamans provided by magazines, TV programs, advertisements, books, Internet forums and every other possible media to understand the processes of construction of specific meanings and knowledge, as well as the processes of legitimation of such figures. Shiotsuki too has followed the same path, exploring the way literature and films portray shamanism in Okinawa (see, for example, Shiotsuki 2010). This approach should not be limited to the analysis of discourses in the peripheries, but should characterise the analysis of urban shamans as well.

Concerning Tōhoku, further research needs to be done to determine if, and in case how, the discourse on shamans changed after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. This would undoubtedly increase our understanding of the shamanic role in contemporary society.

4 See, for example, Kamata 1966; Lebra 1966; Sakurai 1973; Sasaki 1984; Shiotsuki 2012; Sered 1999; Takahashi 2005; Takiguchi 1987; 1990; Wacker 2003.

Moreover, to effectively study and represent the multiple discourses developed around the figure of the shaman in the peripheries, it might be interesting to shift our focus from Tōhoku and the Ryūkyū Islands to other peripheral contexts that are currently under-represented, such as Hokkaidō, Kyūshū and Shikoku. Starting with an investigation of what/who people there think shamans are, it would be possible to work on the reconstruction of the genealogy of these beliefs, adding nuances to our understanding of shamanic practices in Japan.

Researching the discourse on shamanism in the peripheries requires an analysis not only of geographical peripheries, but also of socio-cultural ones, such as the Korean communities active on the Ikoma mountains near Osaka, in Kansai. It would be most interesting and useful to see how their shamanic rituals are performed, and to assess if and how they differ from the rituals currently performed in South Korea, and – if so – what impact they have had on the Japanese religious sphere in the area. A study that goes in this direction, though not focusing only on shamanic practices, has been produced by the Sociological Association for the Study of Religion in Kansai (Shūkyō shakaigaku no kai 2012; see also Miyashita 2015).

Through a critical analysis of the multiple discourses produced and diffused in (and from) the peripheries – an analysis that must take account of the relation between these various discourses and the specific historical-cultural contexts – it is possible, therefore, to trace the genealogy of certain elements and understand what people in different times and places consider relevant to the formation of those same discourses.

4 Researching the Discourse on Shamans in Central Areas

The discourse on shamans at the centre of the country is still under-studied and under-represented, despite the apparent popularity of the topic among people interested in the 'alternative practices' offered by many practitioners in the so-called spiritual sphere.

As in the peripheries, at the centre it is possible to recognize multiple discourses on shamans. Researching this field means giving space to the representations and practices of two main categories of actors. The first is characterised by shamans who perform rituals in urban contexts following a 'tradition' which they have almost invariably adapted to some degree. This is the case with Nakai Shigeno, a practitioner active in Ōsaka until the late eighties and interviewed by Anne Bouchy, who chose not to define her by the term 'shaman', using instead the emic term *dai* ダイ, meaning 'support' and 'substitute' (Bouchy 1992).

The second category includes practitioners who have developed their own way of being shamans by studying under other shamans,

usually outside Japan, and/or by learning various spiritual techniques through workshops and courses. Examples of these actors can be found in the study of spiritual therapists by Ioannis Gaitanidis and Murakami Aki (2014). In this category, it would be important to assess the impact of the FSS (Foundation for Shamanic Studies) founded by Michael Harner in 1979, with the aim of "preserving, researching, and teaching shamanic knowledge", which he has redefined as Core-Shamanism.[5] For about 25 years the FSS has been active in Japan, where Kevin Turner, Director for Asia,[6] organized workshops and worked as a shamanic counsellor, mainly in the Kansai region, before moving to Bali in 2014. When I met him in 2013, he told me that approximately 500 Japanese people had participated in his workshops over the years and that around 10% of them were truly interested in practicing shamanism, a figure that needs to be confirmed by ethnographic research.

It is especially this second category that scholars have failed to consider and investigate, even though the practitioners themselves seem to be aware of the scientific definition of shamanism and are accordingly presenting themselves as shamans. The category identified in the field of anthropological and religious studies has been (and is being) adopted both by actors who define themselves by using such term and by a group of people who share the same knowledge and who thus recognise themselves as 'shamans'.

It is unquestionably the case that urban shamans do not constitute a majority and that their knowledge and practices cannot be considered mainstream, but the same goes for shamans and their communities in the peripheries.

However, if we are to better understand both shamanism and contemporary society, we have to consider this aspect as well. The application of critical discourse analysis to this topic will reveal the entanglements with other discursive strands, such as those that form the discourses on spirituality, healing, and magic, to name a few.

For this reason, when doing research on urban shamans, it is necessary to also investigate the characteristics of the 'new spirituality movements and culture', to use Shimazono's definition (Shimazono 2004, 275-305). Urban shamanism shares many features of these movements and this culture, the main one being a focus on the individual and his/her spiritual empowerment and transformation.

Alongside the two categories of urban shamans, there is another aspect that emerges in the contemporary context: the techniques and roles of 'traditional' shamanic figures are linked to artistic creations and performances, as I have shown in another paper (Rivadossi 2018). Musicians, dancers, poets, and artists seem to have taken up

5 https://www.shamanism.org/.

6 https://www.shamanism-asia.com/kevin/.

Mircea Eliade's invitation to adopt (and – we might say – adapt) the shamanic role (Eliade 1976, 78). As a necessary consequence, analysing shamans in central areas also means researching the discourses produced in artistic fields, through the mass media, and through the various forms of so-called popular culture (see, for example, Staemmler 2011). Without an analysis of this sort, the description of what a shaman is believed to be and do in contemporary Japan would be incomplete and detached from the reality of the practices.

However, researching the multiple discourses on shamans at the centre of the country does not mean regarding them as separate and distinct from discourses on shamans in the peripheries: the two are very much intertwined, and depend on a similar understanding of the meaning of the shamanic role. Moreover, urban shamans derive certain practices and characteristics from shamans from the peripheries, which – as shown before – are considered the heirs to and custodians of a 'tradition' that gives them authority and validates their practices.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this brief analysis has been to propose an effective strategy to study shamanic actors in contemporary Japan, by suggesting what gaps left by previous research should be filled in order to reach a wider comprehension of the phenomenon.

First of all, it is necessary to understand the category of 'shamanism' as a polythetic one, capable of accommodating its various forms – built by drawing upon common elements – across different geographical and historical contexts. This approach will dissolve the artificial and misleading distinction between 'true' shamanisms and 'fake' ones and will enable scholars to finally see that the two are part of the same thread. To achieve this, it is important to discuss the terminology used in the field, such as the label 'Altered States of Consciousness'. The main constitutive element for both 'traditional' shamans and metropolitan ones is the fact that they can (or, better, are believed to be able to) enable communication between humans and other-than-human entities. What thus characterises the shamanic role is the ability to know and use the style of communication required to perform the rituals sought by their clients. For this reason, it is more fruitful to shift our attention from the shaman's consciousness to his/her role in the community.

To dismiss essentialist descriptions, it is necessary to consider the specific discourse on shamans in relation to historical, sociocultural and economic processes. Acknowledgement of the existence of a web of relations involving actors, objects and practices should serve as the foundation for this kind of study. The theoreti-

cal framework that can enable such a task is critical discourse analysis, which makes it possible to analyse the multiple discourses on shamans produced and shared in contemporary Japan, both in the peripheries and at the centre, with special reference to the various media and tools used.

If what has been suggested with regard to contemporary reality were applied to other historical periods, our comprehension of Japanese shamanism would surely be enhanced.

Bibliography

Bouchy, A. (1992). *Les Oracles de Shirataka. Vie d'une femme specialiste de la possession dans le Japon du XXe siècle*. Areles: Éditions Philippe Picquier.

Candea, M. (2007). "Arbitrary Locations: In Defence of the Bounded Field-site". *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13, 167-84. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2007.00419.x.

Eliade, M. (1976). *Giornale*. Transl. by L. Aurigemma. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri. Transl. of: *Fragments d'un journal*. Paris: Gallimard, 1973.

Gaitanidis, I.; Murakami, A. (2014). "From Miko to Spiritual Therapist: Shamanistic Initiations in Contemporary Japan". *Journal of Religion in Japan*, 3, 1-35. https://doi.org/10.1163/22118349-00301001.

Harvey, G.; Wallis, R. (2010). *The A to Z of Shamanism*. Lanham (Maryland); Toronto; Plymouth (UK): Scarecrow Press.

Heinze, R.I. (1991). *Shamans of the 20th Century*. New York: Irvington Publishers.

Hirayama Shin 平山信 (2005). *Fujo no jinruigaku. 'Kamigatari' no kiroku to dentatsu* 巫女の人類学—「神語り」の記録と伝達 (Anthropology of *fujo*: Recording and Transmission of 'Words of Gods'). Tōkyō: Nihon Tosho Sentā.

Hjelm, T. (2011). "Discourse Analysis". Stausberg, M.; Engles, S. (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. London; New York: Routledge, 134-50. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203154281.ch2_3.

Ivy, M. (1995). "Ghostly Epiphanies: Recalling the Dead on Mount Osore". Ivy, M., *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 141-91. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226388342.001.0001.

Kamata, H. (1966). "Daughters of the Gods: Shaman Priestesses in Japan and Okinawa", in "Folk Cultures of Japan and East Asia", monogr. no., *Monumenta Nipponica Monographs*, 25, 56-73.

Kawamura, K. (1994). "The Life of a Shamaness: Scenes from the Shamanism of Northeastern Japan". Inoue, N. (ed.), *Folk Beliefs in Modern Japan*. Tokyo: Institute of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University Press, 92-124.

Kawamura, K. (1999). "Deities and Female Shamans: Gender and the Careers of Possessing Spirits". Wakita, H. (ed.), *Gender and Japanese History: Religion and Custom, Body and Sexuality*. Osaka: Osaka University Press, 121-43.

Kawamura, K. (2003). "A Female Shaman's Mind and Body, and Possession". *Asian Folklore Studies*, 62(2), 257-89.

Kawamura Kunimitsu 川村邦光 (2006). *Miko no minzokugaku* 巫女の民俗学—〈女の力〉の近代 (Folklore of *miko*: Modern 'Women's Power'). Tōkyō: Seikyusha.

Knecht, P. (2004). "Kuchiyose. Enacting the Encounter of This World with the Other World". Formanek, S.; LaFleur, W.R. (eds), *Practicing the Afterlife: Perspectives from Japan*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 179-201.

Lebra, W.P. (1966). *Okinawan Religion: Belief, Ritual and Social Structure*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Marcus, G.E. (1995). "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography". *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95-117. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523.

Meeks, L. (2011). "The Disappearing Medium: Reassessing the Place of Miko in the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan", in "New Studies in Japanese Medieval Religions", monogr. no., *History of Religions*, 50(3), 208-60. https://doi.org/10.1086/656611.

Miller, A.L. (1993). "Myth and Gender in Japanese Shamanism: The *Itako* of Tohoku". *History of Religions*, 32(4), 343-67. https://doi.org/10.1086/463346.

Miyashita Ryōko 宮下良子 (2015). "'Chōsendera' kara 'Zainichi-korean jiin' e. Koroniaru/posuto koroniatu jōkyō ni okeru zainichi korian no shūkyōteki jisseki" 「朝鮮寺」から「在日コリアン寺院」へ—コロニアル/ポストコロニアル状況における在日コリアンの宗教的実践 (From 'Korean Temples' to 'Temples for Koreans Living in Japan': Religious Practices of Koreans Living in Japan in Colonial and Postcolonial Times). *Jinbun gakuhō* 人文學報, 108, 49-63. https://doi.org/10.14989/204510.

Naumann, N. (1992). "The Itako of North-Eastern Japan and their Chants". *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur-und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, 152, 21-37.

Needham, R. (1975). "Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences". *Man*, 10(3), 349-69. https://doi.org/10.2307/2799807.

Ōmichi, H. (2016). "The '*Itako*' as Mass Culture: The Occult Boom of the 1970s and 1980s". *Journal of Religion in Japan*, 5, 22-46. https://doi.org/10.1163/22118349-00501001.

Ōmichi Haruka 大道晴香 (2017). *'Itako' no tanjō. Masuedia to shūkyō bunka*「イタコ」の誕生−マスメディアと宗教文化 (The Birth of '*Itako*': Mass-media and Religious Culture). Tōkyō: Kōbundō.

Poole, F.J.P. (1986). "Metaphors and Maps: Towards Comparison in the Anthropology of Religion". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 54(3), 411-57. https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/liv.3.411.

Raveri, M. (2006). *Itinerari nel sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*. 2a ed. Venezia: Cafoscarina.

Raveri, M. (2014). *Il pensiero giapponese classico*. Torino: Einaudi.

Raveri, M.; Tarca, L.V. (a cura di) (2017). *I linguaggi dell'assoluto*. Milano: Mimesis Edizioni.

Rivadossi, S. (2018). "Artistic Representations of Urban Shamans in Contemporary Japan: Texts, Inter-Actions and Efficacy". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, 54, 513-34. https://doi.org/10.30687/annor/2385-3042/2018/01/024.

Sakurai Tokutarō 桜井徳太郎 (1973). *Okinawa no shāmanizumu. Minkan fujo no seitai to kinō* 沖縄のシャーマニズム−民間巫女お生態と機能 (Okinawan Shamanism: Life and Role of Popular *Fujo*). Tōkyō: Kōbundō.

Sasaki, K. (1984). "Spirit Possession as an Indigenous Religion in Japan and Okinawa". *Senri Ethnographical Studies*, 11, 75-84.

Sasamori, T. (1995). "The Use of Music in the Ritual Practices of the *Itako*, a Japanese Shaman". *Shaman*, 3(1), 41-54.

Satō, N. (1981). "The Initiation of the Religious Specialists. *Kamisan*: A Few Observations". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 8(3-4), 149-86. https://doi.org/10.18874/jjrs.8.3-4.1981.149-186.

Sered, S. (1999). *Women of the Sacred Groves: Divine Priestesses of Okinawa*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shimazono, S. (2004). *From Salvation to Spirituality: Popular Religious Movements in Modern Japan*. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press.

Shiotsuki Ryōko 塩月亮子 (2010). "Sai-majutsukasuru sekai to gendai Okinawa bungaku. 'Shāmanizumu bungaku' no shosō" 再魔術化する世界と現代沖縄文学—「シャーマニズム文学」の諸相 (The Re-Magicalized World and Modern Okinawan Literature: Some Aspects of 'Shamanistic Literature'). Kato Hiroshi 加藤宏; Takeyama Umenori 武山梅乗 (eds), *Sengo, shōsetsu, Okinawa. Bungaku ga kataru 'shima' no genjitsu* 戦後・小説・沖縄—文学が語る「島」の現実 (Postwar, Novel, Okinawa: The Reality of the 'Island' Narrated in Literature). Tōkyō: Kanae shobō, 147-83.

Shiotsuki Ryōko (2012). *Okinawa shāmanizumu no kindai* 沖縄シャーマニズムの近代 (The Modernity of Okinawan Shamanism). Tōkyō: Shinwasha.

Shūkyō shakaigaku no kai 宗教社会学の会 (2012). *Seichisaihō. Ikoma no kamigami. Kawariyuku daitoshikinkō no minzokushūkyō* 聖地再訪—生駒の神々—変わりゆく大都市近郊の民俗宗教 (Revisiting Sacred Places: The Gods of Ikoma. Changing Folk Religion in the Suburbs of Metropolitan Areas). Ōsaka: Sōgensha.

Smith, J.Z. (1982). *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, J.Z. (2000). "Classification". Brown, W.; McCutcheon, R.T. (eds), *Guide to the Study of Religion*. London: Cassel, 35-44.

Staemmler, B. (2011). "Imagining Spirit Possession: Mixing Traditions and Current Trends in the Japanese Manga Shaman King". Dawson, A. (ed.), *Summoning the Spirits: Possession and Invocation in Contemporary Religion*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 162-78.

Takahashi Kazumi 高梨一美 (2005). *Okinawa no 'kaminchu'-tachi* 沖縄の「かみんちゅ」たち (The *Kaminchu* of Okinawa). Tōkyō: Iwata Shoin.

Takiguchi, N. (1987). "Miyako Theology: Shaman's Interpretation of Traditional Belief". *Asian Folklore Studies*, 46(1), 3-34. https://doi.org/10.2307/1177883.

Takiguchi, N. (1990). "Liminal Experiences of Miyako Shamans: Reading a Shaman's Diary". *Asian Folklore Studies*, 49(1), 1-38. https://doi.org/10.2307/1177947.

von Stuckrad, K. (2010). "Reflections on the Limits of Reflection: An Invitation to the Discursive Study of Religion". *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 22, 156-69. https://doi.org/10.1163/157006810x512347.

von Stuckrad, K. (2013). "Discursive Study of Religion: Approaches, Definitions, Implications". *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 25, 5-25. https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341253.

von Stuckrad, K. (2015). "Discourse". Segal, R.A.; von Stuckrad, K. (eds), *Vocabulary for the Study of Religion*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 429-38. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004249707_vsr_com_00000042.

von Stuckrad, K.; Wijsen, Frans (2016). "Introduction". Wijsen, F.; von Stuckrad, K. (eds), *Making Religion: Theory and Practice in the Discursive Study of Religion*. Boston: Brill, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004309180.

Wacker, M. (2003). "Onarigami: Holy Women in the Twentieth Century". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 30(3-4), 339-59. https://doi.org/10.18874/jjrs.30.3-4.2003.339-359.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

"And the *zasu* Changed his Shoes": The Resurgence of Combinatory Rituals in Contemporary Japan

Lucia Dolce
SOAS University of London, UK

Abstract It is often assumed that the combinatory practices that have characterised Japanese religious history were wiped away by the separation of Buddhism and Shinto imposed by the Meiji restoration. Yet field evidence attests that *shinbutsu* rituals are still performed today in major Shinto institutions. This paper offers a reflection on the nature of contemporary combinatory rituals through three study cases: rituals that continue premodern traditions at Kasuga and Hiyoshi Taisha; new rituals created to emphasise the combinatory as the proper dimension of religion in Japan; exorcistic rituals recovered as a contribution to the current health emergency.

Keywords Combinatory rituals. Shinbutsu. Hiyoshi Taisha. Iwashimizu Hachimangū. Pilgrimage. Goryōe.

1 Introduction

The academic discourse on *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 (lit. 'association of *kami* and buddhas') has generally interpreted the combinatory systems that shaped Japanese religion as a feature of the premodern world. Post-war scholarship

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2021-01-26 | Accepted 2021-04-06 | Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/008

tended to see the symbiotic relationship between Buddhism and what we now call Shinto as characteristic of the medieval period. More recent research, in Japan as well as in Europe and North America, has demonstrated that it pervaded Japanese life throughout premodern history, with different dynamics depending on the specific historical circumstances.[1] However, both perspectives maintain that the ritual, spatial and artistic world of combinatory beliefs was wiped away by the forced separation of Buddhism and *kami* worship (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離) which occurred in the late 19th century.[2] Often regarded as the beginning of the modern understanding of religion, this separation undoubtedly destroyed many of the places and rituals of the combinatory system. Yet several instances of combinatory practices can still be observed in contemporary Japan.

This study offers a reflection on the continuity of institutional combinatory liturgies as well as the creation of new forms of combinatory ritual which has occurred in recent years. My concern here rests with the official and institutional level of ritual performance, rather than with popular expressions of combinatory beliefs. Other scholars have highlighted the persistence of practices of combinatory nature in everyday life, arguing that ordinary women and men have continued to turn to deities for practical benefits, indifferent to their formal genealogy as *kami* or buddhas (or other beings in between these two main categories of deities).[3] This emphasis on private purposes, however, shifts the focus to the informal and individual and obliterates the fact that the combinatory systems of premodern Japan were first of all sophisticated elite creations that legitimated institutions.

While the shrines and temples that were once part of a single economic, social, administrative (and liturgical) system are now independent bodies, their efforts to continue, reinstitute or invent performances that emphatically display the high clergy of shrines and temples next to each other in a complex interaction of gestures, objects, colours and sounds suggest a rethinking of their history and the fragile success of their modern identities. Although this is in many ways an unexpected development, it forces us to interrogate the staging of once-rejected hybridity as well as its consequences for the definition of the 'combinatory'. What has triggered these remnants of

1 The space of this article does not allow for a general discussion of the meaning and history of combinatory systems, on which an extensive literature exists in Japanese and in English. See, for instance, Murayama 1957; Matsunaga 1969; Yoshie 1996; Satō 1998; Teeuwen, Rambelli 2003; Faure, Como, Iyanaga 2006-2007; Doruche, Mitsuhashi 2013; Grapard 2016.

2 On the separation policy of the Meiji government see the classic studies by Tamamuro (1977), which includes the separation edicts, and Yasumaru (1979).

3 Reader and Tanabe (1999) have demonstrated this point with a wealth of examples.

the past? Are institutions formally separated ill at ease with abiding by the exclusivistic stance that self-determination has implied? Are these rituals nostalgic moments of recollection of a more prosperous past and an attempt to capitalise on cultural heritage to improve visibility? Or do they point to a different logic of understanding of the religious, which necessitates revisiting the notion of 'combination' as a historically confined phenomenon, overcome by modernity and the adoption of western (i.e. monolithic) models of religion?

My analysis was set in motion by field evidence and has been emboldened by an arguably progressive amplification of the phenomenon that has occurred in the last two decades.[4] A comprehensive analysis that contextualises and questions such occurrences cannot be undertaken here. This paper offers only snapshots of different case studies to give a sense of the diverse contexts in which contemporary *shinbutsu* practices are upheld. I firstly survey traditional Buddhist rituals performed at two grand shrines (*taisha*) of the Kinai region, well-known until the Meiji period for their century-long traditions of combinatory practices. Secondly, I explore new associations between a shrine and a temple of the Kyoto area which were not linked in any significant way in the past, and probe into a newly created *shinbutsu* pilgrimage route in the Kinai area which presents itself as the embodiment of Japanese spirituality. In conclusion, I consider the reenactment of a long-forgotten Buddhist ritual in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2 Continuity: Buddhist Rituals at Shrines

One of the lasting consequences of the Meiji-period separation campaign undoubtedly was the redefinition of official shrines as solely *kami* sites. The elimination of Buddhist objects, rituals and clergy from shrines was central to the process of transformation of the religious landscape and eventually led to the constitution of Shinto as the distinct religion we encounter today. Shinto institutions that had been emblematic of the combinatory system were more affected by its dissolution. Yet a close analysis of their liturgical calendar attests to the performance of associative rituals that seem to reverse the implementation of *shinbutsu bunri* and challenge the official discourse on Shinto. Liturgies conducted at two prominent institutions

4 This article presents material from an on-going long-term project. Early findings were presented at a panel on revisiting the Meiji restoration at the 2007 AAR and at an international workshop on revisiting syncretism at SOAS in 2011. Repeated fieldwork has been facilitated by a number of funding bodies, whose support I gratefully acknowledge: Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Ritsumeikan University, Meiji jingu and Kanazawa University.

in Nara and Kyoto, Kasuga Taisha and Hiyoshi Taisha, illustrate these dynamics. Both shrines are now part of the national umbrella organisation for shrines, Jinja Honchō – a conservative organisation that seeks to maintain an identity for Shinto predicated on modern assumptions of differentiation. The combinatory rituals I shall analyse have been restored at different times of the postwar history of the shrines. Crucially, they are maintained not as occasional or minor liturgies, but as significant annual events (*reisai* 例祭) inscribed in the liturgical calendar of the shrines (*nenju gyōji* 年中行事). As such, these are solemn performances defined by a protocol established centuries ago (albeit abbreviated or modified in some details). These are by no means 'popular' rituals that cater to the need of devotees, even though recent media attention has made the wider public more aware of their occurrence.

2.1 The Visitation Ceremony at Kasuga Taisha

The beginning of the new year at Kasuga Taisha is marked by an official visit of Kōfukuji monks to the Kasuga deities (*Kasuga shasan shiki* 春日社参式).[5] It takes place on 2 January, the day in which the *kami* are presented the first offerings of the year (*nikku hajime shiki* 日供始式). Hence this important dedication ceremony may be considered to consist of a Shinto and a Buddhist segment. At the start of the visitation high clerics from both institutions progress together towards the main building of the shrine. The first step of the ritual is performed by Kasuga priests: at the sound of *kagaku* 雅楽, priests offer vegetables and fruits to the *kami*, then the head priest recites a *norito*. After that, Kōfukuji monks take the stage over: sitting in front of the four shrines of the Kasuga deity they offer the *kami* a reading of the *Heart Sutra* (*Hannya shingyō* 般若心経), followed by the recitation of a hymn called *Thirty Verses on Consciousness-only* (*Yuishiki sanjūju* 唯識三十頌). At the end of the liturgy at the main building, the monks visit the small shrines (*sessha* 摂社) within the Kasuga precincts and proceed to Wakamiya jinja, where they again recited the *Heart Sutra* to the young Kasuga deity.[6] The visitation is a public event and is covered in local and national media. In 2020, for instance, *Asahi shinbun* reported that the current *gūji* 宮司, Kasan-no-in Hirotada 花山院弘匡, accompanied by seven Kasuga priests, progressed solemnly in one

5 For convenience's sake throughout this article I shall use the term 'monks' to indicate Buddhist clergy, although in modern Japan Buddhist clerics do not observe celibacy nor usually live as monastics and therefore may more appropriately be called 'priests'.

6 See Kasuga's website: `https://www.kasugataisha.or.jp/calendar/winter01`. A 2010 NHK short documents that year's visitation: `https://www2.nhk.or.jp/archives/michi/cgi/detail.cgi?dasID=D0004500425_00000`.

line with the current abbot (*kanshu* 貫首) of Kōfukuji, Moriya Eishun 森谷英俊, and nine senior monks from the temple.[7]

The recitation of a *sutra* in front of *kami* may be regarded as the quintessential form of *shinbutsu* practice. In premodern times it reiterated the close connection between *kami* and buddhas and at the same time affirmed the nature of the *kami* as beings who benefited from listening to the Buddhist teachings and who 'rejoiced in the dharma'. It is one of the earliest attested Buddhist practice for the *kami*. At Kasuga, there is evidence that readings of the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* (*Yuimagyō* 維摩経) were carried out by Kōfukuji monks in front of the four shrines that enshrine the Kasuga deity since 859 (Grapard 1992, 73). Kasuga shrine and Kōfukuji constituted a grand shrine/temple complex from the Nara period throughout the medieval period, and one of the most-studied *shinbutsu* system of premodern Japan. Sponsored by the Fujiwara family, the two parts of the complex had complementary roles: the shrine was devoted to the tutelary and ancestral deities of the Fujiwara, while the temple attended to the memorialisation of Fujiwara members. The importance of Kasuga as a 'national' shrine, however, should not be overlooked: their grand rite, for instance, by the Heian period was sponsored by the state.

While the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* is now replaced by the more widely known *Heart Sutra*, the meaning of a *sutra* recitation as an appropriate oblation to the *kami* is reasserted and indeed amplified by its performance at the moment of the first offerings of the year. By pairing it with the recitation of the *Verses on Consciousness-only*, an expression of the Yogacara notion of reality, the celebrants signal the sectarian position of Kōfukuji as a representative temple of the Hossō school and underline that it is not just a group of monks who reads Buddhist texts to the *kami*, but the monks of Kōfukuji who attend to their tutelary *kami*. The liturgical performance thus serves as a vivid reminder of the institutional links that existed between the shrine and the temple when the management and operational running of the shrines was carried out by temple monks and rituals for the *kami* were often performed by monks designated for that (*shasō* 社僧). In fact, the liturgy is registered in the calendar of yearly events not only of the shrine but also of the temple.[8]

Before the Meiji period Buddhist monks officiated within the shrine every day. The New Year visitation is what is left of the traditional modes of religious interaction. By giving it an official status as

7 *Asahi shinbun*, 3 January 2020: https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASN1231D9N12POMB001.html.

8 See the Kōfukuji's website: https://www.kohfukuji.com/event/kasugashasanshiki. On the Meiji period transformations at Kasuga, see especially Grapard 1992, 249-56.

an annual event with a formal performance, however, the contemporary keepers of the tradition send a clear message to their supporters as well as the political bodies that dictate their identity. Both shrine and temple openly legitimise the event as an enactment of a *shinbutsu* tradition which, they argue, had been the 'natural' (*shizen* 自然) course of events until the Meiji restoration.

2.2 The *Lotus Sutra* Debate at Hiyoshi Taisha

Hiyoshi Taisha is the modern name of Hie jinja, tutelary shrine of Mount Hiei and centre of one of the most powerful combinatory systems of the premodern period, the so-called Sannō Shinto 山王神道. The Hiyoshi complex extends at the foot of the mountain in Sakamoto, on the south-west side of Lake Biwa, and consists of three main areas, today called Higashi Hongū, Nishi hongū, and Hachiōji. It enshrines a group of *kami* collectively called Sannō (lit. 'Mountain King'). Its combinatory identity was defined in the mediaeval period by Tendai monks, who also administered the shrines for most of their history. The shrines were violently affected by Meiji period policies and subjected to profound changes to their identity, from new names for their deities and their buildings, to the stripping down of Buddhist paraphernalia and rites and the disappearance of the Tendai monks from their precincts (Breen, Teuween 2010, 108-22). After World War 2 Hiyoshi Taisha restored some of its premodern rituals.[9] Today it maintains two liturgical moments that reiterate the century-long association with Enryakuji. Both rituals take place at Nishi Hongū, the western compounds of the shrine complex, known in pre-Meiji times as Ōmiya 大宮 (or Ōbie 大比叡), and abode of the main deity of the Sannō group.[10]

The first ritual is a worship liturgy known as *sannō raihaikō* 山王礼拝講 (lit. 'Liturgical Lectures for Sannō'), consisting of a ceremonial debate on the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hōkekyō* 法華経). Every year on 26 May about thirty monks, led by the Tendai *zasu* 座主, abbot of Enryakuji and head of the Tendai school, descend from Enryakuji to perform this liturgy for the Sannō deity. Shrine priests are in attendance. The ritual protocol instructs that priests and monks enter together the shrine precincts, lined up according to ranking, in a procession led by the head priest of Hiyoshi Taisha. They position themselves in

9 Breen and Teeuwen note two occasions before the end of the war when monks from Enryakuji returned to the shrines: in 1937, on the occasion of the celebrations for the funding of Enryakuji, a senior monk visited the shrine; in 1938 a party of monks attended the Sannō festival (Breen, Teeuwen 2010, 124).

10 The status of Ōmiya vis-à-vis the deity of Higashi hongu (Ninomiya) has been debated, but the rank and visual representations of Ōmiya confirm its preeminence in the premodern system.

different areas of the space in front of the main hall: the monks take the central stage in the worship hall, while the priests sit to the left side of the hall as spectators. Invited guests are seated on the opposite side of the worship hall.[11] At the centre of the worship hall, closer to the side that faces the main hall, a high platform is set, flanked by an altar adorned with large candlesticks, flowers and an incense burner: a stand in the middle holds the eight scrolls of the *Lotus Sutra*, which give the liturgy its proper name, *Eight Lectures on the Lotus* (*hokke hakkō* 法華八講); on two opposite sides are the seats for the two main ritualists, the reader and the lecturer **[fig. 1]**.[12] The ceremony begins with the shrine's head priest blessing the ritualists in the worship hall. The priest then climbs the steps of the main hall and recites a *norito* 祝詞 at a small altar placed in front of the inner sanctuary (the curtains of the main hall remain down on this occasion)[13] **[fig. 2]**. The debate on the *Lotus Sutra* then begins. It is conducted by two young monks, who are questioned by their seniors on various doctrinal points informed by the scripture. According to the procedures, the reader declaims the titles of the chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* one by one, while the lecturer gives his interpretation of important passages and answers questions posed by the monks seated around the hall, who act as auditors and interrogators. At intervals during the debate, the monks raise and intone a liturgical hymn, scattering paper flowers or *shikimi* leaves in the hall **[fig. 3]**. Interestingly, the seat at the back of the performing platform, directly in front of the main hall, is left empty. Called *enza* 円座 or *sannōza* 山王座, it is supposed to be occupied by the Ōmiya deity, who thus enjoys the merits of listening to the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*. Priests remain in attendance until the very end. When the ritual is completed, the monks are invited to a banquet to partake of the offerings of food and sake made at the ritual (*naorai* 直会), as it is customary at the conclusion of a *matsuri*.

Before the Meiji restoration the *sannō raihaikō* were held twice a year in the third month. The first, at Ōmiya, was the original ritual, conducted by monks from the Eastern Pagoda quarters of Mt Hiei. The second, at Jūzenji shrine 十禅寺 (now Juge no miya 樹下宮), was a new liturgy created in 1224 by Jien and executed by the monks of

11 This account is based on fieldwork conducted in May 2003. I am grateful to the Tendaishū for an invitation to attend the ritual. This was a rainy day and therefore all monks sat inside the worship hall. On bright days, according to protocol, the monks who are not performing sit in the space between the worship hall and the main hall and exchange seats with their peers when their turn comes.

12 The most used edition of the *Lotus Sutra* in Japan is in eight fascicles, thus one lecture for each fascicle. On the early history of the *hokke hakkō* see Tanabe 1984.

13 Interestingly, the central pillars of the *honden* are decorated with stripes in five colours and the three regalia (*sanshu no shingi* 三種の神璽) are hung on top, the mirror on the one side and the sword and a string of *magatama* on the other (visible in fig. 3).

Figure 1 *Raihaikō*: Platform for debating the *Lotus Sutra* in Nishi hongū's worship hall. Sakamoto, 2003. © Lucia Dolce

Figure 2 Nishi hongū's head priest recites a *norito* before the starting of the Buddhist ritual. Sakamoto, 2003. © Lucia Dolce

Figure 3 Liturgical chanting during the *raihaikō*. Sakamoto, 2003. © Lucia Dolce

Shōreni, Jien's lineage headquarters in Kyoto. After the ceremony was halted by Meiji ideologues, the monks continued to perform it in one of the halls on Mount Hiei, Sanbutsudō 讃仏堂. It was reinstated at Hiyoshi Taisha in 1947, as soon as the shrine regained its autonomy from the government and constituted itself as an independent juridical persona (*shūkyō hōjin* 宗教法人). Today's procedures by and large followed the amendments that had been made when the ritual moved to Sanbutsudō. While in premodern times this was a grand ritual that took as long as four days to complete (two scrolls per day were debated, one in the morning and one in the afternoon), today it lasts less than a full day.[14]

Medieval narratives place the beginning of the performance of the Lotus Lectures at Hie jinja in 1025. That year all trees in the precincts of the shrine complex and the mountain behind it had withered away mysteriously. At a certain point the *kami* of Ōmiya appeared to a Shōgenji priest, Hafuribe Maretō 祝部希遠, and lamented the decline of the dharma on Mount Hiei and the idleness of the monks who had relinquished the study of the scriptures to wear armours.[15] The *kami* threatened to abandon the place because monks were not letting him fulfil his role of protector of the dharma, which he claimed

14 A detailed outline of the history and protocol of the liturgy is in Yamada 1976.

15 The reference is to the growing number of warrior monks (*sōhei*).

Saichō, founder of the Tendai school, had assigned him. This oracle was reported to the monks of the Eastern Pagoda, who were in charge of Ōmiya shrine. To apologise to the *kami* the temple gathered thirty of his most learned monks and organised a debate on each of the twenty-eight chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* at the shrine. Soon after the liturgy the trees revived to their original green, revealing that the *kami* had been pleased (Murayama 1994, 137; Sagai 1992, 122-5). This narrative is significant to understand the relationship between *kami* and Buddhism: it defines the role of the *kami* as guardian of Mount Hiei and it highlights that a Buddhist ritual is needed to appease him and express gratitude for his role in protecting the place as well as the dharma, in this case embodied by the Enryakuji establishment.

Unsurprisingly, the scripture performed is the most important text for the Tendai school, the *Lotus Sutra*. Debating the content of a scripture was not merely a placatory offering. It also was a way for monks to show their knowledge of the doctrine and put into action a mechanism by which *kami* intervention was necessitated, whether to exert ethical control over the monastic community or to be a source of instruction.[16] By the time the *Eight Lectures on the Lotus* were established at the Hie shrines, they had become a popular Buddhist rituals, conducted at temples and shrines as well as private residences. Monastics and lay people believed that the benefits accrued by dedicating a debate on the *Lotus Sutra* were higher than those gained by sponsoring a reading or copying of the *sutra*, given the resources needed to stage it and the preparation demanded to the lecturers. All these factors undoubtedly shaped the meaning of the Lotus Lectures as the most significant offering to the Sannō *kami*. Hiyoshi Taisha today maintains this significance and regards the liturgy as the crystallisation of the intimate relationship between its *kami* and the Buddhist institution on Mount Hiei.

2.3 Hiyoshi Taisha (II). The *Shinji* of Sannō *Matsuri*

Sannōsai 山王祭 is the grand festival of the town of Sakamoto which celebrates the Hie deities. Held every year in the fifth month, it was famous throughout the early modern period for its magnificence, which we find portrayed in artworks and even described by the early Western visitors to Japan, the Jesuits missionaries. Today the festival unfolds over three days, from 12 to 14 April, through discrete

16 Debates performed at other temples illustrate the active role of the *kami*: at Kōfukuji the Kasuga deity is said to instruct the monks on the topic of the debate and the presiding abbot is seen as *kami* in attendance (Matsuo 2009).

segments taking place at different locations within the shrine complex and the town of Sakamoto. Its climax remains the descent of the portable shrines of the seven major Hie deities, carried by local men from Nishi hongū to the Lake Biwa on the afternoon of 14 April.[17] Before that, however, the shrine ritual (*shinji* 神事) takes place. Shrine priests conduct offerings at both Higashi hongū and Nishi hongū, but it is at the latter site that the main procedures are carried out. This ritual of dedication is considered the most important event in the Hiyoshi Taisha calendar, and many representatives from Hie Shrines around the country, starting from those of the Ōmi region, are invited to attend. Significantly, it is within this liturgy that segments staged by Buddhist monks have been maintained. Let me review the setting and sequence of the ritual.[18]

The shrine priests meet the monks from Enryakuji, led by the *zasu*, on the slope that takes to the shrine and proceed together towards Nishi hongū. A representative from Jinja honchō and the leaders of the *sannō* confraternities (*sannōkō* 山王講) are also in attendance. In front of the gate the two groups, lined up one opposite the other, receive a purificatory blessing from shrine priests before entering the precincts **[fig. 4]**.[19] The *zasu* alone changes his sandals into the ceremonial wooden shoes (*asagutsu* 浅履) used by shrine priests, to mark that he is entering the territory of the *kami*, taking over the appearance of a shrine monk (*shasō*). (On my most recent attendance the clogs were symbolically brought in front of the gate but the *zasu* did not wear them, apparently for fear that he, then a frail ninety-year-old man, would fall) **[fig. 6]**. The two parties are seated next to each other in hierarchical order under a canopy arranged at the left of the worship hall **[fig. 7]**. In the worship hall in front of the main hall are placed the seven portable shrines of the principal *kami* of Hie.

The first part of the ritual is carried out by shrine priests. The doors of the main hall are open following an established protocol. Offerings from Jinja honchō are presented to the *kami*. The head priest recites the *norito*. Then the first Buddhist segment takes place:

17 On Sannō *matsuri* see Kageyama 2001; Yamaguchi 2010 and Breen, Teuween 2010; on Jesuit descriptions of the festival see D'Ortia, Dolce, Pinto (forthcoming). For a classic analysis of *matsuri* see Raveri 1984.

18 This account is based on fieldwork I carried out in 2004 and 2018. A number of details were different in the two performances and I have noted them when relevant. A shorter dedicatory liturgy is performed at Higashi hongū before the rite at Nishi hongū, but there only priests are in attendance. I am grateful to the officiating priest for providing me with a copy of the order of procedures.

19 In recent years, an area for the blessing has been created on the right of the main gate [**fig. 5**]. One may note that other Buddhist representatives (recognisable from the *wagesa* they wear on their suits) are also present, lined up on the monastics' side.

Figure 4 *Sannōsai*: Monks and priests at the entrance of Nishi hongū. In the background the portable shrines of the main Sannō deities. Sakamoto, 2004. © Lucia Dolce

Figure 5 Monks and priests receive a purificatory blessing before entering Nishi hongū. Sakamoto, 2018. © Lucia Dolce

Figure 6 The Tendai *zasu* arrives at Nishi hongū. A shrine attendant carries his *asagutsu*. Sakamoto, 2018. © Lucia Dolce

Figure 7 Offerings to the *kami*. In the background monks and priests sit together. Sakamoto, 2018. © Lucia Dolce

Figure 8 Senior monks from Enryakuji dedicate five colour *gohei* to the Sannō kami. Sakamoto, 2004. © Lucia Dolce

a dedication of *gohei* in five colours (*goshoku no hōhei* 五色の奉幣).[20] At the sound of *gagaku*, played by musicians sitting at the border of the worship hall, the officiating monks pass around five *gohei*, in succession green, red, yellow, white and black, and hand them over to the *zasu*. The *zasu* presents them to the attendant shrine priest, who for each *gohei* climbs up to the hall and places it on an altar therein **[fig. 8]**. The playing of *gagaku*, the ancient court music that has become the distinctive sound of Shinto shrines, underscores that this is a *kami* ritual. After this dedication, the second Buddhist segment takes place: the *zasu* climbs the high steps that distinguish the main halls of the Hiei shrines and sits in the outer space (*gejin* 外陣); he utters a mantra, makes a *mudra*, and starts reciting the *Heart Sutra*, joined by the attending monks[21] **[fig. 9]**. In the last segment of the ritual the priests offer a bunch of blessed *katsura* branches to the *kami* and then to the *zasu*. The *katsura* tree is considered the sacred tree of the Hiei shrines, for a branch is said to have been used as a

20 This offering might reiterate a step in the protocol of the 'secret visitation to shrines' (*himitsu sansha*), a practice popular in the medieval period, when monks purified themselves and offered *gohei* in five colours before they set out to the nightly pilgrimage to the shrine buildings (Sagai 1992, 173-4). Although the oblation today is performed in front of the main hall, seventeenth century records indicate that the *zasu* offered *gohei* to the seven portable shrines (Yamaguchi 2010, 79).

21 In 2018, undoubtedly due to his age, the *zasu* stood in front of the *honden* with the monks intoning the *sutra* behind him.

Figure 9 The *zasu* recites the *Heart sutra* in front of the kami. In the foreground, *gagaku* players. Sakamoto, 2004. © Lucia Dolce

staff by the god enshrined at Nishi hongū when he moved there from Miwa, in the Nara prefecture. Twigs are then distributed to all participants, who wear them on their body, the priests distinctively on their headgear, the monks on their robes and other attendees behind their right ear or on their suits.[22]

Thus, the ritual protocol of this segment of the Sannō *matsuri* reiterates the Buddhist credentials of Hiyoshi Taisha. Shrine literature explains the liturgy with the long association of the shrine with the Tendai school, which started in the early Heian period when Saichō established his hermitage on Mount Hiei and chose the local deity as protector of his temple.[23] The importance of the performance for the institutions involved is indisputable, and the efforts to continue the ritual in its combinatory form attests to the crucial role that the association with the temple still plays for the identity of the shrine. Even when in 2020 the popular part of the celebrations, the procession of portable shrines, was cancelled because of COVID-19 pandemic, the combinatory rites at Nishi hongū continued to be conducted by shrine priests and Buddhist monks together.

22 The *zasu* and the senior Tendai monks visit Higashi hongū after the rite at Nishi hongū, to recite the *sutra* for that *kami*.

23 This was also emphatically stated by the shrine head priest in the public speech he gave at the end of the ritual in 2018 – particularly significant because in 2018 the shrine celebrated the 1350th anniversary of the enshrinement (*chinza* 鎮座) of its deity.

As with the two rituals reviewed earlier, this liturgical combination is not concerned with individual worshippers. It is performed for the *kami* and promoted by the highest clerical ranks of the institutions that inhabit the territory of the *kami* as an affirmation of their existence. It is a ritual petition for the collective well-being of the town and of the Japanese nation – and, by extension, the entire world.[24] Its efficaciousness is accomplished thanks to the symbiotic power of its combined actors, human as well non-human: the monks and the priests on the stage, the *kami* and the buddhas invisible in the background.

3 Reinventions: New *Shinbutsu* Associations

While the liturgies analysed so far disclose and acknowledge the historical alliances of the shrines and temples that carry them out, the two examples that I shall discuss now are practices that have been devised in recent years to call attention to the *kami*-buddha combination as constitutive of Japanese religiosity. These practices may be deemed new because no specific association is attested historically between the institutions concerned. Yet the terms of these interactions are anything but new or unconventional. Rather, they reiterate the patterns that characterised the construction of *shinbutsu* practices in the premodern period.

3.1 The Sacred Water of Kiyomizudera and Iwashimizu Hachimangū

On 7 November 2003, on the occasion of the public display (*kaichō* 開帳) of the main object of worship of Okunoin at Kiyomizudera, in Kyoto, a special liturgy was performed jointly by the abbot of Kiyomizudera and the head priest of Iwashimizu Hachimangū. The ceremony consisted of a ritual offering of Iwashimizu water to the *honzon* of Kiyomizu. The stated purpose of the ritual was to pray for the safety of the nation (*kokka antai* 国家安泰) and peace in the world (*sekai heiwa* 世界平和).

The liturgy is documented in a publication that includes the ritual protocol, an origin story, the text of the statements of purpose (*saimon* 祭文 and *hyōbyaku* 表白) recited at the beginning of the ritual and the charts of the ritual space – that is, all the elements one finds in pre-

24 World peace is mentioned in the head priest's speech, as it has become customary in such occasions, where world peace becomes an extension of the traditional Japanese intent for a peaceful and prosperous country.

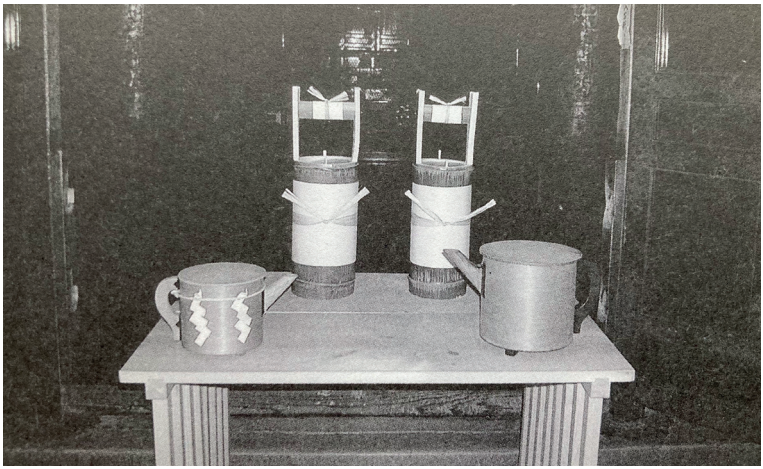

Figure 10 Altar with sacred water from Iwashimizu Hachimangū and Kiyomizudera (Koto no mori Kankō bunka kyōkai 2004, 112)

modern liturgical manuals (Koto no mori Kankō bunka kyōkai 2004, 85-117).[25] According to this source, the ritual unfolded as follows.

The two groups of ritualists lined up in the hall, the monks on one side, led by the abbot, and the shrine priests and the *kagura* performers on the other, led by the head priest. The attendant priest of Kiyomizudera tutelary shrine (*jinushi* 地主) stood on the side of the priests. Ritualists cleansed their hands and proceeded to the ritual space, where everyone occupied an assigned seat according to clerical hierarchy. Water from the two cultic sites was placed on the altar **[fig. 10]** and in front of it the abbot pronounced the *hyōbyaku*. Then the head priest invited the deity by clapping his hands, and shrine attendants presented offerings of food – washed rice, sake, mochi, vegetables, fruits and sweets. The head priest recited a *norito*. After a *kagura* dance performance, Iwashimizu priests bestowed a blessing on all participants. At this point joint acts of worship (*raihai* 礼拝) for the water, addressed both with a Buddhist term, *reisui* 霊水, and a Shinto term, *shinzui* 神水, were performed in the style required by each ritual tradition, the priests clapping their hands, the monks joining theirs in *gasshō*. The climax of the ritual was the moment in which, through a complex protocol of gestures, the heads of the two institutions symbolically merged the water of the temple and the water of the shrine.

Mori Seihan森清範, *kanshū* of Kiyomizudera, and Tanaka Tsunekiyo 田中恆清, *gūji* of Iwashimizu Hachimangū, explain the decision to hold

25 The publication includes several photos of each step of the ritual.

this ritual by recalling the origins of both shrine and temple as sacred places for clear water (清水, read *kiyomizu* or *shimizu*). Kiyomizudera is famous for a waterfall, which is believed to be miraculous and is presented in premodern narratives as a manifestation of Kannon. Within the precincts of Iwashimizu shrine is a pure water well that attests to the existence of a temple where the god of water was venerated before the funding of the shrine dedicated to Hachiman (Koto no mori Kankō bunka kyōkai 2004, 63). Further, the waterfall at Kiyomizudera receives water from the northern stream of the Kizu river and Iwashimizu Hachimangū stands next to the Kizu river. Thus, the material element of water serves to shape and legitimise the institutional alliance. This element is not only used rhetorically for the construction of a new combinatory discourse. By emphasising that it is reflected in the names of both institutions (*mizu* 水 means 'water' in Japanese) and in their past cultic practices, and by employing it physically in the new joint ritual, the creators of the liturgy deploy a relational logic that draws on myth, language and rite to forge the association – the same logic used in premodern combinatory systems, where such associations were expressed in linguistic strategies, origin narratives, visual representations and liturgical practices.[26]

In his introduction to the ritual, Mori wished for the restoration of the *shinbutsu* unity of old, suggesting that the ritual reproduced the "marvel" (*biji* 美事) that existed before the Meiji separation of *kami* and buddhas (Koto no mori Kankō bunka kyōkai 2004, 87). The point explicitly made here is that the effects of a ritual can be enhanced by joint efforts, for *kami* and buddhas working together produce better benefits. Both Mori and Tanaka were members of a Tourist Cultural Association called 'Old Capital Forest' (Koto no mori Kankō bunka kyōkai), whose purpose was to stimulate a return to traditional religion. In the wave of the 'return to nature' movement, the association emphasised that in Japan *kami* and buddhas abide in nature; hence to go back to worship *kami* and buddhas jointly is a 'natural' action for the Japanese. The Association took explicit stance against the separation of *kami* and buddhas accomplished by the Meiji government for, they declared, it has obscured the roots of Japanese religiosity and has had negative consequences on the spirituality of the Japanese. To counter the present situation, the association purported to assess what was left of the practices performed in Kyoto before the Meiji period and to devise interactions between temples and shrines which could improve the understanding of traditional reli-

26 We see this dynamic in act in other cases documented by the same publication. For instance, a new association between Yoshida Shrine and Nanzenji, marked by the performance of a joint ritual, is explained by reformulating legends related to Yoshida Kanetomo, the founder of Yoshida shrine (Koto no mori Kankō bunka kyōkai 2004, 121-36).

gion (Koto no mori Kankō bunka kyōkai 2004, 51-8).[27] The new ritual at Kiyosumidera was part of this strategy.

Since 2003, and modelled after the ritual performed in that occasion, Kiyosumidera and Iwashimizu clerics have established an annual ceremony to pray together for the well-being of the nation and world peace. Presented as a flower offering liturgy (*kenkasai* 献花祭) and described as a revival of a pre-Meiji combinatory ritual, it showcases the head priest reciting a *norito* and the head abbot a *hyōbyaku* and culminates in the symbolic merging of the waters of Kiyomizu and Iwashimizu. The liturgy was conducted in the main hall of Kiyomizudera until 2010. That year marked the 1700 commemoration of Ōjin and the 1150th anniversary of his enshrinement as Hachiman at Iwashimizu, and for the occasion the liturgy was performed in the main hall of the shrine. This was a crucial development in the new *shinbutsu* discourse, for it was the exclusion of Buddhist objects and clergy from shrines that defined modern Shinto.[28] Indeed, Iwashimizu sources emphasises that it reverted the first time in one hundred and forty-two years after the Meiji restoration that a *shinbutsu* ritual occurred at the shrine. Since then, temple and shrine have performed it every year at both locations, usually at the end of May at Kiyomizudera and in mid-June at Iwashimizu.[29]

It should be noted that Iwashimizu Hachimangū has also continued to hold the famous *hōjōe* 放生会, the Buddhist ceremony of release of animals, performed during its major festival in mid-September. It is therefore significant that rather than promoting this ritual as a form of continuity with the past, the institution engaged in the construction of a novel combinatory ritual with Kiyomizudera. In fact, while the *hōjōe* had been maintained as an important segment of the festival, it had no longer been performed by monastics and its Buddhist meaning had been lost. This might have been one reason for creating a new liturgy. However, following on the institution of the new ritual and undoubtedly precipitated by it, in 2004 a *hōjōe* in pre-Meiji style was revived with the participation of Tendai monks from Enryakuji.[30] The recent evolution of this format awaits to be examined.

27 The association was established in the aftermath of the Kobe earthquake.

28 *Shinbutsu*-type rituals at temples are less controversial and have been maintained in several places, not least because temples have continued to house specific *kami*. One can also think of cases in which Shinto priests take part in a liturgical performance at a temple. The segment of the *shunie* performed at Tōdaiji, where the priests of the nearby Tamukeyama Hachimangū attend with the specific function of guarding the palanquin housing a small image of Kannon, seems a case in point (Dolce 2010).

29 See the archive of Iwashimizu webpage: `http://www.iwashimizu.or.jp/event/schedule_more.php?seq=537`. Dates are not fixed, but have changed depending on the year. See, for instance, *Sankei shinbun* 産経新聞, 2014-06-01 (`https://www.sankei.com/article/20140601-AGCKY2HHEFNXZF6CBOBFAKF4HA/`).

30 See `http://www7b.biglobe.ne.jp/~s_minaga/m_iwasimizu_2.htm`.

3.2 Walking New 'Combinatory' Paths: *Shinbutsu Reijō Junrei*

A second example of the establishment of a novel practice that reinterprets traditional combinatory models is the creation of a new 'pilgrimage to spiritual sites of *kami* and buddhas' (*shinbutsu reijō junrei* 神仏霊場巡礼). It consists of an extensive circuit that starts from Ise jingū and finishes on Mount Hiei, visiting one hundred and fifty-two shrines and temples of the Kinai region. Among them are Japan's most famous religious establishments, from Tōdaiji and Kasuga Taisha in Nara, to Shitennōji in Osaka and the three Kumano shrines in the Kii peninsula, to Kiyomizudera, Iwashimizu Hachimangū and Kamoshimo shrine in Kyoto. Although many of these sites have historically been destinations of discrete pilgrimages and some are part of a premodern circuit, the Saikoku pilgrimage, they had never been joined together in such a grand spiritual course.

The new pilgrimage is arranged along seven routes. The first focuses on Ise Jingu, which stands apart as the object of 'special visit'; it is called 'the Path where *kami* and buddhas abide together' (*shinbutsu dōza no michi* 神仏同座の道). The other routes revolve around each province of the region: Wakayama, 'Path of Purification' (*shōjō no michi* 清浄の道); Nara, 'Path of Protection' (*chingo no michi* 鎮護の道); Osaka, 'Path of Plentiful Enjoyment' (*hōraku no michi* 豊楽の道); Hyōgo, 'Path of Fertility' (*hōjō no michi* 豊饒の道); Kyoto, 'Path to Paradise' (*rakudo no michi* 楽土の道); and Shiga, 'Path of Earnest Quest' (*gongu no michi* 欣求の道) (Shinbutsu reijōkai 2008). This division in seven paths seems to me a compelling allusion to the seven major roads that in ancient times served to map out the geopolitical territory of Japan and later on became a metaphor for the sacred nature of this territory, marked as it was by the powerful shrines-temples of the Kinai area. In fact, even the choice of Ise and Mount Hiei as the beginning and end points of the pilgrimage recalls two main points in the sacred cartography of medieval Japan, the Ise bay and the lake Biwa, on which shore Mount Hiei stands.[31] This suggests a conscious rethinking of the national territory and of the role of religious institutions therein, supported by an erudite knowledge of the past.

The pilgrimage was inaugurated in September 2008, with a large group of two hundred and twenty Buddhist and Shinto clerics dressed in their distinctive attires entering the Ise shrines together, the abbot of Kiyomizudera and the high priest of Iwashimizu on the foreground. This was a performance of particular symbolic significance, clearly intended to capitalise on the perception of Ise as the sacred place of Japan *par excellence* and at the same time to re-appropriate it as a place that belongs to Shinto and Buddhism alike. In a sense,

31 On the seven roads and the sacred mapping of Japan see Dolce 2007.

monks entering Ise might be seen as an open challenge even to tradition, for a taboo had existed since early times which forbade things Buddhist in Ise (*shinbutsu kakuri* 神仏隔離).[32] The kick-off at Ise demonstrated that this pilgrimage was a new beginning, albeit predicated on received patterns. The inauguration of the *shinbutsu* pilgrimage was a big media event, widely featured in newspapers and broadcasted in the national television channels.[33] A book of stamps (*goshuinchō* 御朱印帳), since the Edo period part and parcel of a pilgrim's accessories, was purposely created to be purchased for the new pilgrimage – a thick book about three times the usual size of a stamp book, to fit the seals of all hundred and fifty sites. The publicity produced to advertise the pilgrimage invited people to follow the "ancient Japanese pilgrimage path of Shinto and Buddhism" which had been destroyed by Meiji policies, and insisted that the *shinbutsu* pilgrimage would "contribute to the stability of modern people's minds and society" (*Sankei shinbun*, 2008-03-02).

The pilgrimage was conceived by an Association of Shinto-Buddhist Spiritual Sites (Shinbutsu reijōkai), established in March of the same year at Enryakuji, which served as the first administrative office for the association. At that time, it was chaired by Morimoto Kōsei, abbot of Tōdaiji (the current president of the association is Kasuga Taisha's high priest).[34] The temples and shrines that are on the pilgrimage route are members of the association. Eighteen names are listed as its founding members. These are leading figures of the religious world, including the heads of the shrines and temples discussed above; intellectuals, such as Yamaori Tetsuo, eminent scholar of Japanese religion, already involved in the Old Capital Forest Cultural Association, and Hirokawa Katsumi, formerly of Doshisha University, who had tried for many years to create an action group around the idea of *shinbutsu*; and distinguished scholars of combinatory beliefs whose research has shaped the field, and who are themselves high clerics of major establishments: the late Sugahara Shinkai, professor at Waseda University and abbot of the Tendai *monzeki* Myōhōin in Kyoto; Sonoda Minoru, former professor of Kokugakuin University and head priest of Chichibu Taisha; Miyagi Tainen, Shugendō specialist and abbot of Shōgōin; Matsunaga Yūkei, former president of Kōyasan University and abbot of Kongōbuji on Mount Kōya, to cite a few. In many ways the composition of the

32 Satō 2007; Teeuwen, Rambelli 2003, 21-3. Satō has demonstrated that the prohibition was linked to the role of Ise as an imperial shrine.

33 See, for instance, *Yomiuri shinbun*, 30-09-09.

34 For a detailed chronology of the institution of the society and its immediate actions see the history page of their new website: `https://shinbutsureijou.net/history.html`.

Association makes the new pilgrimage an intellectual and political movement, fed by scholarly awareness of the history of Japanese religion.[35] As with the new alliance between Kiyomizu and Iwashimizu discussed above, whose advocates are closely connected to the *shinbutsu* pilgrimage, the creators of the pilgrimage lament that the separation of *kami* and buddhas has obscured the roots of Japanese religiosity and see their actions as necessary means to convey the merits of traditional religion.

To mark the institution of the new pilgrimage two publications were produced. One is a pocket guide to the sites to be visited during the pilgrimage, which gives basic details of their history and the deities enshrined, a small map of the area and a handsome drawing of a representative building, dedicating two pages to each site; it also carries a few columns written by leading figures of the movement (Shinbutsu reijōkai 2008). The second publication is an essay book that provides an outline of the history of combinatory beliefs and discusses the meaning of Buddhist rituals historically performed at shrines, such as the liturgy for releasing animals at Iwashimizu Hachimangū (Hirokawa 2008). Both publications convey the need to "restore the original relationship between *kami* and buddhas" in uncompromising terms and maintain that to keep the world of Buddhism and the world of Shinto separate creates an "unnatural" (*fushizen* 不自然) relation between the two (Hirokawa 2008, inner cover). They call on the Japanese people's long history of worshipping nature and sensing invisible gods and buddhas in mountains, rivers, plants and trees, and envisage the revival of practices which are "the roots of the Japanese people' soul" (*nihonjin no tamashii no moto* 日本人の魂の元) (Hirokawa 2008, 19).

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the pilgrimage, a new guidebook was published, which presents the pilgrimage as a practice for the Reiwa era (Shinbutsu reijōkai 2019). It by and large provides the same information as the previous guide, but includes a reproduction of the vermilion stamps that each of the hundred and fifty-two shrines and temples had created for the pilgrimage.[36] Like the earlier publication, it draws on the ever popular guides to the practical benefits that may be acquired by visiting sacred places in a particular area (*riyaku no gaido bukku* 利益のガイドブック) and capitalises on current

35 Some of the online commentators of the time compared the new pilgrimage to the so-called 'En no gyōja Renaissance' 役行者ルネッサンス that started in 1998 and set out a Shugendō revival. A similar success is contemplated for the *shinbutsu* movement. http://yosino32.cocolog-nifty.com/blog/2008/03/post_5ff9.html.

36 Shinbutsu reijōkai 2019. The guidebook is sold in bookshops, next to scholarly works on historical combinatory beliefs, as well as at temples and shrines of the area. Hasedera even advertises it on its webpage: https://www.hasedera.or.jp/promotion/1/blog_detail.html?key=entry&value=446.

fashions: by inserting the seals of each temple and shrine, the 2019 guidebook caters to the frenzy for collecting stamps, which in recent years has spread across Japan.[37]

4 Reenactment: *Goryōe* at Kitano Tenmangū

Just as I conclude my writing, a new compelling episode in the revival of *shinbutsu* practices has taken place, which begs reporting even if briefly for it fleshes out the multiplication of contemporary combinatory rituals.

On 4 September 2020, a liturgy to exorcise vengeful spirits (*goryōe* 御霊会) has been reenacted at Kitano Tenmangu in Kyoto, to invoke the end of the Coronavirus pandemic and to plea for the good health and safety of the nation. In premodern Japan, epidemics were thought to be caused by unhappy spirits (*goryō*) who brought about havoc in the country until they were ritually placated, often by enshrining and transforming them into deities.[38] Kitano Tenmangū was established in 947 to appease one such vengeful spirit, that of the bureaucrat, scholar and poet Sugawara no Michizane (845-903), there enshrined as Tenjin.[39] In 987 the shrine celebrated the first, court-sponsored, festival for the deity: it included a ritual segment performed by Tendai monks, consisting of liturgical lectures on the eight fascicles of the *Lotus Sutra* (*hokke hakkō*). Such *goryōe* were combinatory rituals, just as the deities they celebrated, and it is in that format that the liturgy has been revived in 2020.

The celebrants of the contemporary ritual are Tendai monks from Enryakuji and shrine priests from Kitano. Following a protocol similar to the other cases of *shinbutsu* rituals analysed above, the monks, led by the Tendai *zasu*, Morikawa Kōei, are welcomed at Kitano's Sankōmon gate by the shrine priests, headed by the *gūji*, Tachibana Shigetoku. The two parties entered together the precincts of the shrine and proceeded to the main hall. The liturgy started with the proclamation of intent to the *kami*: the *zasu* pronounced a *saimon* and offered a sprig of *sakaki* tree (*tamagushi* 玉串); the *gūji* read a *norito*. Then the core of the liturgy took place. The monks recited the *Heart Sutra*, followed by the chanting of the formal Buddhist name

37 This renewed 'stamp fever' was often pointed out to me in 2019 by resident priests of small temples of the Tokyo area, who were not used to occasional pilgrims turning up at their doors to request a stamp.

38 On *goryōe* see McMullin 1988. Several festivals still celebrated to this day in Kyoto, such as the Yasurai *matsuri* at Imamiya Shrine and the famous Gion festival, originated as attempts to repel epidemics that had spread in the capital.

39 On the cult of Tenjin see Murayama 1996 and Borgen 2020; on the combinatory dimension of Tenjin see Iyanaga 2003.

of the deity, "Namu Tenman Daijizai Tenjin 南無天満大自在天神" (lit. 'Praise to the Heavenly Deity of Great Power that Fills the Sky') – a name that itself reflects the combinatory nature of Tenjin. The highlight of the liturgy was a debate on the eight fascicles of the *Lotus Sutra*, similar to that performed at Hiyoshi Taisha. On this occasion, a senior monk, Imadegawa Gyōkai 今出川行戒, General Director of the Worship Division 参拝部 of Enryakuji, acted as lecturer.[40] Widely covered by the media, newspapers and TV channels have reiterated that this is the revival of a *shinbutsu* ritual that had not been performed at Kitano since 1467, when the outbreak of the Ōnin War interrupted it.

The bond between Kitano Tenmangū and Enryakuji might have been forgotten with the postwar emphasis on the Shinto identity of Tenjin, but it is intrinsic to the history of Kitano. At the mythological level, foundation narratives of the shrine claimed that the Tendai *zasu* Son'i, a renown exorcist, whom Michizane had regarded as his teacher in the last years of his life, was the only ritualist with the power to appease Michizane's spirit. As an institution, Kitano was a *miyadera* 宮寺, that is, a temple administrated by Buddhist monks where the main object of worship was a *kami*. The first head priest of Kitano was a monk from Mount Hiei called Zesan 是算, a member of the Sugawara family, who found the temple that would later become Manshuin 曼殊院. Manshuin was in charge of the management of Kitano up to 1868.[41] These links are showcased in the contemporary reenactment of the *goryōe*, revealing a renewed confidence in bringing premodern institutional relationships to the fore: Enryakuji monks are welcomed not only by the head priest and other clerics of Kitano Tenmangū, but also by the abbot of Manshuin and his acolytes, who throughout the liturgy sit alongside the priests of Kitano, as if they were the shrine monks servicing Kitano in premodern times.

The performance of the *goryōe* appears to reiterate tropes highlighted by other *shinbutsu* rituals: historical continuity in the institutional identity of the shrine; enhanced efficacy of the combined action of Buddhist and Shinto ritualists; and the power of the rituals they execute to affect the wellbeing of the nation. It should be noted that the current pandemic has engendered a significant response from religious institutions in Japan, and many have organised events

40 This account is based on newspaper reports and a brief by Hongō Masatsugu (Hongō 2020) of Ritsumeikan University, to whom I am grateful for informing me of the liturgy. Images of the salient steps of the performance can be perused on `https://mainichi.jp/english/graphs/20200904/hpe/00m/0na/001000g/1`. A detailed report of the ritual was published in *Chūgai nippō* 中外日報, 2020-09-09. In Tendai sources the event is also linked to the celebrations for the 1200 anniversary of Saichō's demise, which falls in 2021 (`https://1200irori.jp`).

41 Manshuin, one of the five Tendai *monzeki* monasteries in Kyoto, is now located in the North-eastern part of the city, but was originally built closer to the Kitano area.

to auspicate the end of COVID-19. Among traditional temples, Tōdaiji in Nara was perhaps the first when, at the beginning of the pandemic, gathered representatives of different religious faiths to stage a socially distanced, collective prayer in front of Tōdaiji lecture hall.[42] The reenactment of the *goryōe* at Kitano, however, has a different flavour: not only does it restate the association of a well-known shrine with a Buddhist school; it also evokes the efficaciousness of traditional healing rituals, which had been relinquished by Meiji ideologues because perceived at odds with modern science. In so doing, it acknowledges premodern patterns of coexistence of human and non-human agency in the management of calamities. Interestingly, these notions are surfacing in practices at other less-known Shinto shrines in Japan.[43]

5 Concluding Remarks

The case studies addressed in this paper demonstrate that *shinbutsu* combinatory practices are well alive in Japan today and have become an opportunity to assert the very existence of the institutions that perform them and showcase their public significance.

Ritual is the language of contemporary *shinbutsu* discourse. The liturgies explored above, whether executing old procedures or staging more imaginative segments, articulate the materiality and sensorial dimension of the combinatory, and convey it through the objects that are held, exchanged, offered (*gohei*, sakaki, water); the sonic elements that alternate the sounds of the shrines (*gagaku*, *kagura*) and the sounds of the temples (chanting hymn, reciting *sutras*); the gestures of the celebrants, simultaneous, in succession, swapped one for another. The ritual protocol discloses the dynamics of integration and distinction, identity and dissimilarity, which constitute the combinatory configuration of religion in Japan, now as in the past.

The actors of these performances share an unambiguous interpretation of the world of the *kami* and the world of the buddhas as interconnected, and assert that this relational dimension of religion is fundamental to the definition of Japanese spirituality. In this way, they deny the success of the political intervention of the Meiji peri-

42 *Mainichi shinbun*, 25 April 2020, https://mainichi.jp/articles/20200425/k00/00m/040/097000c. See also McLaughlin 2020.

43 An example is the combinatory ritual to pray for the end of the pandemic at Togakushi shrine in Tsubame, Niigata prefecture. On the occasion of the local spring festival in May 2020, the head priest was joined by Shingon monks from Manpukuji, the temple that managed the shrine before the Meiji period, to offer prayers at three places in town. See http://www.kenoh.com/2020/05/18_taisai.html and a video of the crucial moments of the ritual at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1R2Keng_r0&feature=emb_logo.

od and at the same time prove that the standardisation of the *kami* world attempted by Jinja honchō in postwar years has not worked either. The liturgical calendars of Kasuga and Hiyoshi Taisha and the reenacted practices at Kitano Tenmangū, by bringing historical continuity to the foreground effectively dismiss the more recent history of discontinuity represented by the repositioning of Buddhism and Shinto as separated entities. The new forms of *shinbutsu* practices, at Iwashimizu Hachimangū or along pilgrimage routes, articulate a more explicit, intellectual take on that history through the activism of individuals at the headship of famous shrines and temples, who seem determined to give a novel course to their traditions. Taken together, these practices suggest a new ideological stance that not merely looks at the past nostalgically, but recovers the premodern to reclaim (local) identity and, further, sets out to forge a new role for traditional religious bodies in defining what is the true national identity.

The practices reviewed above also provide material to reconsider the conceptualisation of the combinatory. Syncretistic phenomena have often been associated with popular forms of religion. *Shinbutsu* rituals, however, do not display the spontaneous, devotional character of popular actions, but are validated at the very official and institutional level.[44] A theological justification does not seem to be as central as the institutional one. One may note that the ontological identity of *kami* and buddhas that underpinned premodern combinatory systems does not emerge prominently in the contemporary discourse on *shinbutsu* practises. This suggests that pairing the two is more pertinent than proving that they may be the same entity – after all, the changes brought by modern history cannot be completely disregarded. In fact, the guidebook to the new *shinbutsu* pilgrimage includes detailed instructions on how to worship at each site, acknowledging the distinctiveness of temple and shrine. (Shinbutsu reijōkai 2008, 352-4). The combinatory nature of the *kami* is not dismissed – as it can be evinced from the use of the term *gongen* 権現, a term that indicates a combinatory deity. At Hiyoshi Taisha, for instance, an image of the deity as Sannō gongen may welcome priests, monks and parishioners to the *matsuri* **[fig. 11]**. However, in the whole the rhetoric of contemporary *shinbutsu* discourse relies more effectively on current concerns about environment, spirituality, and return to a vaguely defined tradition.

44 *Shinbutsu* rituals seem to have attract more interest from the general public in recent years, as attested, for instance, by the larger crowd attending the *shinji* of the Sannō *matsuri* in 2018, compared to the handful of curious watching the procedures in 2004. This, however, may be due to a new interest in what I would call 'ritual tourism', which in the last two decades has escalated and seen many Japanese people travel across the country to attend ritual performances.

Figure 11 Sannō *gongen* board at the entrance of the Hiyoshi shrine complex. Sakamoto, 2004. © Lucia Dolce

The space of this article has not allowed any in-depth analysis of each of the rituals presented and the specific issues each of them raises, but some questions may be pointed out that apply to all, in varying degrees. A first issue concerns the power dynamics between the institutions that put forward associative patterns of religious action and Shinto's alleged 'central authority', Jinja Honchō. Informal discussions with representatives of the latter have suggested that initially they saw the new alliances as propelled by economical concerns. Commenting on the rituals established by Kiyomizudera and Iwashimizu, for instance, an argument is made that Iwashimizu Tenmangū is today no more than a local shrine, which has lost the relevance and visibility it held in historic times even within the religious landscape of Kyoto; joint activities with a famous temple such as Kiyomizudera can enhance Iwashimizu standing and hopefully increase its touristic intake. But can the upsurge of interest in *shinbutsu* practices be justified on the basis of purely economic reasons? Is this just a marketing operation?

A second point to consider is the broader context in which this shift of focus to the combinatory has taken place. A rethinking of the nature of Shinto vis-à-vis Buddhism has happened in other areas of cultural life in the past two decades. There has been a growing academic interest in the relation of *kami* and buddhas, which has seen an explosion of scholarly publications on the textual sources and diverse incarnations of premodern combinations. Perhaps even more importantly, the material culture produced by combinatory beliefs has been much displayed, in exhibitions at major museums and less

famous venues.[45] These have brought to public attention the extent of the symbiotic relation of Buddhism and Shinto and unveiled a remarkable number of tangible examples of *kami* as combinatory beings. One such exhibition, for instance, showcased a collection of *kami* statues that had their dual appearance as *kami* and buddhas carved in the wood (Kanagawa kenritsu rekishi hakubutsukan 2006). Interestingly, these objects came from the depositories of several shrines in Kanagawa prefecture, where they had remained hidden for almost a century. This in itself shows that shrines are more relaxed as to what they can unveil of their past practices without compromising their modern identity.

Finally, one also needs to question whether the executors and initiators of combinatory rituals, who advocate the *shinbutsu* association as the main paradigm of Japanese *and* as a peculiarity of Japanese culture, are in danger of producing a new bent of conservative Japanese exceptionalism (*nihonjiron*). Whether the interest in the combinatory will become a feature of postmodern Japanese religion or fill a political agenda filtered through traditionalist positions, this is a development to be watched.

Bibliography

Borgen, R. (2020). "Tenjin". *Brill Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. 2. Leiden: Brill, 1122-7.

Breen, J.; Teeuwen, M. (2010). *A New History of Shinto*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.

Dolce, L. (2007). "Mapping the 'Divine Country': Sacred Geography and International Concerns in Mediaeval Japan". Breuker, R.E. (ed.), *Korea in the Middle*. Leiden: Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies (CNWS) Publications, 288-312.

Dolce, L. (2010). "The Contested Space of Buddhist Public Rituals: The *shūnie* of Tōdaiji". Michaels, A. et al. (eds), *Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 433-58.

Doruche Ruchia ドルチェ・ルチア (Dolce Lucia); Mitsuhashi Tadashi 三橋正 (eds) (2013). *Shinbutsu shūgō saikō* 「神仏習合」を再考 (Rethinking 'Syncretism' in Japanese Religion). Tōkyō: Bensei shuppan.

D'Ortia, L.; Dolce, L.; Pinto, A.F. (forthcoming). "Saints, Sects, and (Holy) Sites: The Jesuit Mapping of Japanese Buddhism". Curvelo, A.; Cattaneo, A. (eds), *Interactions Between Rivals: The Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan (c. 1549-c. 1647)*. Brussels: Peter Lang.

Faure, B.; Como, M.; Iyanaga, N. (eds) (2006-2007). "Rethinking Medieval Shinto / Repenser le shinto médiéval", special issue, *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, 16.

Grapard, A. (1992). *The Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

45 For instance, Kanagawa kenritsu rekishi hakubutsukan 2006; Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan 2007; Tōkyō kokuritsu hakubutsukan; Kyūshū kokuritsu hakubutsukan 2013.

Grapard, A. (2016). *Mountain Mandalas: Shugendō in Kyushu*. London: Bloomsbury.

Hirokawa Katsumi 広川勝美 (2008). *Shin to butsu no fūkei Kokoro no michi. Ise no jingo kara Hieisan Enryakuji made* 神と仏の風景「こころの道」 —伊勢の神宮から比叡山延暦寺まで ("Path of the Heart", the Landscape of Kami and Buddhas: From Ise Shrine to Mt Hiei's Enryakuji). Tōkyō: Shūeisha.

Hongō Masatsugu 本郷真紹 (2020). "Saikō sareta Kitano goryōe" 再興された北野御霊会 (The Restored *goryōe* at Kitano). *Irori*. https://1200irori.jp/content/special/detail/article0.

Iyanaga, N. (2003). "*Honji suijaku* and the Logic of Combinatory Deities: Two Case Studies". Teeuwen, M.; Rambelli, F. (eds), *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*. London: Routledge Curzon, 145-76.

Kageyama Haruki 景山春樹 (2001). "Hiesha no shintaizan shinkō" 日吉社の神体山信仰 (Beliefs in Mountains as Divine Abodes at Hie Shrine). *Shintaizan. Nihon no genshi shinkō o saguru* 神体山—日本の原始信仰を探る (Mountains as Divine Abodes: Exploring Japan's Primeval Beliefs). Tōkyō: Gakuseisha, 19-69.

Kanagawa kenritsu rekishi hakubutsukan 神奈川県立歴史博物館 (ed.) (2006). *Kamigami to deau: Kanagawa no Shinto bijutsu* 神々と出逢う: 神奈川の神道美術 (Meet the Gods: Kanagawa Shinto Art). Kanagawa-ken Jinjachō.

Koto no mori Kankō bunka kyōkai 古都の森・観光文化協会 (ed.) (2004). *Shinbutsu kenkyū* 神仏研究 (Studies on Kami and Buddhas). Special issue: "Kami to hotoke to Nihon no kokoro" 神と仏と日本のこころ (Kami, Buddhas and the Japanese Heart). Kyōto: Kanrin shobō.

Matsunaga, A. (1969). *The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation: The Historical Development of the Honji-shijaku Theory*. Tokyo: Sophia University. Rutland; Tokyo: Tuttle.

Matsuo, K. (2009). *Kōfukuji and Kasuga Taisha: Rites of Kami-Buddha Amalgamation and the People Who Support Them* [DVD]. Sakura: National Museum of Japanese History.

McLaughlin, L. (2020). "Japanese Religious Responses to COVID-19: A Preliminary Report". *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 18(9), 1-23.

McMullin, N. (1988). "On Placating the Gods and Pacifying the Populace: The Case of the Gion 'Goryō' Cult". *History of Religions*, 27(3), 270-93. https://doi.org/10.1086/463123.

Murayama Shūichi 村山修一 (1957). *Shinbutsu shūgō shichō* 神仏習合思潮 (Thoughts on the Combination of Kami and Buddhas). Kyōto: Heirakuji shoten.

Murayama Shūichi (1994). *Hieizanshi. Tatakai to inori no seiiki* 比叡山史—闘いと祈りの聖域 (A History of Mt Hiei: Sacred Place of Fights and Prayers). Tōkyō: Tōkyō Bijutsu.

Murayama Shūichi (1996). *Tenjin goryō shinkō* 天神御霊信仰 (Beliefs in the Vengeful Spirit Tenjin). Tōkyō: Hanawa shobō.

Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan 奈良国立博物館 (2007). *Shinbutsu shūgō. Kami to hotoke ga orinasu shinkō to bi* 神仏習合—神と仏が織りなす信仰と美 (Shinto Gods and Buddhist Deities: Syncretic Faith in Japanese Art). Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan.

Raveri, M. (1984). *Itinerari nel sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese*. Venezia: Cafoscarina.

Reader, I.; Tanabe G. (1999). *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Sagai Tatsuru 嵯峨井建 (1992). *Hiyoshi Taisha to Sannō gongen* 日吉大社と山王権現 (Hiyoshi Grand Shrine and Sannō gongen). Kyōto: Jinbun Shoin.

Satō Hiroō 佐藤弘夫 (1998). *Kami, hotoke, ōken no chūsei* 神・仏・王権の中世 (Kami, Buddhas and Kingship in the Middle Ages). Kyōto: Hōzōkan.

Satō Masato 佐藤眞人 (2007). "Shinbutsu kakuri no yōin wo meguru kōsatsu" 神仏隔離の要因をめぐる考察 (Crucial Factors in the Isolation of Kami from Buddhism). *Shūkyō kenkyū* 宗教研究, 81(2), 359-83.

Shinbutsu reijōkai 神仏霊場会 (ed.) (2008). *Kami to hotoke no michi wo aruku* 神と仏の道を歩く (Walking the Path of Kami and Buddhas). Tōkyō: Shūeisha.

Shinbutsu reijōkai 神仏霊場会 (ed.) (2019). *Kami to hotoke no michi wo tadoru. Kōshiki gaidobukku* 神と仏の道をたどる－公式ガイドブック (Following the Path of Kami and Buddhas: The Official Guidebook). Tōkyō: Sankei shinbun seikatsu jōhō senta.

Tamamuro Fumio 圭室文雄 (1977). *Shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離 (The Separation of Kami and Buddhas). Tōkyō: Kyōikusha shuppan sābisu.

Tanabe, W.J. (1984). "The Lotus Lectures: *Hokke Hakkō* in the Heian Period". *Monumenta Nipponica*, 39(4), 393-407. https://doi.org/10.2307/2384573.

Teeuwen, M.; Rambelli, F. (eds) (2003). *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*. London: Routledge Curzon.

Tōkyō kokuritsu hakubutsukan; Kyūshū kokuritsu hakubutsukan 東京国立博物館. 九州国立博物館 (2013). *Kokuhō daijinjaten* 国宝大神社展 (Grand Exhibition of Sacred Treasures from Shinto Shrines). Tōkyō: NHK Puromōshon.

Yamada Eitai 山田恵諦 (1976). "Sannō raihaikō ni okeru hōshiki no suii" 山王礼拝講における法式の推移 (Developments in the Ritual Protocol of the *Sannō raihaikō*). Murayama Shūichi 村山修一 (ed.), *Hieizan to Tendai bukkyō no kenkyū* 比叡山と天台仏教の研究 (*Sangaku shūkyōshi kenkyū sōsho* 山岳宗教史研究叢書2) (Studies on Mt Hiei and Tendai Buddhism: History of Mountain Religion 2). Tōkyō: Meichō shuppan, 285-316.

Yamaguchi Yukitsugu 山口幸次 (2010). *Hiyoshi sannōsai. Yama wo kake mizuumi wo wataru shinkōtachi* 日吉山王祭—山を駆け湖を渡る神輿たち (The Sannō Festival of Hiyoshi: Portable Shrines that Run Down the Mountain and Cross the Lake). Hikone: Sanraisu shuppan.

Yoshie Akio 義江彰夫著 (1996). *Shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 (The Combination of Kami and Buddhas). Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.

Yasumaru Yoshio 安丸良夫 (1979). *Kamigami no Meiji ishin. Shinbutsu bunri to haibutsu kishaku* 神々の明治維新—神仏分離と廃仏毀釈 (The Meiji Restoration of the Gods: The Separation of Kami and Buddhas and the Destruction of Buddhism). Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.

Websites

https://1200irori.jp
https://www.hasedera.or.jp
http://www.iwashimizu.or.jp
https://www.kasugataisha.or.jp
http://www.kenoh.com/2020/05/18_taisai.html
https://www.kohfukuji.com
https://mainichi.jp/articles
https://www2.nhk.or.jp/archives
https://shinbutsureijou.net

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

The *Sutra of Druma, King of the Kinnara* and the Buddhist Philosophy of Music

Fabio Rambelli
University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

Abstract This chapter discusses a little-known Buddhist scripture, the *Sutra of the Questions by Druma, King of the Kinnara* (*Daiju kinnara-ō shomon-gyō*), translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in the early fifth century. This sutra is unique in that it proposes a powerful, and sympathetic, philosophy of music rooted in the Mahayana doctrines of emptiness; it also offers a template for Buddhist rituals involving music and dance that have been performed in Japan since the eighth century as part of the Gagaku and Bugaku repertory.

Keywords Buddhism and music. Sutra of the Questions by Druma, King of the Kinnara. Gagaku. Philosophy of music (Japan).

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Buddhist Attitudes Toward Music. – 3 The *Sutra of Druma, King of the Kinnara*. – 4 King Druma's Philosophy of Music. – 5 King Druma, Buddhist Music, and Japanese Gagaku.

1 Introduction

Early Buddhism had a negative attitude towards music and dance; the Vinaya codes explicitly prohibit monks, nuns, and lay followers not only from performing, but also from listening or watching performances. This stance is still standard in Theravada Buddhism. The Mahayana traditions took a different position; for them, at least some types of music and dances (those who contained Buddhist elements or could be used to promote Buddhism) could be considered

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2021-01-26 | Accepted 2021-02-23 | Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/009

offerings to the Buddhas and were therefore allowed. Moreover, canonical descriptions of the Pure Lands are replete with references to music and melodious sounds of all kinds. However, in most Mahayana cultures monks were (and still are) only allowed to play a limited range of ceremonial instruments, and extra-liturgical music and dances are performed by lay people. Japan seems to be a notable exception, both for the richness of music and dances used at Buddhist rituals (Gagaku 雅楽 and Bugaku 舞楽) and for the fact that Buddhist priests also engaged in music and dance in religious and secular contexts.

In fact, there is a scriptural basis to this: the *Sutra of the Questions by Druma, King of the Kinnara* (*Daiju kinnara-ō shomon-gyō* 大樹緊那羅王所問経, T 625; hereafter, *Sutra of King Druma*), translated by Kumārajīva in the early fifth century. It is a little-known scripture today, without an extensive body of critical scholarship. This *sutra* is unique in that it proposes a powerful, and sympathetic, philosophy of music rooted in the main Mahayana doctrines; it also offers a template for Buddhist rituals involving music and dance that have been performed in Japan since the eighth century.

In this chapter, after an overview of standard Buddhist attitudes toward music, we present a summary of the *Sutra of King Druma*, followed by a discussion of the philosophy of music it proposes. We will then conclude with considerations on this *sutra*'s impact on Gagaku and Bugaku and their role in Japanese Buddhism.

2 Buddhist Attitudes Toward Music

It is a well-known fact that early Buddhist sources present negative views of music, to the point of prohibiting it to monks, nuns, and lay practitioners. In the *Zōitsu Agonkyō* 増一阿含経 (T 1, no. 2, 756c) the Buddha prohibits monks and nuns from discussing music, singing, and dance (*kabu* 歌舞, *gigaku* 伎楽), because these subjects, along with wine drinking and comedy, are not appropriate for them (T 1, no. 2, 781bc). The Vinaya codes also prohibit monks, nuns, and lay people not only to perform music and dance, but also to watch or listen to performances (*Makasōgi ritsu* 摩訶僧祇律 T 22, no. 1425, 540b; *Jūjuristu* 十誦律 T 23, no. 1435, 269bc). In these texts, music is forbidden because it is related to sensual pleasure and leads to inordinate behaviour, and is therefore a major obstacle to Buddhist practice.

This chapter is based on a paper I presented at the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies, Stanford University in May 2019. I am grateful to Paul Harrison and Irene Lin for the invitation and their comments to the paper. I also benefited from suggestions from Ōuchi Fumi, Vesna Wallace, Matt Gillan, James Robson, Carl Bielefeld, and Ellen Van Goethem.

However, sutra chanting is already attested since an early period, and early scriptures praise chanting the scriptures with a beautiful singing voice (*Zōitsu Agonkyō*, T 1, no. 2, 558a, 673b). The orthodox practice of sutra chanting opens up the possibility of an aesthetic experience in connection to such a devotional act.

In fact, early scriptures also show a positive attitude towards music, singing, and dancing, as long as they are performed as offerings to the Buddha. The *Makasōgi ritsu* allows the members of the Samgha to attend music performances (*gigaku*) of various kind offered by lay patrons at important ceremonies, such as those commemorating the birth of the Buddha, his enlightenment, or his first sermon (T 22, no. 1425, 494a). A more explicit praise of music offerings is present in *Hōen shurin* 法苑珠林, when the Buddha attended a music performance in the city of Śravastī:

> All these people played music as an offering to the Buddha and the Samgha; because of the merit of that, in the future for a hundred kalpas they will not fall into an evil destination (*akudō* 悪道), for a hundred kalpas they will receive the highest pleasure for gods and humans, after which they will become pratyeka buddhas. (T 53, no. 2122, 576c)[1]

In general, Mahayana scriptures tend to show a more positive attitude towards music. The *Lotus Sutra* says that in a distant past, the Bodhisattva Myōon 妙音菩薩 played music of all kinds (*hyakusen no gigaku* 百千伎楽) for 12,000 years to the Buddha Unraion'ō 雲雷音王仏, and because of that he was reborn in the Buddha-land of Jōgeshukuōchibutsu 浄華宿王智仏国 (T 9, no. 262, 56). The *Konkōmyō saishōō kyō* 金光明最勝王経 describes the virtues of Benzaiten's 弁財天 voice that leads beings to salvation (T 16, no. 665, chapter "Dai-Benzaiten-nyo-bon" 大弁才天女品). Here, Benzaiten's voice is not an offering, but a tool to induce beings to accept Buddhism.

A distinct thread in Buddhist ideas about music concerns the presence of music in the heavenly realms and the Pure Lands. The *Muryōju kyō* 無量寿経 (T 12, no. 360, 266a) describes Amida (Skt. Amitābha)'s Pure Land, with the unsurpassable beauty of the sound produced by the trees of the seven jewels, and the myriad kinds of music (*gigaku*) produced spontaneously, in which each sound is the sound of Dharma (*hōon* 法音); moreover, heavenly beings come to play music for the Buddha, the bodhisattvas and the *śrāvaka*. According to this scripture, such heavenly music is not only an adornment of the Pure Land, but a veritable manifestation of the Buddha Amida endowed with the power to lead beings to the Land of Bliss. It is worth noting that the rich

1 Unless otherwise indicated all translations are by the Author.

array of musical instruments listed in Pure Land scriptures will later appear in visual representations of the Pure Land across East Asia.

Furthermore, several Esoteric Buddhist (*mikkyō* 密教) scriptures present a favourable idea of music, again as an offering to Buddha and bodhisattvas;[2] a novelty is the fact that a musical instrument, the *biwa*, is described as the *sanmayagyō* 三昧耶形 (the symbolic, substitute body) of Benzaiten, thus opening up the possibility for a sacralisation of musical instruments as well.[3]

We should point out, however, that the scriptures make a clear distinction between human music and heavenly music, and – within the category of human music – between secular music and music as Buddhist offerings. Heavenly music is described as greatly surpassing human music in beauty, variety, and scale. In general, Buddhist scriptures discourage or even prohibit human, secular music, but encourage human sacred music and lavishly praise heavenly music.

3 The *Sutra of Druma, King of the Kinnara*

The *Sutra of the Questions by Druma, King of the Kinnara* is one of the oldest scriptures in the East Asian canon. It exists in two versions, very similar in content: the first, *Bussetsu Ton shindara shomon nyorai sanmai-kyō* 仏説佗真陀羅所問如来三昧経, is attributed to Lokakṣema, who probably translated it in 170-190 CE; the second, *Daiju kinnara-ō shomon-gyō* 大樹緊那羅王所問経, was translated by Kumārajīva (344-413) and dates from the early fifth century. Their content is almost the same; for this reason, in this chapter we will follow almost exclusively Kumārajīva's version.[4] The sutra describes an extended interaction between the Buddha Śākyamuni and the king of the Kinnaras, Druma. Druma at first visits Śākyamuni on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa near Rājagṛiha, then invites the Buddha and his followers to his own residence on the Himalayas, and finally accompanies the Buddha back to Rājagṛiha. The Buddha teaches aspects of the bodhisattva practice and characteristics of *prajñā-pāramitā* (transcendent wisdom), but also extols the virtue of Druma and his people and the salvific power of music. Several times, Druma is invited by the Buddha to share his knowledge with his audience. Throughout the sutra, numerous performances of heavenly music and singing take place, mostly by King Druma himself and his retinue of musicians and singers, but also by other divine beings, by

2 For a list of sources, see Kataoka 1981, 150.

3 For details, see Inose 2018.

4 For a full English translation based on the Tibetan version of this scripture (which follows closely the Chinese translations), see Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2020.

elements of the environment (trees and mountains), and even by the Buddha himself, who, towards the end, preaches through songs in a remarkable and perhaps unique performance. Buddhist musicologist Kataoka Gidō has suggested that an early sutra, included in the *Jō Agonkyō*, could be a precedent for the *Sutra of King Druma* (Kataoka 1981, 157, 122-5). It is the *Sutra of the Questions by Indra* (*Shakudaikan'in mongyō* 釈提桓因問経, in T 1 no. 1, 62c-66a), in which the god Indra decides to visit the Buddha to ask him doctrinal questions; Indra brings along with him the Gandharva Pañcasikha (Japanese *Hanshayoku* 般遮翼). Defined "musician god" (*shūgakushin* 執楽神) in the scripture, Pañcasikha is a virtuoso musician; Indra asks him to "play his beryl *koto* to entertain the Buddha" as a musical offering (*ko ruri-kin goraku seson* 鼓瑠璃琴 娯楽世尊) (62c) (the Sanskrit text has, instead of *koto*, *vaiḍūryandaṇḍāṃ vīṇāṃ*, a *vīnā* with the neck/fingerboard made of beryl; the *vīnā* is a lute-like musical instrument). The Buddha praises Pañcasikha because his music "has many meanings: it speaks of attachment, of Buddhist practice, of the *śramanera* [monks], and of nirvana" (63a). However, as it will become clear in a moment, the *Sutra of King Druma* offers a much deeper treatment of music and its effects from the context of Buddhist teachings and practices.

A large portion of the *Sutra of King Druma* presents a fairly standard doctrinal apparatus that brings together *prajñā-pāramitā* teachings, visualisations, and instructions on various characteristics of the bodhisattvas, their practices, and their accomplishments. However, between lists of doctrinal items, the scripture presents an original view on music, in conflict with received understanding. Overall, this is therefore a unique scripture. It conveys an unusual sense of sheer joy that is 'secular' in tone, as resulting from the music and dance of the Kinnara, rather than from more standard and rarefied 'pleasure of dharma' (*hōraku* 法楽). Above all, the most durable impression of this sutra is the pervasive role that music plays in it.

Before we discuss the scripture more in depth, some background information on King Druma and his people, the Kinnara (Skt. Kiṃnara), is in order – in part because they are not popular figures in Japanese Buddhism. Druma (*Daiju* or *Ton*, meaning 'tree' in Sanskrit) also appears (in different transliterations) in *Daichidoron* 大智度論 (as Chunronma in pages 135c, 188b; as Dōrōma in page 135b) and in *Rokudo jikkyō* 六度集経 (as Zuma in page 44c), among others. According to the *Daichidoron*, he is either the king of the Gandharva (135b) or of both the Gandharva and the Kiṃnara (135c). The *Sutra of King Druma* locates his kingdom in the Himalayas, specifically on Mount Kōsen 香山 (Skt. Gandhamādana); other sources have it on Mount Kailāsa. Druma is praised in *Daichidoron* and in the sutras that bear his name for his knowledge of the Dharma and his spiritual at-

tainments combined with his legendary virtuosity as a musician;[5] his instrument is the *koto* or *kin* (in Indic sources, that was most likely a *vīnā*). His people, the Kiṃnara (Jp. *kinnara* 緊那羅), are one of the life forms of gods and semi-gods called *tenryū hachibushū* 天龍八部衆,[6] categories of beings that are endowed with both superhuman powers and animal features. *Daichidoron* says that Kinnara are members of the retinue of the *devas*; their residences, their food, and their music are similar to those of the gods (135b). Buddhist texts describe the Kinnara as centaurs (human body with horse face) or as bird-humans (human body with the head of a bird or vice versa);[7] they are thus related in the mythological imagination to fauns and mermaids/sirens, hybrid beings endowed with special musical talents and sexual appetite, themes that also appear in the *Sutra of King Druma*.[8]

Let us now turn to the *Sutra of King Druma*.[9] The Buddha is on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa near Rājagṛiha together with a vast crowd of great *bhikṣu* and bodhisattvas, who had gathered there from all directions of the universe. All of them have perfected the *paramitas*, acquired the nondual wisdom, and have a perfect grasp of the emptiness of all dharmas. They understand all the languages of sentient beings, can contemplate the transcendent wisdom, are endowed with the Buddha-eye, have attained the stage of irreversibility, and master various *samādhi*. One of these bodhisattvas, Tengan Bosatsu 天冠菩薩 (heavenly crown),[10] is one of the protagonists of the scripture and asks several questions of the Buddha. The first question concerns how the bodhisattvas can acquire an "eloquence with many adornments" (*zasshu shōgon no ben* 雑種荘厳之弁) with all its beneficial effects on the listeners (*Daiju kinnara-ō shomon-gyō*, 368c-369a). The Buddha replies by enumerating a long set of four-item lists (369a-370a); long lists of doctrinal points are one of the features of this text. At the end of the Buddha's speech, the universe shakes six times, a great light pervades everything, from up in the sky divinities perform celestial music (*gigaku*) and songs in praise of the Buddha, and flowers rain down on the Buddha.

5 For the above information, see Jenner 1979.

6 These include: Indian gods (Skt. *deva* or *devatā*; Jp. *ten* 天, serpents/dragons (Skt. *nāga*; Jp. *ryū* 龍), demonic beings (Skt. *yakṣa*; Jp. *yasha* 夜叉), heavenly musicians (Skt. *gandharva*; Jp. *kendatsuba* 乾闥婆), anti-gods (Skt. *asura*; Jp. *ashura* 阿修羅), supernatural birds (Skt. *garuḍa*; Jp. *karura* 迦楼羅), heavenly musicians and singers (Skt. *kiṃnara*; Jp. *kinnara* 緊那羅), and a special category of large snakes (Skt. *mahoraga*; Jp. *magoraga* 摩睺羅伽).

7 See Mochizuki 1954-71.

8 I am grateful to Vesna Wallace and Paul Harrison for pointing this out to me.

9 On this *sutra*, see Kataoka 1981, 125-33, 154-67; Kō 1973; Miyazaki 2007; Ono 2007.

10 According to Harrison (1992, xv), the Sanskrit original could have been *Divyamauli* or *Devamauli*.

Next, Tengan Bosatsu asks the Buddha how the bodhisattvas can hear, uphold, chant, or copy this speech after the Buddha's nirvana (370b). The Buddha replies with a set of eight items (related to determination to practice and save sentient beings, compassion, protecting the true Dharma, defeating demons, etc.). At that moment, the universe again shook six times, all the mountains collapsed into rivers, lakes, and the ocean, but without affecting the water beings living there; the universe was now flat like the palm of a hand and beautifully decorated; all plants and trees in the universe bent towards the Buddha and produced flowers and fruits, with beautiful perfumes and light. And then, all celestial beings, without showing themselves, began to play all kinds of music (*gigaku*); from the Himalayas, a beautiful perfume came to permeate the universe, and all kinds of marvellous flowers went towards the Buddha and filled the entire space. All plants rained their petals on the Buddha, creating an enormous roof adorned with bells made with pearls which produced a soft and pleasant sound pervading the entire universe. The Elder Śariputra asked the Buddha what was happening, and the Buddha replied that it was a sign that Druma, king of the Kinnara, was on his way from his residence on the Himalayas to see the Buddha and pay his respects, accompanied by multitudes of Kinnara, Gandharvas, gods, and Mahoragas. King Druma and his vast retinue indeed show up, announced by 84,000 types of music with pure songs (*jōmyōka* 浄妙歌) and harmonious melodies (*zenwa shugaku* 善和衆楽) (370c). The Kinnara, endowed with the great supernatural powers (*jinzūriki* 神通力) of the bodhisattvas, made petals rain from the sky, approached the Buddha, bowed to his feet, and circulated seven times around him.

Then, King Druma began to play his precious *koto* beautifully decorated, made by the divine maker Viśvakarman. When Druma started playing his *koto*, accompanied by his retinue, the sound could be heard all over the universe, and overpowered the celestial music played by the gods in the Realm of Desire, who then stopped playing and went to see the Buddha. At the sound of Druma's music, everything in the surrounding environment, from the cosmic mountain Mount Sumeru down to all plants and trees, began to sway like someone who is extremely inebriated. All the members of Buddha's retinue, with the sole exception of the bodhisattvas at the stage of non-return, at the sound of the *koto*, the songs, and the music, rose from their seats and, unable to control themselves, began to dance. Following this lascivious music, they abandoned their dignified deportment; they were like children dancing and playing and could not hold themselves. Utterly surprised, Tengan asked Mahākāśyapa and the other *śrāvakas*: "Venerables, you are detached from the afflictions (*kleśas*), have attained the eight liberations, and have understood the four noble truths. Why are you abandoning your dignified deportment and dance shaking your body like children?" To which

they replied: "We can't control ourselves; because of the music of this *koto*, we cannot sit quietly, and we can't keep our bodies from dancing, and our minds can't focus". Tengan then said to Mahākāśyapa: because of your practices and achievements "you are venerated by men and asuras like a stupa. Why can't you hold yourself together and dance like a child?". And Mahākāśyapa replied:

> It's like trees in a forest shaken by a powerful storm, they just can't stand still. It's something independent of our mind's desire, I just can't resist this rhythm. The music of the king of the Kinnara, with his *koto*, the songs, and the sounds of wind instruments [*shōteki* 蕭笛, lit. 'Pan's flute'] shake my mind like trees in a storm and it can't stand still. (370c-371a)

Then, King Druma and his retinue of musicians, thanks to the supernatural power of the Buddha and the power of their own past merits, began to play music accompanying a song about emptiness (371bc), at which 8,000 bodhisattvas attained the capacity to endure the non-origination of dharmas (*mushōnin* 無生忍).[11] Tengan asked the Buddha: "Where does this beautiful song come from?". The Buddha replied: "Ask King Druma directly, he will answer you". Here, the Buddha considers Druma perfectly qualified in terms of his spiritual accomplishments and explicitly authorises him to interact with the bodhisattvas and his other followers and teach them the Dharma. At this point, the sutra stages a discussion between Tengan and Druma, in which the latter expounds his profound philosophy of music and how it relates to Buddhism, which we will discuss in some detail below.

Tengan is astonished and asks the Buddha how it is possible that Druma knows such a wondrous doctrine and is capable to express such a profound teaching so eloquently. The Buddha replies that Druma planted the seeds of good deeds with innumerable buddhas in the past. Tengan asks Druma why then he has not yet attained the supreme enlightenment; Druma explains to him that there are twelve different types of incompleteness in the bodhisattvas (372ab). Then, the Buddha teaches Druma a *samādhi* called "abiding in the jewel" (*hōjū* 宝住), which is the direct experience of emptiness (372c-373c). Tengan is incredulous about Druma's ability to attain this advanced *samādhi* and abide in it. Druma explains: one cannot attain or abide in this *samādhi* because it transcends the five aggregates (*skandhas*), the senses, and cognition (374a). The Buddha confirms Druma's abil-

11 According to standard Buddhist doctrines, the realisation of the various aspects of emptiness (in this case, the fact that things have no origin and no substance) causes discomfort, even fear; the capacity to endure such fear and to embrace the new awareness that has been attained is the next step after such realisation.

ity in using skilful means (*upāya*) (374b). Because of that, with the sound of his music, he can subdue and make abide in enlightenment millions of Kinnaras and Gandharvas, and among them, lead 84,000 members of his retinue to omniscience (*issaichi* 一切智) (374a). In other words, because of his deep knowledge of the techniques of *upāya* King Druma can use the intrinsic power of music for purposes related to Buddhist salvation. The Buddha further explains to Tengan: the Kinnara, like the Gardharvas and Mahoragas, love music; with their music, they arouse great love, belief, and respect for the Dharma, which in turns generates the sounds of the three jewels (*busshō hōshō sōshō* 仏声法声僧声), the sounds of the six *pāramitā*, and the sounds of many doctrinal points (dharmas) (374bc). However, we should note that what this intrinsic power of music is and where it comes from is never made explicit in the text. Indeed, metaphysics of music in India, in China, and later in Japan, proposed theories to explain the power of music in conjunction with the various forces operating in the cosmos. Most likely, it was a widespread understanding, and the author did not think it necessary to spell it out.

Next, the sutra presents a grand cosmic vision, in which petals fall from the sky on King Druma. Druma collects them all and takes them to the Buddha to make a precious canopy that envelops the entire universe, all adorned with countless pearls; each pearl puts forth innumerable rays of light; each ray of light produces a lotus flower, all in many colours and with beautiful scents; each lotus becomes a pedestal for a coloured image of a seated Śākyamuni, and all these Buddhas praise King Druma, saying: "Very well, King of the Kinnara! You can teach innumerable sentient beings, and the bodhisattvas should make offerings to you" (374c). At that moment, Druma entered a *samādhi* in which he invited the Buddha and his retinue to his palace in the Himalayas, so that innumerable gods, *nagas*, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *asura*, *garuda*, *kinnara* and *mahoragas* can listen to the Buddha preaching the Dharma (374c). The Buddha accepts, and the joy of the Kinnara explodes in yet another performance of songs, music, and dances (375a). Druma begins to play music singing a song in praise of the Buddha, which says in part: "the songs of gods, *nāgas*, and *kiṃnara* increase attachments and do not extinguish desire; the voice of the Buddha is soft, the sound of his teachings extinguish all attachments and brings peace" (375b). Then, Tengan makes his own magic: he enters a *samādhi* and creates a cosmic-size jewelled platform and invites the Buddha to sit on it, surrounded by his vast retinue; holding this platform in his right hand, Tengan flies to the Himalayas. When the lofty beings of the Realm of Desire and the Realm of Pure Forms see this, they rejoice greatly and make offerings to the Buddha and his retinue: flowers, incense, scents for the body, and music. King Druma sees them coming from afar and alerts the Kinnara to prepare gifts and begin to sing and play music to welcome the Buddha (375c).

King Druma and his retinue welcome the guests to the palace and offer them a sumptuous banquet. The Buddha then begins to preach the Dharma, with a long list of thirty-two aspects for each of the six paramitas (generosity, morality, patience, effort, meditation, and skilful means) (376a-378a). Then, the Buddha manifests in the sky seven giant *tāla* trees that emit light encompassing the entire universe; beautiful heavenly music is produced spontaneously; all trees in the Himalayas also begin to play beautiful music; the Buddha issues forth light from all his pores, each ray of light with a lotus flower, a bodhisattva sitting on each flower perfectly adorned with the thirty-two signs. Then, and this is a crucial scene, the Buddha uses his supernatural powers to create a song accompanied by music in which he clarifies all the doubts of the bodhisattvas (378b-379c).

Having heard this, the sons of King Druma pay obeisance and make offerings to the Buddha, followed by King Druma's wives and ladies in attendance. As a result, all of Druma's women arouse the *bodhicitta* (the desire to attain enlightenment) and reach the stage of no return; they ask the Buddha how they can get rid of their female body and turn into men (*ten sha nyoshin toku nanshi-shin* 転捨女身得男子身) (380c). The Buddha teaches them ten principles to attain that goal, generally related to the precepts and the behaviour of lay Buddhists (380c-381b), combined with the realisation of emptiness. If they are able to see the female body as empty, then there are no distinctions between a male and a female body: this is the meaning of attaining a male body (381b). All the women rejoice and as the Buddha smiles, light of all colours springs forth from his face, illuminating the entire universe.[12]

The Buddha assures the audience that because of their good seeds, all of Druma's wives, after they die, will all attain a male body and be reborn in Tuṣita Heaven together with Miroku 弥勒, the future Buddha; when Miroku becomes Buddha they will keep making offerings to him and learn countless teachings. When King Druma himself becomes a buddha they will be reborn in his Buddha-land where they will also receive the prediction of their future becoming buddhas (381c). At this moment, to Druma's great joy, the Buddha issues the prophecy that one day, 680,000 billion kalpas in future, Druma will become a Buddha called Kudoku ō kōmyō nyorai 功徳王光明如来 and rule over a Buddha-realm named Mukugetsu 無垢月 (Immaculate

12 It is interesting to note that the issue of women turning into men is already discussed in the early translation of this sutra attributed to Lokakṣema in the late second century CE (T 624, 361b-362a), thus making it one of the first scriptures to ever discuss this transformation in some detail. The relative simplicity of women's salvation reminds one of the apocryphal *Sutra on Transforming the Female Body* (*Ten nyoshin-gyō* 転女身経), popular among court ladies in the Heian and Kamakura periods. See Meeks 2010, 302-7 (especially 303-4).

Moon); the Buddha also produced an image of that Buddha and his realm (382b). He also told the audience about Druma's past lives and ascetic accomplishments. In short, innumerable kalpas ago, Druma used to be a *cakravartin* (Buddhist ideal king) called Nimindara 尼泯陀羅 at the time of a Buddha called Hōshu Nyorai 宝衆如来 in a realm called Jōketsu 浄潔; Nimindara made countless generous offerings to that Buddha (383bc).

Next, one of the sons of King Druma asks the Buddha how to abandon their musical art and enter the right path to salvation. The Buddha replies that the music of the Kinnara produces sixty-four sounds that protect the wondrous dharma of enlightenment; there is therefore no need for them to abandon music-making (384a).

At this point, King Druma realised that the Buddha and his retinue wished to go back, and with his supernatural powers he created a jewelled flying chariot to carry them; holding it in his hand, he took it back to Rājagṛiha (384bc). The Kinnara again played music and sang in praise of the Buddha (384c-385a). A famous figure in Buddhist scriptures now entered the picture. King Ajataśatru (Ajase ō 阿闍世王) saw the Kinnara accompanying the flying chariot with the Buddha and his retinue and went to meet them. In this final part of the sutra, the Buddha praises Druma. He says that because of his devotion to the Buddha and the Dharma, Druma has acquired excellent eloquence and the capacity to play beautiful music (385b). King Ajataśatru asks Druma to share some of his merits with him and Druma replies that all of his merits are for him and all sentient beings, as is appropriate for a bodhisattva to do (385b).

Then, Tengan asks the Buddha how many dharmas a bodhisattva has to achieve in order to become a Dharma vessel (*hōki* 法器); the Buddha answers with a list of thirty-two items (385bc). Druma asks how to get rid of anxiety, and the Buddha offers another list (385b-386a). Ajataśatru asks the Buddha how a bodhisattva is to practice the pursuit of enlightenment; the Buddha replies with a poem (386b-387a). King Ajataśatru goes back to his palace; the Kinnara prepare to return to their realm and thank the Buddha with one more set of music and a rain of petals (387a). Indra appears and asks the Buddha about Druma, and Buddha praises him above everyone else. After a final conversation, the Buddha teaches a mantra to subjugate all superhuman beings with evil intentions (including Kinnara) (388b).[13] The sutra ends with a proclamation of its merits and a final celebration (388c-389a).

13 This is one of the earliest mantras ever included in a Chinese translation of a Buddhist text: see Harrison, South Coblin 2002.

4 King Druma's Philosophy of Music

As we can see from this summary, this is a medley of two very different scriptures, each different in language, style, imagery, content, and audience. For convenience, let us call the first 'Tengan's sutra' and the second 'Druma's sutra'. Tengan's sutra is for advanced bodhisattvas. It deals with profound and abstruse aspects of scholastic teachings and is written in an abstract and detached tone. Indeed, it consists of several lists of doctrinal items, all expressed in a very technical language, about characteristics of bodhisattvas, their practices, and their achievements. Detachment is especially obvious in Tengan's reaction to the *śrāvakas* dancing to the music of the Kinnara; it appears as if Tengan is so remote from the realm of the senses that he cannot even understand the *śrāvakas*' state of mind, let alone their emotions in that situation. He even needs to ask the Buddha about the nature of music and why it compels such intense sensory and emotional reactions – something that is seemingly beyond his experience and comprehension.

The second scripture in the medley, Druma's sutra, is very different. It presents central Buddhist teachings, but in ways that can be not only beneficial but also attractive to many beings at different spiritual stages: the interlocutors of the Buddha in this section are King Druma, his consorts, and his children – all lay people with different spiritual capacities and soteriological concerns: Druma is on his way to becoming a Buddha, his consorts ask how to "get rid of the female body and become men", and his male children inquire on how to seriously engage in Buddhist practice. The content of Druma's sutra addresses broader philosophical and cultural matters: a philosophy of music (music as a salvific practice and its limits, especially its relations to the concept of emptiness, where Druma presents the idea that music is simply a transient signifier with no stable and immutable signification), the modalities of women's salvation, the powers of *samādhi*, and so forth. Its structure is not a linear sequence of lists, but rather something akin to a musical composition with different themes (the various subjects addressed by the Buddha and King Druma himself) ending in a sort of crescendo, corresponding to the Buddha's prophecy that Druma will become a Buddha in future and rule over his own Buddha-land; the very final section, after the Buddha and his retinue have returned to Rājagṛiha, is a like a fade-out coda. In fact, this resembles very closely the structure of Gagaku and Bugaku pieces, with multiples themes, repetitions, an accelerando rhythm, and a quiet coda at the end. Above all, what stands out in Druma's sutra is the sheer joy and sensory bliss of the Kinnara as expressed by their music and dance, something that we rarely encounter in a Buddhist scripture; even in the Pure Land sutras, for example, music is essentially an alternative form of sutra chanting, which

thus lacks the powerful sensuality of the Kinnara's music. Finally, something that is especially relevant in the context of this chapter, is that fact that each retelling of this scripture (as discussed above) also involves another musical performance, which then becomes co-substantial with the spoken, doctrinal content of the sutra. This aspect may very well be unique among Buddhist scriptures, and might have had very practical consequences – namely, as a template for Buddhist rituals involving music as they have been performed in Japan since at least the eighth century, as we shall see below.

Three elements in the scripture are particularly relevant: (i) Buddha's acceptance of King Druma's invitation to visit his realm and be entertained by the Kinnara, in clear contrast with the dry and tone-deaf setting of Tengan's portion; (ii) the fact that the Buddha explicitly authorises King Druma to speak on his behalf on matters of doctrine in two crucial moments, when Śāriputra asks the Buddha about the nature of Druma's music first and Druma's spiritual accomplishments later; in other words, Druma, a Kinnara and a secular musician, is veritably teaching the Dharma to *śrāvaka* and advanced bodhisattvas; and (iii) crucially, the Buddha himself in the latter part of the scripture, makes music (sings!) that speaks the Dharma, very much like Druma does.

However, it would be wrong to interpret this entire scripture as simply a random medley of two very different songs, as it were. Rather, this is a well-crafted attempt to present a complex set of teachings to a wide and diverse audience – something that would be interesting to both scholastic exegetes and a wider, secular audience. Tengan's portion, despite its scholastic specialisation, already contains hints of what is about to come: the audience of which he is a member includes music-related bodhisattvas, such as bodhisattva Myōon, an important figure in the *Lotus Sutra*, who was later identified with Myōonten/Benzaiten (Skt. *Sarasvatī*), the goddess of music and musicians; and the miraculous signs following Buddha's sermons, as we have seen, prominently include heavenly music.

One could say that this scripture is an effective attempt to represent nonduality (silent asceticism versus music performance, ascetic rigor versus sensorial experiences, scholasticism versus art). It is also a powerful endorsement of music as a proper Buddhist activity. The sutra, however, leaves matters largely unsettled. It only speaks about the celestial music of the Kinnara, not about human music. Medieval exegesis in Japan would bridge this gap and give an important role to a certain type of human music, the court and ceremonial music and dances of Gagaku and Bugaku.[14] This sutra also shows a remarkable, and little noticed, transition away from a traditional

14 On this subject, see Rambelli 2021.

focus on eloquence toward an enhanced interest in the performing arts. The initial question posed by Tengan to the Buddha is a standard and innocuous one on the art of eloquence, in which a beautiful voice is placed at the service of signification and its performative effects on the audience (acceptance of Buddhism). Druma's sudden arrival hijacks this line of argument: for him, sound is not just a tool to a distinct and separate end, but a powerful dharma in itself as a direct manifestation of emptiness. This transition from speech to voice to sound – and thus from preaching to musical performance – also seems to be at the basis of the shift in the imagery of Benzaiten, from a goddess of eloquence to Myōonten, goddess of music.

Let us now look more in depth at Druma's understanding of music as a legitimate Buddhist practice. After what is perhaps the sutra's most memorable episode, in which Druma's performance on the *koto* has all beings, sentient and non-sentient alike, dancing uncontrollably, Tengan asks Druma where this music comes from. What follows is a summary of their dialogue.

King Druma: "This song comes from the musical voice (*onjō* 音声) of sentient beings", which in turn "originates from empty space [*kyokū* 虚空]". Tengan shows a very superficial understanding of music when he asks: "Doesn't musical voice originate in the mouth?" And Druma: "The musical voice of sentient beings originates from the body and from the mind". Tengan: "No, because the body, like plants and stones, is not intelligent [*gumuchi* 癡無知], and the mind, being formless, has no vision or touch and does not make speeches; it's like an apparition [*genke* 幻化]." Druma: "If it is distinct from body and mind, where does it come from?" (371c). Tengan: "Ideation [*shiyui* 思惟] creates music and sound. If there is no voice in empty space, then sound does not emerge". Druma has a more profound understanding:

> All sounds (*onjō*) emerge from empty space (*kyokū*). Sound has the nature of emptiness (*kyokūshō* 虚空性): when you finish hearing it, it disappears; after it disappears, it abides in emptiness. Therefore, all dharmas, whether they are taught or not, are emptiness. All dharmas are like sound. If one teaches the dharmas through sound, the dharmas cannot be attained in sound itself. Dharmas themselves cannot be said; what is called speech is only sound. Therefore, sound is originally non-abiding anywhere [i.e., is non-substantial], thus it is not real and solid (*mukenjitsu* 無堅実), and its reality only lies in its name (*myō i jitsu* 名為実). If so, and paradoxically, its reality is indestructible (*fukakai* 不可壊), has no origin (*muuki* 無有起) and thus is not subject to extinction, therefore it is pure (*shōjō* 清浄), immaculate (*byakujō* 白浄), and incorruptible (*muku* 無垢), like light (*kōmyō* 光明) and the mind (*shinjō* 心性); it is all-surpassing (*shukka* 出過) and beyond signs (*shukka shosō* 出過諸相) – that is, sound is the condition of enlightenment (*shōi* 正位);

> when a bodhisattva is in that condition, he has attained the endurance of the non-origination of dharmas (*mushōhōnin* 無生法忍) […]
>
> All discourses are only sound/voice; one produces these sounds simply because one wants to talk about something else than voice. This endurance of the non-origination of dharmas cannot be explained nor heard. Why? Because its meaning is unattainable (*fukatoku* 不可得), that is, absent. (372ab)

In this dense argument, we can see an attempt to outline a semiotics of speech, which also applies to music. In short, King Druma seems to be saying that discourses are simply voiced sounds or signifiers; their signifieds are not inherent in those sounds and are nowhere to be found (they are unattainable). Music is exactly the same. One seems to hear here a distant echo of Roland Barthes' *Empire of Signs*, where he described a realm of pure signifiers without meanings, or, in Buddhist terms, the condition of realised emptiness. In more technical terms, music, like language, is not a symbol of anything (meaning is ontologically distinct and separate from sound); rather, music is both an index and an icon (a faithful reproduction) of emptiness – in other words, music is a concrete example, in our experiential field, of emptiness.

In this context, the materiality of King Druma's instrument, the *koto*/*kin*, is also relevant. Aside from the fact, also significant, that it was made by the divine craftsman Viśvakarman, the sutra described it as having been made of a precious stone called *ruri*. Often, *ruri* refers in the Buddhist scriptures to lapis lazuli, a blue stone. However, the etymology of the term, from the medieval Chinese 吠瑠璃 (modern Ch. *feiliuli*; Jp. *beiruri*), points to the Sanskrit *vaiḍūrya*, 'beryl'. This light green stone is in fact transparent – an effective metaphor for emptiness.[15] In other words, King Druma plays music exemplifying emptiness on a transparent musical instrument, in an interesting example of semiotic collapse, in which the instrument, its sound, its signification, and its referent are all the same – transparent, evanescent, impermanent, ultimately empty.

5 King Druma, Buddhist Music, and Japanese Gagaku

At a time in which most Buddhist scriptures saw music just as entertainment – either a way to deal with possible patrons or as an offering to the buddhas – or as a sort of ambient music creating the soundscape of the Pure Land, the *Sutra of King Druma* provided the first cogent and systematic Buddhist philosophy of music as closely related to the

15 I owe this suggestion to Paul Harrison.

concept of emptiness, its practices (*samādhi*) and its effects (*prajñā-pāramitā*). However, the importance of this sutra goes well beyond its intellectual content, as it was central for a number of developments that affected Japanese Buddhism and its attitudes towards the performing arts, especially Gagaku and Bugaku. In particular, the sutra offers a justification for the activities of musicians and performing artists, by presenting their art as both a joyful offering to the Buddhas and a form of self-cultivation. The sutra also provides the first known model for Buddhist ceremonies involving instrumental music and dance. As Buddhist musicologist Kataoka Gidō noted, the musical accompaniment to the dialogues between Druma, the Buddha, and others, can be seen as a precedent to Tendai *rongi* 論議 (doctrinal debates) ceremonies as they are still performed today (Kataoka 1981, 131-3). We can expand this insight further and see in the *Sutra of King Druma* a model for large Buddhist ceremonies involving Bugaku dance (*bugaku hōyō* 舞楽法要) and chanted lectures accompanied by Gagaku instrumental music (*kangen kōshiki* 管弦講式), which both developed in the late Heian period (see Ono 2013; Rambelli 2020; 2021).

Bibliography

Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎; Watanabe K. 渡邊海旭 (eds) (1924-1932). *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵経. 85 vols. Tōkyō: Issaikyō kankōkai.

Primary Sources

Bussetsu Ton shindara shomon nyorai sanmai-kyō 仏説伅真陀羅所問如来三昧経 (Skt. **Druma-kiṃnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra*), T 15, no. 624.
Daichidoron 大智度論, T 25, no. 1509.
Daiju kinnara-ō shomon-gyō 大樹緊那羅王所問経 (Skt. **Druma-kiṃnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra*), T 15, no. 625.
Hōen shurin 法苑珠林, T 53, no. 2122.
Jō Agonkyō 長阿含経, T 1, no. 1.
Jūjuristu 十誦律, T 23, no. 1435.
Konkōmyō saishōō kyō 金光明最勝王経, T 16, no. 665.
Makasōgi ritsu 摩訶僧祇律, T 22, no. 1425.
Muryōju kyō 無量寿経, T 12, no. 360.
Myōhō rengekyō 妙法蓮華経 (*Hokkekyō* 法華経), T 9, no. 262.
Rokudo jikkyō 六度集経, T 3, no. 152.
Zōitsu Agonkyō 増一阿含経, T 1, no. 2.

Secondary Sources

Barthes, R. [1970] (1982). *Empire of Signs*. New York: Hill and Wang.
Dharmachakra Translation Committee (ed.) (2020). "The Questions of the Kiṃnara King Druma". `https://read.84000.co/translation/toh157.html`.
Harrison, M.P. (1990). *The Samadhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present*. Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies.

Harrison, M.P. (1992). *Druma-kinnara-raja-pariprccha-sutra*. Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies.

Harrison, M.P.; Coblin, W.S. (2012). "The Oldest Buddhist Incantation in Chinese? A Preliminary Study of the Chinese Transcriptions of the Mantra in the *Druma-Kinnara-Rāja-Paripṛcchā-Sūtra*". *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 222, 63-85.

Inose Chihiro 猪瀬千尋 (2018). *Chūsei ōken no ongaku to girei* 中世王権の音楽と儀礼 (Music and Rituals in Medieval Japanese Kingship). Tōkyō: Kasama shoin.

Jenner, G. (1979). "Chunronma". *Hôbôgirin. Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Bouddhisme d'après les sources Chinoises et Japonaises*, vol. 5. Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 506-7.

Kataoka Gidō 片岡義道 (1981). *Eishō ronkō* 叡聲論攷 (Essays on *shōmyō* [Buddhist chant] on Mt. Hiei). Tōkyō: Kokusho Kankōkai.

Kō Junshoku 洪潤植 (1973). "Butten ni arawareta bukkyō ongaku no josetsuteki kenkyū" 仏典に現われた仏教音楽の序説的研究 (Introductory Study on Buddhist Music as It Appears in Buddhist Scriptures). Kin Chiken 金知見; Sai Ingen 蔡印幻 (eds), *Shiragi bukkyō kenkyū* 新羅仏教研究 (Studies on Buddhism in Silla). Tōkyō: Sankibō busshorin, 613-33.

Meeks, L.R. (2010). *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Miyazaki Tenshō 宮崎展昌 (2007). "*Ton shindara shomon nyorai sanmai-kyō* no kan'yakusha ni tsuite" 伅真陀羅所問如来三昧経の漢訳者について (On the Author of the Chinese Translation of the Meditation Sūtra on the Kinnara Druma's Questions to the Tathāgata). *Bukkyō bunka kenkyū ronshū* 仏教文化研究論集 (Research Essays on Buddhist Culture), 11, 18-39.

Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨 (ed.) (1954-71). "Kinnara". *Bukkyō daijiten* 仏教大辞典 (Encyclopedia of Buddhism). Expanded and revised by Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆 and Sekai seiten kankō kyōkai 世界聖典刊行協会, vol. 1. Tōkyō: Sekai seiten kankō kyōkai, 543c-544b.

Ono Kōryū 小野功龍 (2013). *Bukkyō to gagaku* 仏教と雅楽 (Buddhism and Gagaku). Kyōto: Hōzōkan.

Ono Makoto 小野真 (2007). "Buddhistisch-musikalische Konzepte in Sutren und deren Verwiklichung im *Hōe* (法会) Butten ni okeru bukkyō-ongakuteki konseputo to hōe ni okeru sono genjitsuka" 仏典における仏教-音楽的コンセプトと法会におけるその現実化 (Concepts of Buddhist Music in the Scriptures and their Actualization in Rituals). *Nihon dentō ongaku kenkyū* 日本伝統音楽研究 (Studies on Japanese Traditional Music), 4, 5-25.

Rambelli, F. (2020). "Cosmic Sound, Emptiness, and the Path to the Pure Land. Buddhist Conceptualizations of Music in Japanese Gagaku". Michimoto Tesshin 道元徹心 (ed.), *Nihon bukkyō no tenkai to sono zōkei* 日本仏教の展開とその造形 (Developments in Japanese Buddhism and its Figurative Arts). Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 207-22.

Rambelli, F. (2021). "The Dharma of Music: *Gagaku* and Buddhist Salvation in Medieval Japan". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 48(1), 45-71. https://doi.org/10.18874/jjrs.48.1.2021.45–71.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

Mānasa Bhajare: A Commentary on Sathya Sai Baba's First Public Discourse

Antonio Rigopoulos
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract Ratnākaram Sathyanārāyaṇa Rāju alias Sathya Sai Baba (1926-2011), from the village of Puttaparthi in the Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, has been one of the most popular Indian *gurus*. Scholarly attention has focused on his charismatic figure, purported powers and transnational movement but very little on his teaching activity, though the guru considered it to be an essential part of his mission as an *avatāra*. Indeed he constantly engaged in teaching (*upadeśa*), both through his discourses and his writings. This article offers a commentary to his first public discourse, which he delivered in his ashram of Prasanthi Nilayam on 17 October 1953, on the final day of the Dasara festival.

Keywords Sathya Sai Baba. Guru. Teachings. First public discourse. Mānasa Bhajare.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Open access
Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/010

These days, listening to lectures and discourses
has become just an itch, a disease, a craze.
When they have been heard once
people imagine they have known all.
But the real purpose of the search for Truth
is to liberate oneself.
The yearning must be deep and persistent.
The longing to know and experience the Truth
will then become a Yoga, a process of union…
Do not rest content with mere listening to advice.
What you have listened to
must later be reflected upon,
and what has thus been imprinted on the mind
has later to be experienced
and expressed in thought, word, and deed.
Only thus can the Truth be a treasure in the heart;
only then can it flow through the veins
and manifest in full splendor through you.
(Sathya Sai Baba 1984, 48)

1 Introduction

Ratnākaram Sathyanārāyaṇa Rāju[1] alias Sathya Sai Baba (Telugu: Satya Sāyibābā; 23 November 1926-24 April 2011) from the village of Puttaparthi[2] (Telugu: Puṭṭaparti) in the Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, has been and still is one of the most popular Indian *guru*s: his portraits, smiling under a round mass of hair clad in an ochre robe, are familiar both in public spaces and in private homes. In India and throughout the world his devotees count in the millions, predominantly from the urban upper-middle classes. His towering fame was and is due first and foremost to his alleged miraculous and healing powers, which are inextricably interwoven to his life and message.[3] Scholarly attention has focused on his movement as well as on his charisma and purported powers but very little on his teachings, though the *guru* of Puttaparthi viewed it as a crucial aspect of his mission as a full, divine incarnation (*pūrṇāvatāra*). To be sure, from 1953 up until the end of his life his teaching activity (*upadeśa*) has been intense, both through his public discourses and his writings. Steeped in *bhakti* or devotion, his instruction was based upon

1 He belonged to the Rāju or Bhatrāju caste of bards and genealogists, which is recognised as a Kṣatriya sub-caste. In Andhra Pradesh, the Bhatrājus are generally occupied as teachers or speaking minstrels, popularising sacred literature through songs and poetry. They are supposed to be the offspring of a Kṣatriya female and a Vaiśya male and are mostly Viṣṇu worshippers. They are the only non-Brahmin caste that performs the duties of a religious teacher.

2 On the village of Puttaparthi and Sathya Sai Baba, see Rigopoulos 2014.

3 For an introduction to Sathya Sai Baba and his movement, see T. Srinivas 2010, 2018; S. Srinivas 2008.

Advaita Vedānta metaphysics upholding the non-dualism of the individual Self (*ātman*) and the Absolute *Brahman*, and placed emphasis on ethics and social service through the creation of schools, hospitals and a variety of charitable works as is typical of neo-Hinduism.[4]

His early discourses, translated and edited from their original Telugu[5] into English by his secretary and biographer Prof. Narayan Kasturi (1897-1987),[6] are important since they reveal the basic lines of his teaching and strike me for their simplicity and depth, their freshness and beauty.[7] Whereas in the first five years, i.e. in the period 1953-1957, the *guru* delivered just five speeches,[8] starting from 1958 he intensified his teaching activity true to his word that he would be dedicating himself to the task of *upadeśa* especially after his 32nd year. Thus in the period 1958-62 he delivered fourteen discourses in 1958, six in 1959, ten in 1960, twenty-eight in 1961 and twenty-four in 1962, for a total of eighty-two. Thirty-four of these eighty-two talks took place outside Puttaparthi, with N. Kasturi always by his side, during the *guru*'s tours of North India[9] and his visits to towns and villages of Andhra Pradesh and other southern states.[10] The number of the *guru*'s public discourses increased throughout the decades, to the point that to date 42 volumes of the series *Sathya Sai Speaks* have been edited which comprise his speeches up to 2009. All in all, Sathya Sai Baba delivered over a thousand public discourses during his lifetime.

Unfortunately, there are no recordings of the early Telugu discourses of Sathya Sai Baba. It was Kasturi who scrupulously not-

4 On neo-Hinduism, see Halbfass 1995, 227-350. On Sathya Sai Baba's service (*sevā*) to society, see Aitken 2004, 191-206.

5 The *guru* spoke the Rayalaseema dialect of Telugu, sometimes with verbal endings of modern standard Telugu; see Rama Raju 1985, 292. On rare occasions, he delivered his public speeches in Kannada. Gokak (1983, 5) reports that the *guru* could freely converse in Tamil and Malayalam and could also play with Hindi and English.

6 A distinguished Kannada litterateur and a university lecturer, he first met the *guru* in Bangalore in July 1948 and became a permanent resident at Prasanthi Nilayam's ashram in 1954. On this most important figure, see Rigopoulos 2021.

7 The first eleven volumes of his discourses cover almost twenty years, from 1953 to 1972, and were all compiled by N. Kasturi from notes he took on the spot. Rama Raju observes: "They were again translated into Telugu by scholars like D. Picchayya Sastri and Dr. Amarendra. Telugu has two styles (1) Grandhika (classical) and (2) Vyavaharika (spoken) styles of writing. Baba's first 11 books […] are very near to the classical style and the rest of the books are in the spoken style of Telugu" (Rama Raju 1985, 288).

8 The first three were delivered at his ashram of Prasanthi Nilayam in Puttaparthi in October 1953, February 1955 and August 1956; the fourth was delivered in Venkatagiri in April 1957; the fifth was delivered in Tirupati in July 1957.

9 In Lucknow in April 1961; in Badrinath and Nainital in June 1961.

10 He delivered five speeches in Madras, three in Bangalore, three in Venkatagiri and two in Tirupati.

ed down his words and edited his talks.[11] It was not at all easy for him to capture the *guru*'s words, however, given that he spoke very fast and extempore, never resorting to a prepared speech.[12] Kasturi then translated his discourses into English, always subjecting them to the *guru*'s scrutiny and approval prior to publication.[13] He points out the beauty of Sathya Sai Baba's melodious Telugu, which was inevitably lost in translation.[14] Yet, even though Kasturi states that his translations were a poor rendering of his master's sublime words and that "English is too blunt and too blatant a tool to unravel the subtle treasures of Avataric wisdom" (Kasturi 1982, 259), he still thought that "even when Swami's[15] Telugu nectar is diluted and deformed by translation into English the call does not lose either its urgency or its intimacy" (Kasturi 1982, 252). Referring to the quality of his *guru*'s speeches, he observed:

11 He took down his notes in both Telugu and Kannada, Kannada being the language he was most familiar with. With no tape recorder available, he had to rely on his ability to memorise and write down his *guru*'s words as fast as possible.

12 As Kasturi states: "Imagine my struggle to scribble on the pages of my notebook the series of adjectival or adverbial clauses that hurry one behind the other from His lips and the nouns and the verbs encasing ideas, personalities and principles" (Kasturi 1982, 262). Referring to his own torrential, 'Ganga' speeches, the *guru* observed that "only the swift stream can flush the slime away" (Kasturi 1985, 284).

13 The *guru*'s speeches and writings were first published in the *Sanathana Sarathi* monthly newsletter and later in the *Sathya Sai Speaks* and *Vahini* series. Recently, a digitalized archive of his discourses and writings has been created so as to preserve the original audiotapes and videotapes, his handwritten texts, letters, photos, etc.; see "A Documentary on Sri Sathya Sai Archives". Robert Priddy's idea that Kasturi "acted as a kind of 'spin doctor' and even 'ghost writer' for Sathya Sai Baba" ("'PROFESSOR' N. KASTURI – the 'official biographer' of SB and prolific prosyletizer") is unfounded given that he never substituted himself to his master. The opinion voiced by M. Krishna – an ex-devotee who was close to the *guru* from 1950 to 1957 – that Sathya Sai Baba's lectures "were mostly thoughts borrowed from Mr. Kasturi" (Haraldsson 2013, 186) is also far-fetched. If the proximity with a learned man like Kasturi must have had its impact upon the *guru*, the suggestion that he acted as a kind of *éminence grise* and that Sathya Sai Baba's discourses were borrowed from him is unjustified. Kasturi was literally in awe of the *guru*'s purported omniscience, constantly craving to record his 'revelations' and pearls of wisdom. In 1958, in one of his poems, he celebrated the 'alchemic potency' of his *guru*'s discourses with these words: "Every word a Manthra, every phrase a Sutra; A Gayathri each sentence, Upanishad, a speech; Every hour a minute, a minute but a second" (Kasturi 1982, 249).

14 Even Vinayak Krishna Gokak (1909-1992), one among the most eminent Kannada writers and poets who became a devotee of Sathya Sai Baba in 1966, praised the *guru*'s Telugu as being "incomparably beautiful and expressive" (Gokak 1983, 238). He observes: "The table-talk of Dr. Samuel Johnson and S.T. Coleridge has been justly famous. The casual talk by Sri Ramakrishna to groups of listeners that came to him has been collected together as *Vachana Veda*, – Spoken *Veda*. Baba's talk deserves to be recorded in a similar way. It will be a priceless possession for posterity. But Baba is not just a conversationalist of genius. He is a brilliant writer as well" (Gokak 1983, 211).

15 Kasturi, as all devotees, refers to his *guru* as Swami, i.e. 'lord', 'master' (Sanskrit *svāmin*).

> Baba says His discourse is a 'mixture' prepared and prescribed by the physician [= *guru*] to cleanse, cure, and make us 'whole'-some. He calls them *Sambhashan*, Dialogue, Conversation […]. He is no orator publicity-prone. He does not declaim, circumlocute, or even, speak. He talks to you and you and you and every single you, sitting there, the Arjuns, willing to reach, but afraid to march. (Kasturi 2012, iii)

From the very beginning, Sathya Sai Baba presented his talks as "conversations" and "medicine for the mind" (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 139):

> I do not give "speeches"; My talks are more of the conversation type: I want that you should follow every word of what I say with reverent attention, for your *anandam* is My *aharam* – your joy is My food. You can get *anandam* only by following the advice I give you and this is why I am particular that you should listen carefully and take to heart all that I say. This is not a mere lecture, wherefrom you do not seek new lessons for life. (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 7)

In this article I focus attention on the *guru*'s first public discourse, which he delivered in his ashram of Prasanthi Nilayam on Saturday, 17 October 1953, on the evening of the final day of the ten-day Dasara festival, i.e. on the auspicious Vijayādaśamī,[16] while he sat on the *jhūla*, the floral swing.[17] Sathya Sai Baba was 26 years old. The fact that he gave his speech while seated on a swing is meant to highlight his joyful spontaneity, the flowing of his words of grace being understood as a pure, effortless pastime (*vilāsa*) reinforcing his identification with Kṛṣṇa, paradigm of the juvenile god.[18] Kasturi recalls: "Fortunately, I had my pen in my pocket and someone lent me sheets of paper. I could secure His words and put them together" (Kasturi 1982, 172). It should be noted that there were at least a couple of antecedents to this official discourse. The first was a speech he held in Karur, Tamil Nadu, on 27 October 1947, in which he spoke about his childhood experiences and avatāric mission (Padmanaban 2000, 391, 394), while the second was a speech he held in Puttaparthi on

16 Lit. 'victory tenth'. The culminating day of the nine nights or the Navarātri festival, celebrating the Goddess' defeat of the buffalo-demon Mahiṣāsura. Vijayādaśamī is also the climax of the Rāma Līlā festival, celebrating Rāma's victory over the demon Rāvaṇa; see Simmons, Sen, Rodrigues 2018.

17 See Kasturi 1982, 172; 1985, 283. For the account of an earlier Dasara festival and of the swing ceremony, see Vijayakumari 2000, 168-9.

18 On the *guru*'s sitting on the *jhūla* and his identification with Kṛṣṇa, see Leela n.d., 61; Padmanaban 2000, 280-1, 300-1, 416-18.

1 October 1949, day of Vijayādaśamī, centred on the quality of devotion (Padmanaban 2000, 485, 487).[19]

The fact that he chose Vijayādaśamī to inaugurate his public teaching is noteworthy since it was on this very day that Sai Baba of Shirdi (d. 15 October 1918), his 'previous incarnation', had shed his mortal coil.[20] On every Vijayādaśamī the *guru* celebrated the saint of Shirdi by the ceremonial bathing (*abhiṣeka*) of his silver idol and, particularly in the early days, used to fall into states of trance claiming he visited the village of Shirdi in the State of Maharashtra through 'transcorporeal journeys' (Kasturi 1982, 96-7).[21] In this way, he aimed at emphasising his link and purported oneness with the original Sai Baba. Regarding the sacredness of this day, he observed:

> Today, Vijayadashami, is a thrice-sacred day [...]. Today is the *samaapthi* (conclusion festival) of Dasara. It is also the *samaapthi* (conclusion) of the *yajna saptaha*, the 7-day rite of *puja* and *parayanam* (adoration and recitation). It is also the *samaapthi* Day of the *poorva-avathaaram* (the previous incarnation), the *Samadhi* day (the entombment) of the Shirdi *Sareeram* (body of Shirdi Sai Baba). (Steel 1997, 271)

Vijayādaśamī marked the time of crossing the borders (*sīmollanghan*), being the day when kings such as Śivajī (1627-1680) set out on their campaigns of conquest by invading a neighbouring State.[22] Shirdi Sai Baba's passing away on this day was symbolically interpreted by the saint himself as his crossing over the ocean of worldly existence. On Vijayādaśamī of 1916, two years before his demise, he predicted: "*This is my Simolangan* (my going beyond the boundary of life)" (Narasimhaswami 1942, 135).

In order to analyse Sathya Sai Baba's first public discourse and better appreciate its principal arguments and rhetorical strategy, I will break it up into thematic units and offer a brief commentary to each of them.

19 In his early years, the *guru* also gave occasional lectures to select groups of devotees; see Vijayakumari 2000, 215-16.

20 For an introduction to the popular saint of Shirdi in the Ahmednagar district of the State of Maharashtra, paradigm of an integrative spirituality, see Rigopoulos 2013.

21 On the Vijayādaśamī festival held in Puttaparthi in 1947, see Padmanaban 2000, 383. For some photos of Sathya Sai Baba performing the *abhiṣeka* to the Shirdi Sai Baba idol in 1950, see Padmanaban 2000, 498-9.

22 See Kher 2001, 130. According to tradition, it was on this day that the Pāṇḍavas took up the weapons they had stored earlier during their long stay in exile, being symbolic of their coming out of exile.

Figure 1 Sathya Sai Baba seated on a swing near the Chitravathi River. His cross-legged posture is reminiscent of Shirdi Sai Baba's iconic posture. 1946. Puttaparthi

2 Sathya Sai Baba's Opening Words

> When I was at Uravakonda, studying in the high school, you know I came away one day, threw off My books, and declared that I have My work waiting for Me. The Telugu *pundit* (scholar) described the incident of that evening to you all, in his speech. Well, that day, when I came out publicly as Sai Baba, that first song I taught the gathering in the garden, to which I went from the Telugu *pundit*'s house, was:
>
> *Manasa bhajare guru charanam* |
> *Dustara bhava sagara taranam* ||
>
> I called on all those suffering in the endless round of birth and death to worship the feet of the *guru* (spiritual preceptor), the *guru* that was announcing Himself, who had come again for taking upon Himself the burden of those who find refuge in Him. That was the very first message of Mine to humanity. *Manasa bhajare*: "Worship in the mind!"[23]
>
> I do not need your flower garlands and fruits, things that you get for an *anna*[24] or two; they are not genuinely yours. Give Me something that is yours, something which is clean and fragrant with the perfume of virtue and innocence and washed in the tears of repentance! Garlands and fruits you bring as items in the show, as an exhibition of your devotion: poorer devotees, who cannot afford to bring them, are humiliated and they feel sorry that they are helpless; they cannot demonstrate their devotion in the grand way, in which you are doing it. Install the Lord in your heart and offer Him the fruits of your actions and the flowers of your inner thoughts and feelings. That is the worship I like most, the devotion I appreciate most. (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 1-2)

In 1953, Sathya Sai Baba's audience must not have exceeded a few hundred people: villagers, i.e. cowherds and peasants of Puttaparthi and surrounding rural areas, and middle and upper-class devotees mainly coming from the urban area of Bangalore.[25] The *guru* sets up the listening[26] by recalling the momentous time when he announced that he was Sai Baba, as had just been described in the preced-

23 In Sanskrit, *bhaja* is the imperative, second person singular, of verbal root *bhaj*, "to serve, honor, revere, love, adore" (Monier-Williams 1988, 743). The interjection *re* in *bhajare* is an often used exclamation employed in addressing someone in an informal way. On this peremptory call to worship, see Savkur 2012.

24 A currency unit formerly used in British India, equal to 1/16 of a rupee.

25 The journey to the remote village of Puttaparthi was arduous in the early years. From Bangalore during the rainy season it could take a few days via Penukonda and Bukkapatnam; see Padmanaban 2000, 230-1.

26 In following years, Sathya Sai Baba will acquire the habit of prefacing his talks by chanting a verse or stanza composed extempore, often expressing the core of his instruc-

ing speech by a local *paṇḍit* and Telugu teacher who was none other than his elder brother Seshama Rāju (1911-1985).[27] Indeed, it was Seshama Rāju who prepared the *guru*'s discourse by narrating the occasion that brought to the solemn declaration of his younger brother Sathyanārāyaṇa. This declaration took place on May 23, 1940[28] in Uravakonda, a town about 80 miles away from Puttaparthi where Sathyanārāyaṇa was studying at the time, living at the house of his brother Seshama Rāju who taught in the very same school, i.e. the District Board High School.[29] With the words "I am no longer your Sathya, I am Sai Baba", he announced the beginning of his mission.[30] Sitting on a boulder[31] in the garden of one of his first devotees, the Excise Inspector G.S. Anjaneyulu, he sang the devotional hymn (*bhajan*) which was to become the all-time favorite among his *bhakta*s.[32] Its solemn *incipit Mānasa bhajare gurucaraṇam* ।

tion. He typically addressed his listeners as *divyātmasvarūpulāra*, "embodiments of the divine *ātman*" or *premasvarūpulāra*, "embodiments of pure love"; see Kasturi 1985, 284.

27 On Seshama Rāju, see Padmanaban 2000, 88, 349. On the memorable letter that Sathya Sai Baba wrote to him on May 25, 1947, see Padmanaban 2000, 350-1. Initially a skeptic, Seshama Rāju came to recognise his brother's divinity after 1950. Here is a testimony on Seshama Rāju dating to the early 1950s: "Sri Seshamaraju garu was Swami's elder brother. Because he was a teacher by profession, he would strictly observe discipline. He was not given to chattering much, and was reserved by nature. He did not come often to the Mandir. He did not like the way the young and the old swarmed around Swami, clamoring. While we were swarming around Him, Swami would say: "All of you go downstairs. Seshappa is coming." His desire was that, because Swami was an incarnation of God, He should be solemn and serious, should order people to go on errands for Him. Like the Master that He was, He should go about grandly and royally like a King. He should sit only on a chair. He should never move closely with women. He should not indulge in child-like pranks. But, alas! Swami's thinking was the exact opposite of this. When the elder brother was approaching, Swami would get up and sit in the chair, looking serious. Only men were allowed to sit around His chair and chat with Him. Taking note of that, and feeling happy, Seshappagaru would chat for a while and go away. The minute he left, we all would run like horses and, once again, swarm around Swami. Sometimes, when there was not sufficient time for us to run downstairs before Seshappagaru entered the room, we would hide behind the doors and in the space under the staircase. From there, we would watch Swami's mask of seriousness" (Vijayakumari 2000, 207-8).

28 Or, perhaps more probably, on 21 October 1943. The *guru* was either thirteen or sixteen years old at the time; see Padmanaban 2000, 146-9, 160 fn. 64.

29 On Sathya Sai Baba's school education, see Padmanaban 2000, 128-9.

30 For a detailed presentation of these events and their antecedents, see Padmanaban 2000, 85-161. For the *guru*'s own account of what happened that day, see Sathya Sai Baba 2014, 113-30.

31 It will become known as the Sai Baba *gundu*; see Padmanaban 2000, 122-3, 148, 150, 154.

32 From now on, he would often sing this song; see Padmanaban 2000, 134. For a couple of audios of Sathya Sai Baba singing *Mānasa bhajare*, see "Sri Sathya Saibaba singing 'Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam' Bhajan" and "Sai Baba singing Manasa Bhaja re Guru Charanam". Here is a full translation: "Worship in thy mind the *guru*'s feet; They are [the bridge] for crossing the troublesome ocean of worldly existence. Glory be to the *guru*, the supreme sovereign; Glory be to Lord Sai who is the true *guru*. I bow to

Dustarabhavasāgarataraṇam ॥ can be rendered as follows: "Worship in thy mind the *guru*'s feet;[33] They are [the bridge] for crossing the troublesome ocean of worldly existence".[34] This verse, which Sathya Sai Baba extolled as the greatest *mantra*,[35] encapsulates his fundamental teaching, i.e. that the regal way to attain the ultimate goal of human life, freedom (*mokṣa*) from the painful round of births and deaths, is devotion to the *guru*, the complete surrender of oneself to him.[36] *Gurubhakti* is understood to be both the means *and* the goal[37] and it must be pointed out that Shirdi Sai Baba taught the same lesson to his devotees: "Hence to get safely across this *Maya*, hold fast to the Sadguru's feet, surrender to him single-mindedly. And the fear of worldly life will vanish instantly" (Dabholkar (Hemadpant) 1999, 650, ch. 39, v. 82).[38] Finding refuge at the *guru*'s feet (see *Bhagavadgītā* 2.7d; Edgerton 1964, 9), i.e. in Sai Baba, can only be achieved through a worship (*bhajana*, *pūjā*) that is inward, not based on any exterior

Śiva; to Śiva whose abode is the Aruṇācala hill; I bow to Baba who is the syllable *oṁ*". According to devotee M.L. Leela (1927-1999) who was a testimony of Sathya Sai Baba's early years in the 1940s, the original closing line was not *Oṁkāraṃ Bābā Oṁkāraṃ Bābā Oṁkāraṃ Bābā Oṁ Namo Bābā*, as found in current *bhajan* books, but *Oṁ Śrī Datta Anasūyā Putra Sāī Bābājī Veṅkuśārā*, i.e. "*Oṁ* Lord Datta, the son of Anasūyā, [who is] the Revered Sai Baba, [the 'son' i.e. pupil] of Veṅkuśā"; see Leela n.d., 132. The *guru* taught that the daily, congregational practice of singing devotional hymns was a must: "You eat twice a day for the body; shouldn't you do *bhajan* at least once a day for the mind?" (Gries, Gries 1993, 16). On the importance of *bhajan*s in Sathya Sai Baba's life and teachings, see Padmanaban 2000, 34-5, 272-3, 320-1; Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 114-27 (discourses nos. 22 and 23, delivered on the occasion of an *akhaṇḍa* or twenty-four-hour *bhajan* session held in Bangalore on 10 July, 1959). See also Steel 1997, 24, 41-3. For a collection of *bhajan*s sung in Prasanthi Nilayam, see *Bhajanavali* 1983.

33 A later Prasanthi Nilayam *bhajan* with this same initial line is *Mānasa bhajare gurucaraṇam* । *Sai caraṇam praṇamāmyaham* ॥; see *Bhajanavali* 1983, 53.

34 See Kasturi [1961] 1980, 54-6. *Mānasa bhajare*, the initial words that give the name to the song, might have been influenced by the popular composition *Mānasa saṃcarare* of the 18th century Advaita Vedānta saint and composer of Carnatic music Sadāśiva Brahmendra; see "Manasa Sancharare". Here is a translation: "In your mind roam in *Brahman*, in your mind roam in *Brahman*; A fine peacock feather adorns his [= Kṛṣṇa's] hair, surpass a bud his celebrated cheeks fair; In his consort Lakṣmī's bosom does he reside, as a wish-fulfilling tree is he where his devotees reside; Nectar his moon-like face is to the highest sage, sweet music from his flute completes this visage". Sathya Sai Baba was especially fond of Carnatic music and himself a fine singer. Among his devotees were the twin brothers B.V. Raman (1921-2006) and B.V. Lakshmanan (1921-1996), celebrated masters of Carnatic music who sang for him on several occasions; see Padmanaban 2000, 475.

35 See Vijayakumari 2000, 176.

36 On the frequency of Sathya Sai Baba's references to the *guru* in his early discourses, see Gries, Gries 1993, 78-80.

37 See *Nāradabhaktisūtra*, v. 30. For an introduction to the subject of the *guru*, see Rigopoulos 2009; 2018, 1-8.

38 On these issues, see Rigopoulos 2021, 217-62.

appearance but on inner contemplation,[39] it being an adoration that has mentally renounced all actions and is purely spiritual.[40] Solely in this way can the mind be disciplined and ultimately transcended.[41] This teaching is regarded as the foundation of authentic religious life and symptomatically Kasturi titled this discourse *Mānasa bhajare*. Through the uninterrupted, interiorised worship/remembrance of the *guru*-god one's whole being is believed to be sanctified and transmuted: there is nothing the devotee must do since everything is left to the *guru* and one is totally dependent upon him and his grace. The interiorisation of the *guru* or of the so-called "*guru* principle" (*guru-tattva*) is what leads to the realisation of his omnipresence, the veritable acme of *bhakti*. Here is how Sathya Sai Baba himself explained the *incipit* of the first *bhajan* he taught in a discourse he delivered on 14 January 1964:

> The very first lesson I gave when I declared My identity at Uravakonda was: "*Manasa bhajare guru-caranam, dustara-bhava-sagara-taraṇam*". That is to say: first know that you are in this cycle of birth and death, the ocean of worldly life (*bhavasagaram*); then, resolve on crossing it (*taranam*); then fix on a *guru* or the name and form of God which appeals to you; lastly, dwell on His glory, do *bhajan*, but do it with all your mind. He who is deluded by this relative reality is the worldly person (*samsari*); he who is aware that it is only relatively real is the spiritual practitioner (*sadhaka*). Egoism is the most dangerous illusion that has to be exploded and destroyed. (Sathya Sai Baba 2012, 14-15)

The *guru* underlines that what he wants from his *bhakta*s is their heart and soul, not any hypocritical display of devotion. He openly criticises rich devotees who make a grand exhibition of their faith and humiliate

39 As the refrain of a poem (*abhaṅg*) attributed to the Maharashtrian poet-saint Tukārām (c. 1607-1649) says: "How can my mind wander elsewhere, after I have seen your feet?" (*ātā koṭhe dhāve man | tujhe caraṇ dekhlīyā ||*). For a fine musical rendering, see "Aata kothe dhave Abhang – Sant Tukaram".

40 One is here reminded of a devotional hymn such as the *Śivamānasapūjā*, "The mental adoration of Śiva", a short composition ascribed to Śaṅkara (8th century CE), the great master of non-dual Vedānta; see *Stotraratnāvalī* 1992, 12-13; "Shiva Manasa Puja All Five Shlokas". On inner worship, see *Bhagavadgītā* 5.13, 6.15, 6.27, 6.45, 8.10, 9.13, 9.34, 12.8, 12.14, 17.16, 18.33, 18.51-53 (Edgerton 1964, 29, 33, 35, 37, 43, 47, 49, 62, 63, 80, 86, 88). In *Bhagavadgītā* 10.22c, Kṛṣṇa solemnly states: "Of sense-organs I am the mind" (*indriyāṇāṃ manaś cā 'smi*) (transl. by the Author). On *pūjā* practice, see Valpey 2018.

41 See Murthy 1983, 222-5. As the *guru* once observed: "Man is life with desire; life without desire is God. Mind is desire: when mind disappears, desire disappears" (Hislop 1979, 18).

the poor who cannot afford to buy flower garlands and fruits.[42] Again, Sathya Sai Baba emphasises that the divine must be installed in the heart, i.e. that "the feet of the *guru*" must be worshipped interiorly,[43] not through any pompous, outward ritual: what we have is a critique of ritual theatricality[44] in favour of inner contemplation.[45] What the master requires from his *bhakta*, be he/she rich or poor, is his/her own self, not any outer thing. Preliminarily, this entails an act of sincere repentance,[46] since only inner purification will predispose to genuine worship, i.e. to the offering of the fruits of one's actions and the flowers of one's thoughts and feelings to one's "chosen deity" (*iṣṭadevatā*).

3 The Reeducation of Mankind

> In shops, things are kept in separate packets and each one specialises in some particular article or set of articles. But, in an exhibition, hundreds of shops join to make all varieties of things available and there is a great deal of window-dressing, arrangement, and display. I have been, all these days, generally giving individual advice, like the packets available in shops and giving answers to individual questions. This "speech", today, is a new experience for you. I am addressing a gathering today, but even though it may be new to you, for Me it is not new. I have given advice to large gatherings before, though not in this appearance. Whenever *nira-*

42 Apparently, the *guru* always disliked the traditional offerings of flowers and fruits; see Murthy 1983, 223. As he remarked in a discourse held on 16 April 1964: "You must offer the Lord, not the flowers that plants grow; that will reward the plant, not you! The Lord wants you to offer the lotus that blooms in the lake of your heart, the fruit that ripens on the tree of your earthly career, not the lotus and the fruit available in the market place! You may ask, 'Where can we find the Lord?' Well, He has given His address, in Chapter 18, *Sloka* 61 of the Bhagavad Gita. Turn to it and note it down. '*Easwara sarvabhutanam hriddese, Arjuna, tishthati*'. 'O Arjuna, the Lord resides in the heart of all beings'. Now, after knowing that, how can you look down on any living being in contempt or how can you revel in hating him or indulge in the pastime of ridiculing? Every individual is charged with the Divine Presence, moved by Divine attributes. Love, honour, friendliness - that is what each one deserves from you. Give these in full measure" (Sathya Sai Baba 2012, 120-1).

43 On *guru* worship, see Sathya Sai Baba 2000.

44 On these issues, see Sax 2009, 79-105; Cremonesi, Fava, Scarpi 2018.

45 This teaching calls to mind Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount* and his critique of the hypocrites, who "love to say their prayers standing up in synagogue and at the street-corners, for everyone to see them", and his advice to "go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place" (Mt. 6,5-6; *The New English Bible. New Testament* 1961, 10).

46 On Sathya Sai Baba's call to repentance in his early discourses, see Gries, Gries 1993, 162.

> *kara* (formless) becomes *sakara* (one with form), it has to fulfill the mission and it does so in various ways. But, the one purpose – the reeducation of man – persists, whatever the *yuga* (the era).
>
> The first sixteen years of this life have been, as I have often told you, the period, when *bala leela* (divine child sport) predominated and the next sixteen is being spent mostly in *mahimas* (miracles) in order to give *santosha* (joy) to this generation. Joy and contentment are short-lived sensations; you have to catch that mood and make it a permanent possession: *ananda* (bliss). After the thirty-second year, you will see Me active more and more, in the task of *upadesha* (spiritual instruction) – teaching erring humanity and in directing the world along the path of *sathya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, and *prema* (truth, righteousness, peace, and love). Not that I am determined to exclude *leela* and *mahima* from My activity after that. I only mean that reestablishing *dharma*, correcting the crookedness of the human mind and guiding humanity back to *sanathana dharma* (eternal, universal religion) will be My task thereafter.
>
> Do not be led away by doubt and vain argument; do not question how and whether I can do all this. The cowherds of Brindavan also doubted whether the little boy, who grew in their midst, could lift Govardhanagiri and hold it aloft! The thing needed is faith and yet more faith. (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 2-3)

By using the story of the difference between single shops and an exhibition in which hundreds of shops join together,[47] the *guru* explains that whereas prior to this public occasion he had mainly given individual advice answering to individual questions, from now on he will also be giving advice to large gatherings. He argues that this is nothing new for him, given that in all prior incarnations he used to give both individual and public instruction. Here, Sathya Sai Baba has in mind the famous passage of *Bhagavadgītā* (*BhG*) 4.1-3, in which Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he taught this same eternal *yoga* or discipline to Vivasvat, who in turn told it to Manu who then passed it on to Ikṣvāku. Thus received in a line of succession, the royal seers (*rājarṣi*) knew it but in the long course of time it became lost and therefore needs to be proclaimed once again to each and all. The idea is that the one essential mission of all *avatāra*s in all *yuga*s is always the same, i.e. the reestablishment of *dharma* as Kṛṣṇa solemnly proclaims to Arjuna in *BhG* 4.7-8:

47 Even in another early speech he presented himself as a shopkeeper giving what is asked for; see Gries, Gries 1993, 251.

For whatever of the right (*dharma*)
A languishing appears, son of Bharata,
A rising up of unright (*adharma*),
Then I send Myself forth.
For protection of the good,
And for destruction of evil-doers,
To make a firm footing for the right,
I come into being in age after age. (Edgerton 1964, 23)

As the self-proclaimed *avatāra* of the present age, Sathya Sai Baba constantly pointed out that his mission was that of reeducating erring humanity to the eternal values of truth (*satya*), righteousness (*dharma*), peace (*śānti*) and love (*preman*), i.e. to *sanātanadharma*, the 'eternal religion'.[48] For this reason, he assigned to himself the task of renovating and recasting education by establishing schools in which male and female students could be trained in human values. The education in human values (EHV) based upon *satya*, *dharma*, *śānti* and *preman* – to which *ahiṃsā* or nonviolence will later be added – will be the guiding principle of his teaching, being implemented at all levels of the Sathya Sai Baba Organisation and in all the educational institutions he created, in Andhra Pradesh as well as throughout India, primarily through a variety of service activities (*sevā*).[49] The assumption is that these values are shared by all humans, though it is recognised that they require to be contextualised and adapted to the culture of each society. The *guru* taught that through such practical education men and women could rid themselves of their ego and realise their original nature, the divine *ātman*.

Interesting is Sathya Sai Baba's subdivision of his avatāric career into three phases, the first sixteen years of his life being mainly characterised by childish play (*bālalīlā*), the subsequent sixteen years by miracles (*mahiman*), and starting from his 32nd year up to the end of his life by teaching (*upadeśa*). In retrospect, it can be said that he was faithful to such programme though as he himself noted *līlā*s[50] and *mahiman*s were not at all excluded from his action but continued to play a significant role throughout his life.[51] The final aim is to lead all dev-

48 His insistence on the primacy of education in his early discourses is noteworthy; see Gries, Gries 1993, 53-5. In particular, see Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 23-33, 41-4, 86-91, 139-44, 180-3 (discourses 5, 6, 8, 17, 19, 26 and 33). On the *guru*'s views on education, see Gokak 1983, 115-45.

49 On the EHV programme at the beginning of the 1980s, see *The Path Divine: For Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas, Group III* 1983. For an overview, see Romano 1999. On the implementation of EHV programmes, see Arweck, Nesbitt, Jackson 2005. See also Sankar 2004.

50 On the notion of *līlā*, see Schweig 2018.

51 For a hagiographical account of Sathya Sai Baba's many miracles in his early years, see Purnaiya [1976] 2003. For an introduction to the *guru*'s wonders, see Babb 1987,

otees to enduring bliss (*ānanda*), which can only be achieved through an inner transformation and not merely by experiencing the variety of his astonishing deeds (a vast array of 'materialisations' starting with *vibhūti* or sacred ash, miraculous cures, etc.), since these are said to afford only temporary joy (*saṃtoṣa*).[52] As he once explained in a discourse he held on 1 January 1992, in order to be fixed in *ānanda* one must achieve the perfect union of the *sat*, i.e. divine reality, with the *cit*, i.e. the individual consciousness.[53]

By identifying himself with Kṛṣṇa, Sathya Sai Baba tells his audience that they should not doubt how and whether he will be successful in reestablishing *dharma*. As in all Indian religions, doubt (*saṃśaya*) is considered to be poisonous since it paralyses the mind: Arjuna's case in the *Bhagavadgītā* is paradigmatic in this regard. The main function of the *guru* is precisely that of helping his pupils to overcome all doubts by cultivating firm faith in God or the master and in oneself (*ātmaviśvāsa*). Moreover, by instituting a parallelism between the cowherds of Brindavan, who doubted that the little Kṛṣṇa who grew in their midst could lift the Govardhana mountain with his finger,[54] and the cowherds of Puttaparthi, who doubt that the 'little Sathya' who grew in their midst will ever be able to achieve his avatāric task, the *guru* invites them to put all their suspicions and vain arguments aside and have full faith in him. Just like Shirdi Sai Baba, who insisted on the necessity of *niṣṭhā* or faith (Rigopoulos 1993, 273-4, 287-9), Sathya Sai Baba taught that faith was the one indispensable virtue along the spiritual path and constantly treated this topic from his early discourses (Gries, Gries 1999, 61-2).

4 The Secret of Spiritual Success

> Once, Krishna and Arjuna were going together along the open road. Seeing a bird in the sky, Krishna asked Arjuna, "Is that a dove?". He replied, "Yes, it is a dove". He asked Arjuna, "Is it an eagle?". Arjuna replied promptly, "Yes, it is an eagle". "No, Arjuna, it looks like a crow to Me. Is it not a crow?", asked Krishna. Arjuna replied, "I am sorry, it is a crow beyond doubt". Krishna laughed and chided him for his agreeing to whatever suggestion was given. But,

168-86; Rigopoulos 2016, 3-28.

52 On *saṃtoṣa*, see Murthy 1983, 180-2. On the *guru*'s *vibhūti*, see Bhatnagar 2011.

53 On Sathya Sai Baba's references to *Brahman* as *sat-cit-ānanda* in his early discourses, see Gries, Gries 1993, 170.

54 On this famous episode narrated in both the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (10.25) and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (5.11.1-25), see Dimmitt, van Buitenen 1978, 116-17.

> Arjuna said, "For me, Your words are far weightier than the evidence of my eyes; You can make it a crow, a dove, or an eagle and when You say it is a crow, it must be one". Implicit faith is the secret of spiritual success.
>
> The Lord loves not the *bhakta* (devotee), but his *bhakti*, remember. The Lord's grace is like rain, pure water, falling equally everywhere, but its taste gets changed according to the soil, through which it flows. So also, the Lord's words are sweet to some, bitter to others. The Lord's ways are mysterious; He blessed Vidura[55] with the words, "Be destroyed", and Dushasana[56] with the words, "Live for a thousand years". He meant that Vidura's 'I' will be destroyed and that the wicked Dushasana will have to suffer the ills and tribulations of this world for ten centuries.[57] You do not know the real reasons behind the actions of the Lord. You cannot understand the motives of other men, who are almost like you in everything, actuated by the same motives and having the same likes and dislikes! But yet, how easily you discover the motives of the One, who is far, far above the level of man! How glibly you talk and judge of something that is as strange to you as atmosphere to a fish! (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 3-4)

With the above story of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, Sathya Sai Baba offers a good example of what it means to have complete, unquestioning faith in the words of one's *guru*. Each and every word of the *guru* is thought to carry a profound meaning and is never to be taken lightly. Thus the pupil must listen with utmost attention to whatever the *guru* utters and must cultivate an attitude of unquestioning faith, which entails one's full surrender (*śaraṇāgati*, *prapatti*) to him: indeed, for a disciple the *guru*'s words are far weightier – in Sanskrit *garīyas*, comparative of *guru*, lit. 'heavy' – than the evidence of his/her own eyes.[58] This story was a favourite of Sathya Sai Baba who, with a few variants, often repeated it in his discourses.[59] The source from which he got it is probably the Bengali mystic Rāmakṛṣṇa (1836-

55 A son of sage Vyāsa by a *śūdra* slave girl. An incarnation of *dharma* as a sort of lower double of Yudhiṣṭhira, Vidura gave good advice to both the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas and in the *Mahābhārata* war sided with the Pāṇḍavas.

56 Lit. 'hard to rule', Duḥśāsana was one of the hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. When the Pāṇḍavas lost their wife Draupadī in the rigged dicing match with Duryodhana, the leader of the Kauravas, Duḥśāsana dragged her forward by the hair humiliating her. For this outrage, Bhīma vowed he would drink his blood and he fulfilled his promise on the sixteenth day of the *Mahābhārata* war.

57 On these issue, see Aithal 2009.

58 On surrender in Sathya Sai Baba's early discourses, see Gries, Gries 1993, 197-8.

59 See Gries, Gries 1993, 259. See also Balasubramanya 2015, ch. 16 ("Being a Platform Hero but a Practical Zero").

1886), who is reported to have told a similar tale carrying the same moral lesson.[60] We read:

> One day at Dakshineswar, an arrogant but sincere young devotee was raising objections against what the Master was telling him. He continued arguing even when the Master had repeated his statement several times, at which he gave him a mild rebuke and said, "What sort of a man are you? I say it again and again and you don't accept it". The heart of the young man was touched and he said, "When you say it, I accept it of course. It was for the sake of argument that I spoke thus". On hearing it the Master smilingly said with an expression of delight in his face, "Do you know what devotion to the spiritual teacher is like? One is certain to perceive immediately whatever the spiritual teacher mentions. Arjuna had that devotion. One day while driving with Arjuna in a chariot Krishna looked at the sky and said, 'See, friend, how beautiful is the flock of pigeons flying there!' Arjuna saw it and immediately said, 'Yes, friend, very beautiful pigeons indeed'. The very next moment Sri Krishna looked again and said, 'How strange, friend! They are by no means pigeons'. Arjuna saw them and said, 'Quite so, friend, they are not pigeons at all'. Now try to understand the matter; Arjuna's truthfulness was unquestionable, he never could have flattered Krishna when he said so. But he had such great devotion to him and faith in his words that he actually saw with his eyes whatever Krishna described to him, right or wrong". (Saradananda 2008, 397-8)[61]

Sathya Sai Baba further points out that God is absolutely impartial given that his rain, i.e. grace (*kṛpā*), falls equally everywhere.[62] The Lord has no preferences for any *bhakta* whatsoever but is attracted solely by *bhakti*, he being pure love, *preman*: though his ways are unfathomable and humans will never be able to comprehend them, still they are infallibly righteous notwithstanding the fact that his words may be bitter to someone and sweet to others. That the taste of the

60 Sathya Sai Baba held Rāmakṛṣṇa in high esteem and often mentioned him in his early discourses, i.e. at least twenty times starting in 1963; see Gries, Gries 1993, 273. He once observed that Rāmakṛṣṇa "was fascinated by the friendship exemplified by Arjuna and Krishna" (Gries, Gries 1993, 273). Rāmakṛṣṇa himself must have received this story through oral transmission. Though some recent writers have set this episode in Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa's capital on the Saurāṣṭra peninsula of Gujarat – see Srivastava 2017, section 88 ("Arjuna sees a bird changing form"); Vanamali 2018, 278 – I could not identify a source for it neither in the *Mahābhārata* nor in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

61 See also Râmakrishna [1949] 1963, 193. On Rāmakṛṣṇa's stories and parables, see Sen 2010. For a psychoanalytical interpretation of this story, see Kakar [1991] 2007, 41-63.

62 These words are reminiscent of Mt 5,45-46, in which Jesus in the *Sermon on the Mount* talks of the heavenly Father "who makes his sun rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the honest and the dishonest" (*The New English Bible. New Testament* 1961, 10).

rain changes according to the good or bad soil, i.e. the good or bad person through which it flows,[63] means that each and every one gets what he/she deserves as per the law of karmic retribution. Sathya Sai Baba uses a comparison connected with farming, evidently in order to be better understood by his audience.[64]

But even beyond the law of *karman* which God has fixed, the *guru* wishes to emphasise that man will never be able to understand the motives which underlie and determine the Lord's actions, his supremely free and spontaneous *līlā*, though in his foolish pride he/she may speculate on them, vainly talking and judging. The *guru* notes that humans do not even understand the motives of other humans, who are driven by the same impulses and have the same likes and dislikes: *a fortiori*, the Lord's reasons are said to be as strange to man as atmosphere is to a fish, there being an insurmountable hiatus between God and his creatures.[65] As he often liked to repeat love, i.e. God, has no reason or season.[66] What the *guru* underlines is the mystery and unknowability of God and of he himself as an *avatāra*. What man is invited to do is to surrender himself/herself to the divine and cultivate an implicit faith in the master: this is the only cure for the disease of birth and death (*saṃsāra*), the essential quality that must characterise the aspirant (*sādhaka*).

5 Pains Indicate Birth of a New Life

> There are four types of persons; the "dead", who deny the Lord and declare that they alone exist, independent, free, self-regulating, and self-directed; the "sick", who call upon the Lord when some calamity befalls them, or when they feel temporarily deserted by the usual sources of succour; the "dull", who know that God is the eternal companion and watchman, but who remember it only off and on, when the idea is potent and powerful; and lastly, the "healthy", who have steady faith in the Lord and who live in His comforting creative presence always. You proceed from "death" to "life" and

63 The illustration of the good and bad soil calls to mind Jesus' parable of the sower; see Mt 13,1-23; Mk 4,1-20; Lk 8,4-15. Elsewhere, Sathya Sai Baba has commented on what happens when the soil is good: "When the thirst for liberation and the revelation of one's reality is acute, a strange and mysterious force in Nature will begin operating. When the soil is ready, the seed appears from somewhere! The spiritual Guru will be alerted and the thirst will get quenched" (Sathya Sai Baba 1981, 97).

64 It should be noted that he was always delighted in going to villages and meeting villagers; see Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 128.

65 Along these lines, on another occasion the *guru* of Puttaparthi remarked: "How can an ant (man) calculate the depths of the sea (God)?" (Gries, Gries 1993, 227).

66 See "Sai Student: Experiences and Musings".

> from "illness" to "health" by the experience of the buffetings of the world. The world is a very essential part of the curriculum of man; through the agony of search is born the infant, wisdom. The pains are worthwhile; they indicate the birth of new life. From *ashanti* (restlessness) you get *prashanti* (absolute peace), from *prashanti* to *prakanti* (bright spiritual illumination), and from *prakanti*, *paramjyoti* (supreme divine radiance).
>
> It is like the alternating of night and day, this recurrence of joy and grief. Night and day are twin sisters, both are necessary to increase the fertility of the soil, to activate and refresh it. They are like summer and winter. There are some who ask Me, "Baba! Make this summer less hot!" But, in the heat of summer, the Earth takes in the needed energy from the Sun, so that when the rains come, she may yield a plentiful harvest. "Cold" and "heat" are both in the plan of God and yours is only to know this and treat both as valuable. (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 4)

Sathya Sai Baba's classification of people in four types, i.e. the "dead", who deny the Lord and live egotistically as if they alone existed; the "sick", who remember God only in times of difficulty; the "dull", who acknowledge God as their eternal companion but are not steady in cultivating such awareness, and the "healthy", who have faith in the Lord and live in his presence at all times, is reminiscent of *BhG* 7.15-17 where Kṛṣṇa distinguishes the "deluded men", who do not resort to him and are of a demonic nature – who may be likened to the "dead" – from the fourfold who worship him, i.e. the "afflicted" – who may be assimilated to the "sick" – the "knowledge-seekers", the "goal-oriented" and the "possessors of knowledge". These latter ones are the best and can be equated with the "healthy", being disciplined and of single devotion (Edgerton 1964, 39).[67]

The world with all its experiences, both good and bad, though being illusory (*māyā*) is the arena in which one is called to develop *viveka*, discrimination,[68] and thus proceed from "death" to "life" and from "illness" to "health". The idea is that only through the agony of search, only by clearing all doubts and developing an inner view, can *jñāna* or wisdom be born. Thus the difficulties and pains one experiences in life are to be regarded as useful, as a sign of divine grace, since they are the 'labour pains' through which one may be reborn to spiritual life.

67 The *guru* distinguished four other classes of people: those who pay attention to own faults and others' excellences; those who pay attention to own excellences and others' excellences; those who pay attention to own excellences and others' faults; those who present own faults as excellences and others' excellences as faults; see Gries, Gries 1993, 145.

68 On the indispensable cultivation of *viveka* in Sathya Sai Baba's early discourses, understood as the chief aim of education and often coupled with the twin virtue of *vairāgya* or detachment, see Gries, Gries 1993, 40-1, 48.

The dualistic world in which we are immersed with alternating days and nights, this whole universe with its inevitable mixture (*miśra*) of joy and grief is itself our 'university,' i.e. our *guru* from which we must learn what is essential in order to achieve final liberation (*mokṣa*).[69] Sathya Sai Baba mentions the stages of this *itinerarium ad Deum* leading from darkness (*tamas*) to light (*jyotis*): from a condition of worldly entanglement and restlessness (*aśānti*) to detachment and supreme peace (*praśānti*), from supreme peace to spiritual illumination (*prakānti*), and from spiritual illumination to the supreme light (*paraṃjyotis*) of one's communion with the Lord.

If the real *guru* or *sadguru* lies within us, yet the idea is that man must discover him also in the exterior world since God is omnipresent and fills everything and everyone being 'the fullness of the full'. As *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 5.1 states: "The world there is full; The world here is full; Fullness from fullness proceeds. After taking fully from the full, It still remains completely full" (*pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṃ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate । pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate ॥*) (Olivelle 1996, 72-3). This is the reason why Sathya Sai Baba liked to encourage his devotees by telling them: "Life is a challenge, meet it; Life is love, share it; Life is a dream, realize it; Life is a game, play it" (Gries, Gries 1993, 107). Moreover, he reminded them of the four 'f's: "Follow the master; Face the devil; Fight to the end; Finish the game!" (Murthy 1983, 178). On the other hand, if man does not learn his/her lessons, he/she will inevitably have to 'repeat the class' and be reborn in *saṃsāra*.[70]

Once more the *guru* illustrates his point by having recourse to agriculture, saying that the twin sisters of night and day, just like summer and winter, are both necessary in order to increase the soil's fertility and activate life. Many villagers of Puttaparthi and surrounding areas, believing him to be endowed with exceptional powers, often asked him to alter nature's course. For instance, he would be asked to send the rain so as to prevent drought or, as he himself recalls, "to make this summer less hot". However, he typically refused to interfere with the laws of nature. Only in exceptional cases, such as when Puttaparthi was threatened by floodwaters, did he claim to in-

69 As he once stated: "Do not confine your studies to this Circle and these books. The Universe is the University for you […] all beings and things in the Universe. Approach these teachers with awe, reverence and humility: they will respond with their lessons" (Murthy 1983, 158). Moreover: "The true *guru* is nature, creation, the world" (Gries, Gries 1993, 80). Along these lines, he also observed that "the best scripture is the world" (Gries, Gries 1993, 79).

70 Kasturi wrote in his autobiography: "I have no knowledge of the years when I was last on earth. But I must congratulate myself that, this time, I have had good schooling. Now! I am waiting to receive my School Leaving Certificate – namely, the signal to leap into the warm lap of Sai, for the final rest in Him" (Kasturi 1982, 390).

tervene through his divine will (*saṃkalpa*) changing the course of natural phenomena (Steel 1997, 146-7).

6 Shine Forth in Your Real Nature

> Thorny plants and thorn-less plants are both there in nature; the wise man knows the value of both; he plants the thorn-less one and surrounds it with the thorny ones, so that what he fosters is left unharmed.
>
> Activity can save as well as kill; it is like the cat, which bites; it bites the kitten, in order to carry it in its mouth to a place of safety; it bites the rat, in order to kill and eat. Become the kitten and work will rescue you like a loving mother. Become a rat and you are lost.
>
> God draws the individual towards itself; it is the nature of both to have this affinity, for they are the same. They are like the iron and the magnet. But, if the iron is rusty, covered with layers of dirt, the magnet is unable to attract. Remove the impediment; that is all you have to do. Shine forth in your real nature and the Lord will draw you into His bosom. Trials and tribulations are the means, by which this cleansing is done. That is why Kunti[71] prayed to Krishna, "Give us always grief, so that we may never forget Thee".[72] They are like the dietary and other restrictions that the doctor prescribes to supplement the effect of the drug of *namasmarana* (remembrance of God). (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 4-5)

71 In the *Mahābhārata* she is the daughter of the Yādava king Śūra and the sister of Vasudeva. She married Kuntibhoja – hence her name Kuntī – and subsequently Pāṇḍu whom she chose at a *svayaṃvara*, thus becoming the mother of the three eldest Pāṇḍava brothers: Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and Arjuna. In her maidenhood she had shown great respect to sage Durvāsas who had blessed her with a charm by means of which she could have a child by any god she pleased to invoke. Her so-called Pāṇḍava sons Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and Arjuna were actually the sons of the gods Dharma, Vāyu and Indra respectively. Kuntī was also, secretly, the mother of Karṇa, result of an earlier union with Sūrya, the sun. Towards the end of the *Mahābhārata*, she retires to the forest with Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gandhārī where she dies with them in a fire.

72 Sathya Sai Baba reiterated this point in another of his early discourses in September 1960: "Trouble is the bait, with which the fish is hauled out of the water. Kunti asked that Krishna should continue giving her and her sons all kinds of misery, so that He may grant them His grace continuously" (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 157). See also Gries, Gries 1993, 267. The source for Kuntī's prayer is *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 1.8.25: "I wish that all those calamities [of the *Mahābhārata* war] would happen again and again so that we could see you, the world teacher [= Kṛṣṇa], again and again, for seeing you means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths" (*vipadaḥ santu tāḥ śaśvat tatra tatra jagadguro* | *bhavato darśanaṃ yat syād apunar bhavadarśanam* ||). For a modern commentary to her prayer, see Prabhupāda 1978, 43-51.

Sathya Sai Baba again resorts to an illustration taken from farming.[73] The good farmer, i.e. the wise man, is he/she who has discrimination and knows the value of all plants, the thorn-less ones as well as the thorny ones. The thorn-less ones are the ones that need to be planted with utmost care and fenced by the thorny ones in order to be protected and grow safely: they correspond to the tender plant of devotion, which in order to grow in man's heart needs to be protected from the pests of evil agents and worldly passions by an adequate fence, i.e. the thorny plants of discipline and spiritual *sādhanā* without which the mind is like a wild elephant in rut.[74]

Activity or *karman*, warns the *guru*, is that which decides of one's life since it can either save or kill man.[75] If the dutiful, dharmic action is performed at the best of one's capacities in a spirit of detachment and dedication to the Lord, with no craving for the fruit (*phala*) that will derive from it, then it is pure and it is thought to save man since it loses its binding force freeing him/her from all saṃsāric shackles, as per the doctrine of *naiṣkarmya* taught in *BhG* 2.47-48, 3.4 ff. On the other hand, if man performs his/her actions with attachment, egotistically longing for their fruits, then the power of *karman* is said to inexorably bind him/her all more tightly to the painful round of rebirths. Finally, it all depends on the intentions that inspire and determine one's actions.

Sathya Sai Baba points out that if man becomes like a kitten and surrenders his/her whole mind and heart to the Lord, dedicating all his/her actions to him, then the mother cat, i.e. God, will take total care of his devotee carrying him/her safely and lovingly in her mouth. But if man becomes like a rat, being carried away by his/her passions and desires, he/she will inevitably be lost ending up being eaten and killed by the cat, i.e. he/she will be inexorably trapped in *saṃsāra*, being bound to it all the more forcefully.[76] Here, the *guru* had in mind the doctrine of *prapatti* or full surrender to the Lord, the culmination of *bhakti* as it is taught in the southern Teṅkalai school of Śrīvaiṣṇavism according to which a devotee must surrender himself/herself to God as a kitten passively and confidently lets himself/herself be carried in his/her mother's mouth wherever she pleases. The *bhakta* must abandon all self-effort at salvation and wait for this

73 On the frequent analogies of farming and fencing in the *guru*'s early discourses, see Gries, Gries 1993, 236.

74 On the need for discipline, see Gries, Gries 1993, 47.

75 On acting as a way of salvation, see Haberman 1988.

76 In another of his early discourses, Sathya Sai Baba equated the cat with the body, saying that it must be fed something so that it is strong enough to catch rats, i.e. attack wicked tendencies; see Gries, Gries 1993, 230.

spontaneous gift of grace from God.[77] Sathya Sai Baba explained self-surrender as follows:

> Surrender is when doer, deed, and object are all God. It cannot be forced. It comes naturally to a heart filled with love for God. God is as a spring of fresh and sweet water in the heart. The best tool to dig a well to that inexhaustible source and savor its sweetness is *japa*, the repetition of the name of the Lord. Dedicate every action to the Lord and there will be no place for ego. That is the quickest way for the ego to subside. (Hislop 1979, 17-18)

The Lord is compared to a magnet and each individual soul to iron: the magnet irresistibly attracts the iron, the two being really one and the same.[78] But what prevents the Lord from attracting the individual souls (*jīva*s) to himself are the layers of rust and dirt (*mala*) that cover them, i.e. the impurities and defilements that pollute each *jīva* and which are due to the illusory deception of ignorance (*avidyā*). The *sādhaka* is therefore called to remove *avidyā*, the essential impediment, since nothing else is needed. Then the *ātman* will shine forth in its pristine splendour and the Lord will draw it to his bosom, in the blissful communion of pure love.

The cleansing leading to real knowledge (*vidyā*, *jñāna*), sole antidote to *avidyā*, must be achieved through *bhakti*, the quintessential characteristic of which is the remembrance (*smaraṇa*) of the Lord.[79] This is the reason why the *guru* states that trials and tribulations are to be welcome as the means to achieve such catharsis, since man is drawn to remember his Beloved and call for his help especially in times of difficulty, when he/she is confronted with physical and mental ailments. Sathya Sai Baba recalls the figure of Kuntī, who in the *Mahābhārata* war lost all her dear ones and was subject to all sorts of tribulations and yet prayed that such calamities be always given to her so as to never forget her Lord, i.e. Kṛṣṇa. The *guru* observes that such trials are like the restrictions that a doctor gives to his/her patient in order that the medicine of the remembrance of the Lord's name (*nāmasmaraṇa*) be most efficacious. The master is popularly revered as the "doctor of the illness of existence",[80] the one thanks to whom the painful wheel of births and deaths is put to a definite stop.

77 On *prapatti* and Śrīvaiṣṇavism, see Raman 2007. The major theologian of the Teṅkalai school was Piḷḷai Lokācārya (trad. 1264-1369).

78 On the analogy of the magnet in Sathya Sai Baba's early discourses, see Gries, Gries 1993, 242.

79 On the practice of *nāmasmaraṇa*, see Tulpule 1984, 127-45; *Kalyāṇa Kalpataru* 5(1) 1938.

80 *Bhavarogavaidya*; *Gurugītā*, v. 93. See also *Gurugītā*, v. 34. On this famous hymn to the *guru*, see Rigopoulos 2009, 225-318.

It is hard to overstate the significance of the practice of *nāmasmaraṇa* in Sathya Sai Baba's teaching, given that it constitutes its cornerstone being constantly recommended in all of his discourses. We read:

> Remembrance of the Lord's name is the method of crossing over the ocean of the worldly life for this age; remembering the Lord by means of His Name is enough to save man. The Lord is Aanandamaya (of the nature of Bliss); He is also Aananda (divine bliss), which is to be tasted through the Name. It is Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss Absolute). You may doubt whether such a small word like Rama or Sai or Krishna can take you across the boundless sea of worldly life. People cross vast oceans on a tiny raft; they are able to walk through dark jungles with a tiny lamp in their hands. The raft need not be as big as the sea. The Name, even the Pranava (Om) which is smaller, has vast potentialities. The recitation of the Name is like the operation of boring, to tap underground water; it is like the chisel-stroke that will release the image of God imprisoned in the marble. Break the encasement and the Lord will appear.[81]

Revered in the *vaiṣṇava* tradition as the third of the nine limbs (*navāṅgāni*) of *bhakti*, *nāmasmaraṇa* can be practised in a variety of ways: one is called to repeat the chosen name vocally, i.e. muttering it in a low tone (as in the practice of *japa*) and most importantly mentally, i.e. worshipping it in the heart at all times, typically associating it with the charming form (*rūpa*) of the Beloved. Sathya Sai Baba observed that as an ant moves slowly but steadily towards its goal, climbing over all obstacles, in the same way each and every man ought to follow the path of *nāmasmaraṇa*. He further noticed that though the mind is hard to control being led astray by all sorts of distractions like a snake or a monkey, yet it can be disciplined and charmed into innocence by the sweet music of the Lord's name (see Gries, Gries 1993, 227, 251). Significantly, in the *Bhaktisūtra*s ascribed to Nārada the sage solemnly states that the highest, quintessential characteristic of *bhakti* consists in the offering of all of one's acts to the Lord – physical, vocal, and mental – and in feeling the highest perturbation and pang of separation on the occasions of

81 "Sai Inspires. Loving Sairam and Greetings from Prasanthi Nilayam". On the relevance of *nāmasmaraṇa* in Sathya Sai Baba's early discourses, see Gries, Gries 1993, 130-4. On the weightiness of the practice of *nāmasmaraṇa* in the Sathya Sai Baba Organisation, see Shah 1980, 97-111 (ch. 7, "Namasmarana Movement"). On the *guru*'s 108 names, see Kasturi 1979.

losing the remembrance of him (*sūtra* 19).[82] Cultivating the remembrance of the Lord avoiding all distractions, living at his presence realising that "in Him we live and move, in Him we exist" (*Acts* 17,28; *The New English Bible. New Testament* 1961, 231), is the alpha and omega of a *bhakta*'s life.

7 Do Not Give Up Your *Sādhanā*

> Sai is *sarvajanapriya* (beloved to all people) and so, any name, which gives you joy, you can take up. Tastes differ according to temperament and the character one has earned by generations of activity, as a living being in the world. The proprietor of a coffee house goes to the nearby druggist for a pill, to ward off his headache and the druggist, when he gets a headache, goes to the coffee house for a cup of coffee, which he thinks will cure him. Men are like that; *loko bhinna ruchih* (tastes of people differ). The *jnani* says, *sarvam brahma mayam*: "In God is all". Another, a *yogi*, says all is energy; a third, who is a *bhakta*, says all is the play of Bhagawan (the Lord); each according to his taste and according to his progress in *sadhana* (spiritual practice). Do not hurry or ridicule them, for they are all pilgrims, trudging along the same road.
>
> *Sadhana* is most required to control the mind and the desires, after which it runs. If you find that you are not able to succeed, do not give up the *sadhana*, but do it more vigorously, for it is the subject in which you did not get passing marks, that requires special study, is it not? *Sadhana* means inner cleanliness as well as external cleanliness. You do not feel refreshed, if you wear unwashed clothes after your bath, do you? Nor do you feel refreshed, if you wear washed clothes, but skip the bath. Both are needed, the *bahya* and the *bhava* (the external as well as the internal).
>
> Children believe your words, when you say that the policeman will catch them, or the ghost will beat them. They are full of fear, fortitude and faith! But, having grown old and stuffed your heads with all kinds of doctrines, dogmas, theories, and arguments, you have now to use your *viveka* (discrimination) and discover God the hard way.
>
> This I will tell you, there is no escaping it; all creatures have to reach God, someday or other, by the long route or by the short route. (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 5-6)

82 The Sanskrit aphorism runs as follows: *nāradastu tadarpitākhilācāratā tadvismaraṇe paramavyākulateti* II. For a translation and commentary to the *Nāradabhaktisūtra*s, see Sarma 1938. See also Arya 2010. On *virahabhakti* or 'love in separation', see the monograph of Hardy 1983.

In harmony with the integrative teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* and adhering to Vivekānandian inclusivism,[83] Sathya Sai Baba remarks that the various names of God are equally dear to him since all religious paths – the path of knowledge (*jñānamārga*), the path of action (*karmamārga*) and the path of love (*bhaktimārga*) – are but different ways leading to the same ultimate goal. One is free to choose the divine name and spiritual path he/she views as the most appropriate for him/her. Therefore, all aspirants are to be respected: one should never dare to criticise the *sādhanā* of others, judging it to be inferior to one's own. The *jñānin* who, echoing the "great sayings" (*mahāvākya*s) of the *Upaniṣads*, says that "everything is made of *Brahman*" (*sarvaṃ brahmamayam*),[84] the Tantric *yogin* who says that all is *śakti*[85] or energy and the *bhakta* that says that all is but the *līlā* or play of the Lord are regarded as equally praiseworthy, since their roads will inevitably converge and lead to the same destination, i.e. *mokṣa*.

Sathya Sai Baba always advocated the *bhaktimārga* since he viewed it as the easiest and most direct path to liberation (Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 45-6). The attraction towards different names and forms of God is linked to the different tastes and idiosyncratic tendencies and convictions of people, as per his humorous example that to ward off a headache the proprietor of a coffee house goes to the nearby druggist for a pill, whereas the druggist goes to the coffee house for a cup of coffee.[86] The idea is that all preferences are the re-

83 On these issues, see Rigopoulos 2019. The *guru* cited Vivekānanda (1863-1902) at least eight times in his early discourses; see Gries, Gries 1993, 277-8. Howard Levin, who first met Sathya Sai Baba in June 1970, recalls how the guru talked a lot about Rāmakṛṣṇa and Vivekānanda; see "Souljourns, Part 2 – Howard Levin, with Sai Baba for 50 years and remembering it all", minute 11. For an excellent biography of the *Bhagavadgītā*, see Davis 2015.

84 Compare with the saying *sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma*, "All this is verily *Brahman*", of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1. Sathya Sai Baba may have had in mind a famous song titled *Sarvaṃ brahmamayam* composed by Sadāśiva Brahmendra. Here is an English translation: "Everything is filled with God: all that is spoken and all that is not spoken; all that is written and all that is not written; all that can be learnt and all that cannot be learnt; all that can be sung and all that cannot be sung; all that can be taught and all that cannot be taught; all that can be enjoyed and all that cannot be enjoyed. In all places, the meditation of the *haṃsa* scale (*Brahman*) is the only thing that leads you to salvation". For a fine rendition of this song, see "Malladi Brothers – Sarvam Brahmamayam – Madhuvanti".

85 This is the power of *kuṇḍalinī*, 'the coiled one', visualised as a dormant snake coiled at the base of the spine which the *yogin* awakens, leading it through the central channel of the spinal column (*suṣumnānāḍī*) to finally merge with the unlimited power of the *sahasrāracakra*, i.e. 'the thousand-petalled lotus' located at the crown of the head. On these issues, see Silburn 1988. Kasturi reports that Sathya Sai Baba occasionally quoted from the works of Sir John Woodroffe, i.e. Arthur Avalon (1865-1936), a pioneering writer on Hindu Tantrism and the translator of important Tantric texts; see Kasturi 2005, 21. On Tantra being "the spiritual science based on *shakti*" see Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 141.

86 This story is found in another of the *guru*'s early discourses: "Like the hotel-keeper who goes to a druggist for a pill when he gets a headache, while that same druggist

sult of one's *karman*, which extends to one's past lives. The *guru* recalls the proverbial phrase coined by the great poet Kālidāsa (c. 4th-5th century CE) in *Raghuvaṃśa* 6.30, according to which "different people have different tastes" (*bhinnarucir hi lokaḥ*) (Kale 1922, 46).

Furthermore, he reiterates the importance of practicing a spiritual discipline so as to learn how to control the mind and its whims and purify oneself. Addressing the public as if it were students,[87] he states that *sādhanā* must never be given up even if one finds it hard and is not able to succeed in it: this only means that one must engage in it more vigorously since, like in school, it is the subject in which one has not obtained passing marks that deserves special attention and a focused effort.[88] The *guru* equates spiritual discipline with cleanliness through which the catharsis of the *sādhaka* is to be achieved. As he poignantly exemplifies with the analogy of refreshing oneself through a bath and washed clothes, both inner (*bhāva*) and outer (*bāhya*) cleanliness are needed, i.e. inner worship and the outer expression of one's devotion through selfless service towards all fellow beings. If one does not engage in daily *sādhanā*, he/she will inevitably remain dirty: filth and rust will accumulate upon him/her thus preventing the magnet, i.e. God, from attracting the individual soul. The master's insistence on cleanliness is a characteristic of his early discourses, since he often remarked how cleanliness is the doorway to godliness starting with inner cleanliness, i.e. inward contemplation, which has faith and constant practice as its soap and water (see Gries, Gries 1993, 29).

In bringing his speech to a close, Sathya Sai Baba remarks how man must discover a new innocence.[89] He makes the example of children[90] who naturally believe the words of their parents and are full of fear, fortitude and faith. Even Rāmakṛṣṇa made similar remarks, highlighting how it is difficult to realise God and obtain his grace without having the innocent faith of a child (see Râmakrishna [1949] 1963, 192). By contrast, the grown-ups who have forgotten the Lord have their minds filled with all sorts of worldly and religious doctrines, dogmas, theories

goes to the same hotel for a cup of coffee when he gets a headache, the West comes to the East for mental peace and the East is enamoured of the West for what it considers necessary for mental peace!" (Sathya Sai Baba 2008, 336).

87 It is probable that several students were present at this first public discourse of the *guru*.

88 On the *sādhanā* prescribed by the *guru*, see Sathya Sai Baba 1978. He once noted: "*Sadhana* is just replacement of the bad tendencies of the mind by the divine attributes of the *Atma*. Mind has two principal bad characteristics: its tendency to not go straight, but to move obliquely; and its tendency to desire and grasp all objects that it sees. It is compared to the snake, which moves by twisting and who bites all it sees. The mind must go straight to God by facing Him directly" (Hislop 1979, 96).

89 On the need for a new innocence, see Panikkar 1982.

90 On the *guru*'s frequent mention of children in his early discourses, see Gries, Gries 1993, 27-8.

and arguments, which are utterly poisonous. Consequently man must be unmade and remade, i.e. reeducated, discovering the Lord the hard way by exercising at each and every step the subtle art of discrimination, *viveka*, along with detachment, *vairāgya*, i.e. the emptying of all of one's selfish and insane notions and presuppositions.

The *guru*'s praise of fear, i.e. fear of God (*timor Dei*), fortitude (*dhairya*, *utsāha, sabūrī*) and faith (*niṣṭhā*, *śraddhā*) may be read as an implicit reference to the teaching of Shirdi Sai Baba – to whom he often referred to in his early discourses – given that the last two virtues were a fundamental pair on which the saint of Shirdi constantly insisted, requesting the 'two coins' of *niṣṭhā* and *sabūrī*, faith and courageous patience/forbearance, from all of his devotees.[91]

Appropriately, Sathya Sai Baba concludes his discourse with a solemn, positive assurance. He declares that all creatures are inevitably destined to reach God, to merge themselves in him, either by the long route or by the short route, it being only a matter of time. The final destiny of all beings is said to be pure *ānanda*, 'bliss', which coincides with one's 'coming back home' after having wandered in *saṃsāra*: in the end, all creatures will come to realise that they had never been separated from their Beloved, the very idea of being separate or far away from him being a consequence of ignorance and of the bewildering power of illusion, *māyā*. As the *guru* proclaimed:

> Born in water, floating over water,
> The watery bubble dissolves in water,
> Nara (human being) is the watery bubble and
> Narayana (God) the water.
> What I tell you is a fact.
> The essence of all philosophical works
> I tell you at once in one sentence:
> The Atma exists in all living things
> And you are one. Remember! (Rama Raju 1985, 294)

8 Conclusion

Kasturi, the *guru*'s biographer, vividly remembered the occasion of his beloved Swami's first public discourse. When he concluded his speech and the *jhūla* function ended, "as usual… the women devotees insisted on an elaborate Arati,[92] which involved no less than 108 flames to be waved in many-tiered lamps and also the presentation

91 See Rigopoulos 1993, 147-8, 175-6, 179, 273-4, 287-9, 358.

92 The ceremony of circling a tray of lights before a deity or a holy person at the end of worship while chanting a hymn.

of a variety of fruits and sweets. It all ended with the singing of traditional lilts by women devotees" (Kasturi 1982, 173).

All in all, Sathya Sai Baba's discourse did not last more than twenty minutes. In the early years he often opted for short yet incisive talks. It must also be remembered that on this occasion his discourse was preceded by the one of his elder brother Seshama Rāju. The *guru* did not speak again in public for more than a year: it was only on 20 February 1955, on the auspicious occasion of the Mahāśivarātri festival,[93] that he delivered his second public discourse in Prasanthi Nilayam.[94]

This survey of Sathya Sai Baba's first public speech confirms his traditionalism and *advaitabhakti* orientation, in harmony with Vivekānanda's neo-Hinduism. A characteristic of the *guru*'s talks is that they are both simple and profound, their language being crystal clear and comprehensible to all.[95] In particular, the rhetorical strategy he adopted in this first speech deserves notice. After recalling his declaration, when he disclosed his identity as Shirdi Sai Baba, he is keen to portray himself as the *pūrṇāvatāra* of the age, a universal saviour figure endowed with all powers. And in order to present his mission and teachings, he employs a wide variety of illustrations (*dṛṣṭānta*), metaphors (*rūpaka*) and similes (*upamā*): flower garlands and fruits are compared to thoughts/feelings and actions; the difference between single shops and an exhibition is used to indicate the difference between his giving individual advice and this first, seminal public speech; divine grace is equated with rain; the transcendent character of God's motives is said to be as strange to man as atmosphere is to a fish; the fertility of any soil, i.e. of each person, is said to be dependent upon the nature and peculiar characteristics of each and every soil/person; thorny plants and thorn-less plants are both precious and must cooperate: the sage knows that the former must protect the latter, the thorny ones being symbolical of discipline and the thorn-less ones of the growth of man's ātmic awareness. Other significant illustrations are the ones of the cat and the rat, the iron and the magnet, the doctor and the drug of *nāmasmaraṇa*, the *sādhanā* that requires passing marks, and the taking of a bath and the wearing of clean clothes.

Sathya Sai Baba also narrates captivating stories taken from Epic and Purāṇic sources as well as from general lore: Kṛṣṇa lifting the

93 The "great night of Śiva", during which worship of the sacred *liṅga* with *bel* leaves and the recitation of Śiva's thousand names are performed. This festival is celebrated on the fourteenth night of the new moon of the lunar month of Māgha (January-February).

94 For Kasturi's English translation of this second public discourse titled Sharanagati, i.e. "Surrender", see Sathya Sai Baba [2009] 2015, 7-14.

95 As Rama Raju notes: "Bhagavan Baba's Telugu is simple but forceful, straight but pregnant, with suggestive meanings that penetrate the hearts of different categories of readers according to their capacities" (Rama Raju 1985, 292). For an assessment of Sathya Sai Baba as a speaker, see Kasturi 1985, 211-51.

Govardhanagiri mountain; the touching dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna; Kṛṣṇa's opposite blessings to Vidura and Duḥśāsana; the existence of four types of persons; Kuntī's prayer to Kṛṣṇa; the anecdote of the proprietor of a coffee shop and the druggist and their opposite behaviour in order to try to rid themselves of a headache; the children's fear of policemen and ghosts and their faith in their parents' words.

By illustrating his points through such means, and oftentimes sprinkling his stories with humour, the *guru* is able to capture the minds and hearts of his listeners proving himself to be an excellent orator. He will put to use such rhetorical strategy in all of his future discourses, displaying a vast array of figures of speech (*arthālaṃkāra*s)[96] and even resorting to alliteration (*anuprāsa*), delighting his listeners by word play and "by punning, stressing and splitting words so as to yield *double entendre*" (Rama Raju 1985, 292).

The kṛṣṇaite character of the *guru*'s discourse is self-evident as well as his implicit identification with Kṛṣṇa. In his youth Sathya Sai Baba especially emphasised his identification with Kṛṣṇa while simultaneously claiming to be an *avatāra* of Śiva-Śakti and to encompass the fullness of divinity as represented in the *trimūrti* of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. In his speech the theme of *bhakti* is dominant throughout, culminating with the call to perfect surrender to the Lord, with clear echoes of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.[97] From beginning to end Sathya Sai Baba insists on inner worship, on one's faith and love for God which are to be manifested through pure thoughts and intentions, i.e. through an inner purification. The lavish performance of outer rituals for displaying one's devotion and dogmatic religiosity are condemned.

The call to inner worship (*mānasa bhajare*) requires radical conversion and repentance, the surrendering at the *guru*'s feet, and coincides with consecrating oneself to the practice of *nāmasmaraṇa* or *japa* singled out as the easiest and most effective way leading to divine communion. As Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna in *BhG* 8.7:

> Therefore at all times
> Think on Me (*mām anusmara*), and fight:
> With thought-organ and consciousness fixed on Me
> Thou shalt go just to Me without a doubt.
> (Edgerton 1964, 42)

96 For some examples of his figures of speech and their explanations, see Rama Raju 1985, 293-4.

97 Significantly, the *guru* wrote his own commentaries to these two seminal texts; see Sathya Sai Baba 1979; 1983. For a comprehensive survey on Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, see Holdrege 2013.

It is a Purāṇic axiom that in this degenerate *kali* age[98] in which chaos and unrighteousness (*adharma*) prevail, humans must resort to the constant remembrance of the divine name and form as their privileged means to achieve liberation. Taking to the repetition of the divine name is thought to lead to complete self-surrender given that the name is infallibly powerful. The way of *bhakti* is universal and open to all: there are no secrets, no esotericisms in Sathya Sai Baba's *upadeśa*. As he once pointed out: "The most subtle aspect of Swami's teaching is love" (Hislop 1979, 57). Even in future discourses he will recommend *bhakti* as the royal path leading to salvation,[99] its most precious limb (*aṅga*) being the treasure of the divine name, never insisting on any particular contemplative technique.[100] After all, precisely this had been Shirdi Sai Baba's own habit. Following the practice of *dhikr* which is the Sufi equivalent of *nāmasmaraṇa*, he used to repeat to himself one of the ninety-nine beautiful names of Allāh, i.e. *Allāh Mālik* meaning 'Allāh is the King'.[101]

98 The *kali* age or *yuga*, the last and worst of all world ages, is said to begin with Kṛṣṇa's death believed to have taken place in 3102 BCE. Its length is of 1200 divine years, i.e. 432,000 human years.

99 If the centrality of *bhakti* in Sathya Sai Baba's teachings is self-evident, nonetheless Kasturi noted that the *guru*'s discourses tended to go in cycles, often concentrating on the same selected themes for a week or a month though with altered presentation and examples according to the different types of audiences; see Priddy 1998, 223.

100 With the exception of the meditation on the light (*jyotis*), which he often recommended: "Light a lamp or a candle. Gaze straight ahead at the flame… The form of God may also be included, Krishna, Rama, Jesus, Sai, as you wish. The form of God selected may be seen in the centre of the flame wherever it is carried and then you are with God everywhere. Then take the candle flame, the *jyoti*, into your heart and see it in the midst of the petals of the heart. Watch the petals of the heart unfold and see the light illumine the heart. Bad feelings cannot remain. Then move the flame to the hands and they can no longer do dark deeds. In turn move the flame in like fashion to the eyes and ears so they may henceforth take in only bright and pure sensations. The *jyoti* is then moved to other body parts. There is no particular sequence. But important is the final body station, which is the head. The light is then moved outside, from the particular to the universal. Move the light into relatives, friends, enemies, trees, animals, birds, until the entire world and all its forms are seen to have the same light at their centre as has been found to be within oneself. The idea of moving the light into the universal phase, the idea of universality is that the same divine light is present in everyone and everywhere. To impress this universality on the mind, we do the spreading of the light outside one's own body. One should understand that what comes about in meditation as one moves deeply into it, is not thinking of the light, but the forgetting of the body and thereby the direct experience that the body is not oneself. This is the stage of contemplation when the body is totally forgotten. It cannot be forced. It comes about by itself and is the stage that naturally follows correct concentration" (Steel 1997, 127-8). For a collection of the *guru*'s discourses on meditation (*dhyāna*), see Sathya Sai Baba 1982. See also Hislop 1979, 172-5; Murphet 1982, 119-25.

101 *al-Malik* (الملك) is the name of Allāh as the "King of Kings", the Lord of the worlds in an absolute sense, above and beyond all earthly rulers; see Rigopoulos 1993, 293-7. The term *malik* derives from the Semitic root *mlk*, 'to reign', 'to possess', which occurs more than 200 times in the Quran. Forms of the root *mlk* occur more than 3000 times in the Old Testament; see Soggin 1997, 672-80. On God as king in the Bible, see *Exodus* 15,18 ("The Lord reigns for ever and ever"); *Psalm* 22,28 ("For dominion belongs to the

As per Sathya Sai Baba's initial analogy of the flowers and the fruits, from the purification of one's thoughts and intentions, i.e. the 'flowers' of one's inner love of God, must naturally descend a life of selfless acts of service (*sevā*), which are the concrete 'fruits' of one's love of man and of all creatures, as per his dictum "Work is worship: duty is God" (see Murthy 1983, 262-5). As he noted at the very beginning of his talk, even the *avatāra* has a lot of work to do in order to accomplish his mission. As a consequence, every *bhakta* is called to cooperate with him and sanctify his/her life *in* society, given that worldly life and spiritual life are not different but one and the same.[102]

The *guru* underlined that *mānava sevā*, service rendered to man, is Mādhava *sevā*, service rendered to God. He therefore summoned all his devotees to "care and share", in the awareness that "anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me" (Mt 25,40; *The New English Bible. New Testament* 1961, 48). Love of God and love of man were inseparable in his *upadeśa*. Ultimately, Sathya Sai Baba taught that selfless service to man is the highest form of worship:

> *Seva* rendered in the faith that all are Forms of the One God is the highest *karma*. You must watch and see that the inspiration for the *seva* comes from the heart, not the head.
>
> *Seva* is more fruitful than the *japa*, *dhyana*, *yajna*,[103] or *yoga* usually recommended to spiritual aspirants, for it serves two purposes, the extinction of the ego, and the attainment of *ananda*, or bliss.
>
> The real value of *seva*, its most visible result, is that it reforms you, reshapes you. Do *seva* as *sadhana*; then you will be humble and happy. (Steel 1997, 242)[104]

Lord and he rules over the nations"); *Psalm* 103,19 ("The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all").

102 See Steel 1997, 274. One must be in the world but not of the world; see Murthy 1983, 94-100.

103 Ritual sacrifices.

104 The *guru*'s teaching is consonant with the Bible quote "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (*Hosea* 6,6; see also Mk 12,33; Mt 9,13; 12,7).

Bibliography

Aithal, S.K. (2009). "Prayers/Insults, Blessings/Curses, and Conditional Clauses in *The Mahabharata*". *Indian Literature*, 53(2), 132-41.

Aitken, B. (2004). *Sri Sathya Sai Baba: A Life*. New Delhi: Penguin.

Arweck, E.; Nesbitt, E.; Jackson, R. (2005). "Common Values for the Common School? Using Two Values Education Programmes to Promote 'Spiritual and Moral Development'". *Journal of Moral Education*, 34(3), 325-42. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240500206154.

Arya, P.P. (2010). *Attaining God Here and Now: Path of Bhakti Expounded in Narada Bhakti Sutras*. Chandigarh: Umang Printers.

Babb, L.A. (1987). "Sathya Sai Baba's Saintly Play". Stratton Hawley, J. (ed.), *Saints and Virtues*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 168-86.

Balasubramanya, A. (2015). *Capturing Divinity: A Sequel to the Memoirs of a Sai Student*. Prasanthi Nilyam: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust.

Bhajanavali (1983). Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Bhatnagar, S.C. (ed.) (2011). *Sai Vibhuti Prasadam and Its Significance (Based on Sai's Teachings): A Humble Offering to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust.

Cremonesi, C.; Fava, F.; Scarpi, P. (a cura di) (2018). *Il corpo in scena. Tecniche, rappresentazioni, performance*. Padova: Libreriauniversitaria.

Dabholkar, G.R. (Hemadpant) (1999). *Shri Sai Satcharita: The Life and Teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba*. Transl. by I. Kher. New Delhi: Sterling.

Davis, R.H. (2015). *The Bhagavad Gita: A Biography*. Princeton (NJ); Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Dimmitt, C.; van Buitenen, J.A.B. (eds, transl.) (1978). *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇa*s. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/2053941.

Edgerton, F. (transl.) (1964). *The Bhagavad Gītā*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.

Gokak, V.K. (1983). *Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (An Interpretation)*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications.

Gries, D.; Gries, E. (eds) (1993). *An Index of Sathya Sai Speaks: Volumes I-XI. Covering Discourses by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba 1953-1982*. Tustin (CA): Sathya Sai Book Center of America.

Haberman, D.L. (1988). *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana*. New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0041977x00151675.

Halbfass, W. (ed.) (1995). *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta*. Albany (NY): State University of New York Press.

Haraldsson, E. (2013). *Modern Miracles. Sathya Sai Baba: The Story of a Modern Day Prophet*. Guildford (UK): White Crow Books.

Hardy, F.E. (1983). *Viraha Bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hislop, J.S. (1979). *Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Bangalore: Sri Sathya Sai Baba Society of America.

Holdrege, B. (2013). *Bhakti and Embodiment: Fashioning Divine Bodies and Devotional Bodies in Kṛṣṇa Bhakti*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315769325.

Kakar, S. [1991] (2007). *The Analyst and the Mystic*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Kale, M.R. (1922). *The Raghuvaṃśa of Kālidāsa: With the Commentary (the Sanjīvinī) of Mallinātha. Cantos I-X*. With a Literal Translation into English,

Copious Notes in Sanskrit and English and Various Readings etc. etc. Bombay: Gopal Narayen & Co.

Kalyāṇa Kalpataru 5(1) (1938). Gorakhpur: Gītā Press.

Kasturi, N. [1961] (1980) *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram, Part I (1926-1960)*: *Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Kasturi, N. (1979). *Garland of 108 Precious Gems: Ashtothara Sathanama Rathnamala*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Education and Publication Foundation.

Kasturi, N. (1982). *Loving God: Eighty Five Years under the Watchful Eye of the Lord*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Kasturi, N. (1985). "Baba. As Speaker". Gokak, V.K. (ed.), *Sai Chandana: Book of Homage*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, 282-6.

Kasturi, N. (2005). *Gurudev*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Kasturi, N. (2012) "Sathya Sai Speaks". Sathya Sai Baba, *Sathya Sai Speaks*. Vol. 7, *Discourses of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Delivered during 1967)*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, iii-iv.

Kher, V.B. (2001). *Sai Baba: His Divine Glimpses*. Foreword by M.V. Kamath. New Delhi: New Dawn.

Leela, M.L. (n.d.). *Lokanatha Sai*. Madras: Sri Sathya Sai Mandali Trust.

Monier-Williams, M. (1988). *Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages. New Edition, Greatly Enlarged and Improved with the Collaboration of E. Leumann, C. Cappeller and Other Scholars*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Murphet, H. (1982). *Sai Baba: Invitation to Glory*. Delhi: Macmillan.

Murthy, M.V.N. (1983). *The Greatest Adventure: Essays on the Sai Avatar and His Message*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Narasimhaswami, B.V. (1942). *Sri Sai Baba's Charters and Sayings*. Madras: All India Sai Samaj.

Olivelle, P. (transl.) (1996). *Upaniṣads*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Padmanaban, R. (2000). *Love Is My Form. A Biographical Series on Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Vol. 1, *The Advent (1926-1950)*. Bangalore: Sai Towers.

Panikkar, R. (1982). *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype*. New York: The Seabury Press.

Prabhupāda, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami (1978). *Teachings of Queen Kuntī*. Los Angeles: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

Priddy, R. (1998). *Source of the Dream: My Way to Sathya Sai Baba*. York Beach (ME): Samuel Weiser.

Purnaiya, N. [1976] (2003). *The Divine Leelas of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Bangalore: Sai Towers.

Rama Raju, B. (1985). "Sathya Sai as a Master of the Telugu Language and as a Writer". Gokak, V.K. (ed.), *Sai Chandana: Book of Homage*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, 287-94.

Râmakrishna, S. [1949] (1963). *Alla ricerca di Dio. Parole raccolte e annotate da Jean Herbert*. Roma: Ubaldini.

Raman, S. (2007). *Self-Surrender (prapatti) to God in Śrīvaiṣṇavism: Tamil Cats and Sanskrit Monkeys*. London; New York: Routledge.

Rigopoulos, A. (1993). *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*. Albany (NY): State University of New York Press.

Rigopoulos, A. (2009). *Guru. Il fondamento della civiltà dell'India. Con la prima traduzione italiana del "Canto sul Maestro"*. Roma: Carocci.

Rigopoulos, A. (2013). "Shirdi Sai Baba". Jacobsen, K.A.; Basu, H.; Malinar, A.; Narayanan, V. (eds), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Vol. 5, *Religious Symbols. Hinduism and Migration. Contemporary Communities Outside South Asia. Some Modern Religious Groups and Teachers*. Leiden: Brill, 641-50.

Rigopoulos, A. (2014) "The Construction of a Cultic Center Through Narrative. The Founding Myth of the Village of Puttaparthi and Sathya Sāī Bābā". *History of Religions*, 54(2), 117-50. https://doi.org/10.1086/677807.

Rigopoulos, A. (2016). "A Modern *Kalpavṛkṣa*. Sathya Sāī Bābā and the Wish-Fulfilling Tree". Ferrari, F.M.; Dähnhardt, T. (eds), *Roots of Wisdom, Branches of Devotion: Plant Life in South Asian Traditions*. Sheffield; Bristol: Equinox, 3-28.

Rigopoulos, A. (2018). "Guru. Hinduism". Jain, P.; Sherma, R.D.; Khanna, M. (eds), *Hinduism and Tribal Religions*. *Encyclopedia of Indian Religions*. Dordrecht: Springer, 1-8.

Rigopoulos, A. (2019). "Tolerance in Swami Vivekānanda's Neo-Hinduism". *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 45(4), 438-60. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453719828425.

Rigopoulos, A. (2021). *The Hagiographer and the Avatar: The Life and Works of Narayan Kasturi*. Albany (NY): State University of New York Press.

Romano, C. (1999). *Teoria e pratica del "Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Program"* [BA Thesis]. Venezia.

Sankar, Y. (2004). "Education in Crisis: A Value-Based Model of Education Provides Some Guidance". *Interchange*, 35(1), 127-51. https://doi.org/10.1023/b:inch.0000039023.98390.88.

Saradananda, Swami (2008). *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master: Originally Written in Bengali in Five Volumes*. Mylapore; Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math.

Sarma, Y.S. (ed.) (1938). *Narada's Aphorisms on Bhakti*. Bangalore: The Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya.

Sathya Sai Baba (1978). *Sadhana. The Inward Path: Quotations from the Divine Discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Bangalore: Sri Sathya Sai Education and Publication Foundation.

Sathya Sai Baba (1979). *Bhagavatha Vahini*. Transl. by N. Kasturi. Bangalore: Sri Sathya Sai Education and Publication Foundation.

Sathya Sai Baba (1981). *Sathya Sai Vahini*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Sathya Sai Baba (1982). *Dhyana Vahini: Discourses by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Sathya Sai Baba (1983). *Geetha Vahini: Discourses by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Sathya Sai Baba (1984). *Vidya Vahini: Discourses by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Sathya Sai Baba (2000). *Sree Gurucharanam. A Compilation of Divine Discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba during Guru Poornima (1956-1998)*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Sathya Sai Baba (2008). *Sathya Sai Speaks*. Vol. 2, *Discourses of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Delivered during 1961-62)*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust.

Sathya Sai Baba [2009] (2015). *Sathya Sai Speaks*. Vol. 1, *Discourses of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Delivered during 1953-60)*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust.

Sathya Sai Baba (2012). *Sathya Sai Speaks*. Vol. 4, *Discourses of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Delivered during 1964)*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust.

Sathya Sai Baba (2014). *His Story as Told by Himself: A Compilation from the Divine Discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust.

Savkur, S.R. (2012). *Reflections on Adi Shankara's Bhaja Govindam (Based on Teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba)*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust.

Sax, W.S. (2009). "Ritual and Theatre in Hinduism". Holm, B.; Flemming Nielsen, B.; Vedel, K. (eds), *Religion, Ritual, Theatre*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 79-105.

Schweig, G. (2018). "*Līlā*". Jacobsen, K.A.; Basu, H.; Malinar, A.; Narayanan, V. (eds), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Leiden: Brill Online. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2212-5019_BEH_COM_2050170.

Sen, A.P. (ed., transl.) (2010). *His Words: The Preachings and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa*. New Delhi: Penguin; Viking.

Shah, I.H. (1980). *Sixteen Spiritual Summers*. Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications.

Silburn, L. (1988). *Kuṇḍalinī: Energy of the Depths*. Albany (NY): State University of New York Press.

Simmons, C.; Sen, M.; Rodrigues, H. (eds) (2018). *Nine Nights of the Goddess: The Navarātri Festival in South Asia*. Albany (NY): State University of New York Press.

Soggin, J.A. (1997). "מֶלֶךְ *melek* king". Jenni, E.; Westermann, C. (eds), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 2. Peabody (MA): Hendrickson, 672-80.

Srinivas, S. (2008). *In the Presence of Sai Baba: Body, City, and Memory in a Global Religious Movement*. Leiden: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004165434.i-403.

Srinivas, T. (2010) *Winged Faith: Rethinking Globalization and Religious Pluralism Through the Sathya Sai Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press. https://doi.org/10.7312/srin14932.

Srinivas, T. (2018). "Sathya Sai Baba". Jacobsen, K.A.; Basu, H.; Malinar, A.; Narayanan, V. (eds), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Leiden: Brill Online. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2212-5019_BEH_COM_9000000267.

Srivastava, D.I. (2017). *Decoding the Metaphor Mahabharata*. Mumbai: Inkstate Books.

Steel, B. (1997). *The Sathya Sai Baba Compendium: A Guide to the First Seventy Years*. York Beach (ME): Samuel Weiser.

Stotraratnāvalī (1992). Gorakhpur: Gītā Press.

The New English Bible. New Testament (1961). Oxford; Cambridge: Oxford University Press; Cambridge University Press.

The Path Divine: For Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas, Group III (1983). Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Education Trust.

Tulpule, S.G. (1984). *Mysticism in Medieval India*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Valpey, K. (2018). "*Pūja* and *Darśana*". Jacobsen, K.A.; Basu, H.; Malinar, A.; Narayanan, V. (eds), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Leiden: Brill Online. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2212-5019_BEH_COM_2030050.

Vanamali (2018). *In the Lost City of Sri Krishna: The Story of Ancient Dwaraka*. Rochester (VT): Inner Traditions.

Vijayakumari (2000). *Anyathā Saranam Nasthi: Other Than You Refuge There Is None*. Ekrattuthangal; Chennai: Sai Shri Ram Printers.

Websites

"Aata kothe dhave Abhang – Sant Tukaram". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrKNquFYWMw.
"A Documentary on Sri Sathya Sai Archives". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsQtI9CW-Xs.
"Malladi Brothers – Sarvam Brahmamayam – Madhuvanti". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9TE16F61Aw.
"Manasa Sancharare". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKZYfcEkyKQ.
"'PROFESSOR' N. KASTURI – the 'official biographer' of SB and prolific proselytizer". https://robertpriddy.com/saibaba-x/27/.
"Sai Baba singing Manasa Bhaja re Guru Charanam". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji_vE5kNM6c.
"Sai Inspires. Loving Sairam and Greetings from Prasanthi Nilayam". http://media.radiosai.org/sai_inspires/2020/SI_20200719.htm.
"Sai Student: Experiences and Musings". https://aravindb1982.blogspot.com/2013/11/no-reason-or-season-for-love-Sathya-Sai-Love-is-my-form.html.
"Shiva Manasa Puja All Five Shlokas". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHkWh5qeLuI.
"Souljourns, Part 2 – Howard Levin, with Sai Baba for 50 years and remembering it all". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHdmjzlBxZA.
"Sri Sathya Saibaba singing 'Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam' Bhajan". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76NvQD21IrM.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

My First Steps in Religious Fieldwork: Exploring Aum Shinrikyō in 1995

Marcella Mariotti
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract This paper is an homage to professor Massimo Raveri and the vivid impact he had on my research more than thirty years ago. After a brief introduction about how I developed my interest in New-new religions in Japan, I present the English translation of my first publication on the subject "Asahara Shōkō and the Aum Shinrikyō: The Teaching of the Supreme Truth" published in 1995 soon after the Sarin attack.

Keywords Aum Shinrikyō. New-new religions. Shin-shin-shūkyō. Asahara Shōkō. Apocalypticism. Armageddon.

1 Introduction

I am very much indebted to Massimo for his fascinating introduction for aspiring freshmen to the undergraduate courses of Japanese Language and Culture at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in 1988, which was decisive in my decision to shift from studying Arabic to enrolling in Japanese Studies. In the following years, his stimulating lectures and Oxford-style seminars, in the small, familiar and friendly library in Ca' Cappello Palace in Venice, strengthened my interest, first in Shinran and his 'unusual' Jōdo Shinshū (Shin Buddhism or True Pure Land Buddhism) interpretation of Buddhism, and later in contemporary New-new religions.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Open access
Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/011

During my last year of university, while preparing my (now MA degree) dissertation thesis, I was working in a Venetian glass store in Saint Mark's Square. In an attempt to improve my Japanese language skills, I started talking about New-new religions with one of my customers. He happened to be a friend of a Kyoto University sociologist (prof. Ito Kimio, my graduate mentor in Kyoto), and following our conversation, he started to send me newspaper articles about Aum, an almost 'unknown', yet-to-be-studied New-new religion in Europe, that I definitely wanted to research.

Impressed by Massimo's fieldwork and lectures, I decided to follow his 'itinerary' as soon as I had the chance to go to Japan on an interpreting job. It was the end of February 1995, a few days before the Sarin attack in the Tokyo subway. I planned to go to Aum's branch office. Aum had already had some problems with the law, and it found itself under intense accusation by several newspaper articles and weekly journals, especially regarding the disappearance of the lawyer Sakamoto Tsutsumi, who in 1988 had initiated the establishment of a Coalition of Help for those affected by Aum Shinrikyō (Aum Shinrikyō Higai Taisaku Bengodan), later renamed Aum Shinrikyō Victims' Association (Aum Shinrikyō Higaisha-no-kai). I still remember how scared Massimo was when I told him I wanted to try to interview some Aum members in Kyoto. I told him, "If I don't come back, you know what I was doing". Honestly, I don't know which of us was the most frightened. It was a thrilling challenge. I went with a friend in the Aum Kyoto branch to carry out my interviews, to perform an observation of meditation sessions and the Aum facilities, and to collect a huge number of primary sources. My MA thesis saw the light of day in June 1996, growing to 350 pages of translations of all the interviews and books and materials I had gathered there.[1]

Massimo's passion for fieldwork brought me to a second MA degree in Sociology. It also led me to continue my studies in disciplines directly connected with contemporary and participant action, nowadays represented in my Critical Language Pedagogy Studies. The classroom became my fieldwork!

I am honoured to publish here the English translation of my first journal article (Mariotti 1995), one of the earliest in a European language,[2] which, thanks to Massimo's guidance, was written in response to the Sarin attack in 1995, and published in the Italian Journal *Sette e Religioni nel mondo* (Sects and Religions of the World), put out by GRIS (Gruppo di Ricerca e Informazione Socio-religiosa).

1 Retrievable at `https://www.academia.edu/47597712/Le_Nuove_Generazioni_in_Giappone_e_il_fascino_dellapocalisse_Mariotti`.

2 Expert scholar in New-new religion of Japan, Shimazono Susumu, published his in Shimazono 1995.

2 Asahara Shōkō and the Aum Shinrikyō: The Teaching of the Supreme Truth

2.1 The History

The events that in recent months have undermined the myth of Japanese social security have also brought interest in a recently formed sect, Aum Shinrikyō, whose history is inseparable from that of its founder Asahara Shōkō (born Matsumoto Chizuo), the fourth child of a *tatami* craftsman; he was born in the Kumamoto prefecture (Kyushu, south-eastern Japan) on 2 March 1955 and, because of his semi-blindness, he attended a school for the blind for fifteen years. After graduating, he practiced acupuncture and moxibustion; he opened in Funebashi, in the Chiba prefecture (near Tokyo), a pharmacy of Chinese and Asian medicines; later, he founded the Association of the Blessed Divines (Tenkei no kai), which produced and sold medicines to heal rheumatism and other diseases of the elderly: in 1982 he was arrested for fraud and released on bail.

Subsequently, in May 1984, he founded a centre for the practice of yoga and 'religious activities' in Shibuya (Tokyo), distributing at the same time 'religious articles' through Aum PLC, which was established in the same year. Shortly afterwards, the Aum Shinsen no kai (lit. 'Association of the Sublime Supernatural Beings'), a members-only circle, was founded. 1986 is the year in which Asahara, according to his own declarations, reached his final illumination in the Himalayas, and thus began to spread his salvific teaching, starting from Osaka; on 25 August 1989 the central administration of Tokyo granted religious status to his organisation, which he called Aum Shinrikyō, Teaching of the Supreme Truth, with its headquarters in Fujinomiya, near Mount Fuji.

Until 17 May 1995, the day the guru was arrested for the massacre that took place in the subway of Tokyo, Aum had more or less thirty branches (in 1990 there were only fourteen), some of which were outside Japan (United States, Germany, Russia, and Sri Lanka); there were about ten thousand followers in Japan, thirty thousand in Russia, and very few in other countries. In November 1994, a Sunday television channel in Moscow began to broadcast a programme called *The Search for Truth*, which presented experiments that were supposed to provide scientific proof of the 'superpowers' promised by Asahara. By April 1992, the religious group was already running large short-wave radio stations in Russia that were theoretically capable of broadcasting readings of the founding guru in Japanese, Russian and English to all parts of the world.

In the district of Nakano, in Tokyo, there is a medical clinic made up of Aum doctors and nurses who intend to promote a 'new medicine'. They also belong to the sect establishments which have been

growing since 1990 in Kamikuishiki near mount Fuji in Yamashina Prefecture, and in the Kumamoto Prefecture (where a commune was established). Asahara Shōkō founded the Party of Truth in September 1989 to integrate politics and religion in order to realise 'absolute freedom and happiness'. The party stood in the parliamentary elections of February 1990 with twenty-five representatives, of whom not even one was elected. In Tokyo and Osaka, chains of snack bars (not only vegetarian, as one might expect from the sect's diet) and super-cheap emporiums would seem to constitute its primary financial support, as well as a base for the 'recruitment' of new adepts, through the use of ostensible recruiting notices for personnel.

However, the expansion of the Aum teachings was not without dark implications: in fact, the controversies that arose following the disappearance of the entire family of a certain lawyer who had been hired by ex-members and their relatives in a lawsuit against the sect itself, echoed throughout Japanese mass-media; similarly, suspicions could not be dispelled about Aum with respect to several Sarin gas attacks, starting with that of June 1994 in Matsumoto (which counted seven dead), and continuing through that of January 1995 in Kamikuishiki (with dozens of people who were intoxicated) up to the attack that happened two months later in the Tokyo subway (which instead counted twelve dead). This last event, which was followed by the arrest of Asahara and his closest collaborators, seems to have marked the end of Aum's journey for the time being. Its fate was furthermore sealed by the request, forwarded by the government on 24 April to the governor of Tokyo, to withdraw recognition of the sect's religious status.

2.2 The Teachings

The Aum's teachings refer to the original Tibetan Buddhism of the Himalayan regions, specifically to the *Kagyū* branch of *Vajrayāna*, which developed in the eleventh century. Yoga elements of the Indian tradition, Christian prophecies and symbols, Hindu iconography, esoteric teachings, and occult practices are also added to it.

Thanks to the acquisition of super-powers and the revelation of the Aum truth, Asahara Shōkō promises liberation from disease, happiness in this life, and absolute salvation, using yoga techniques, initiations and special practices revealed only to those who placed total trust in him. He is supposed to be, in fact, the single repository of true knowledge – a knowledge whose worldwide dissemination will defend the earth from complete destruction and the dangers of the *mappō* (the age of degeneration of the law): the effort that Aum followers make and their dedication to Aum must be absolute if they

are to achieve this salvific purpose by 1997.[3] By following these precepts[4] and disciplines and by receiving initiations from the master, they will be able to accelerate the pace of their own 'realisation' and thus contribute to the salvation of humanity.

Asahara claims that the uniqueness of his teaching is to be found, in summary, in the 'four pillars':

1. a concrete system of teachings going back to the original teachings of Yoga and Buddhism;
2. initiations along the path to awakening. With these, energy is transmitted in such a way as to modify one's consciousness, and thus one gains access to the mysterious parts of the person, which cannot be understood by merely reading or listening to the texts;
3. the aid of those who have achieved spiritual results: that is, ascetics who have already reached the Triple Salvation (absolute freedom, absolute happiness, absolute joy);
4. the charismatic existence of the founding guru and his written teachings.

2.3 Cosmogony

In order to understand the path that was lain out for followers, it is useful to highlight the structure of the universe proposed by Asahara. The universe is divided into four realms: from the Phenomenal World or World of Desires (where human beings dwell), one ascends to the World of Form or Astral World (made up of subtle elements), to finally reach the Causal World or World of the Non-Form and *Maha Nirvana* **[fig. 1]**.

The higher one ascends through the worlds, the stronger and clearer the light becomes: each particle of light constitutes a piece of information allowing one to bring the True Self back to freedom from the illusory influence of appearances.

The True Self initially enjoyed absolute freedom: it could pass through the various realms of the universe and decide whether to live or die. It was in a state of absolute happiness because it did not produce *karma* and was not plagued by misleading information: although

3 According to the earliest texts, however, the foundation of the different branches that were spread throughout the world by his followers should have been completed by 1993.

4 The precepts are of three different types, corresponding to the kind of *karma* (action, deed) that needs to be purified, whether a) of the body, b) of the word or c) of the mind. While on the physical plane, it is necessary to avoid killing, stealing, and indecent conduct; while on the verbal plane, speaking falsely, saying unnecessary things, insulting, and creating enmities; and while on the mental plane, being stingy, becoming angry, and denying the truth.

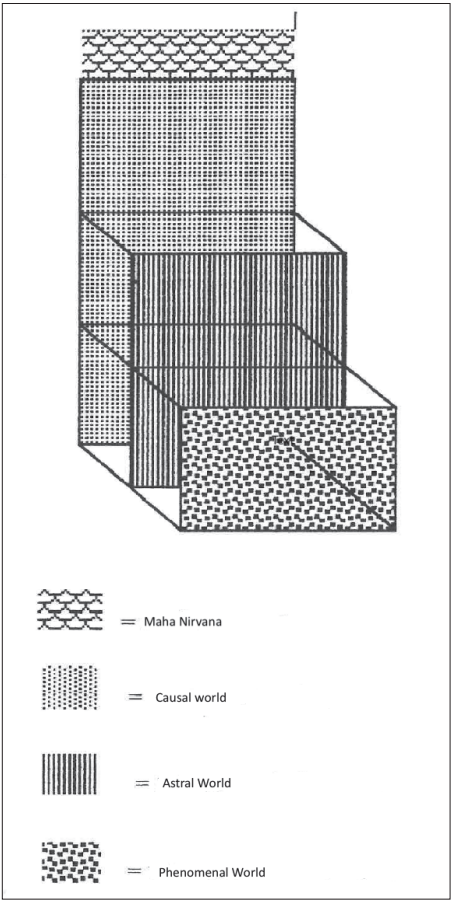

Figure 1
Universe Structure. Author's graph composed from AUM Public Relation Editorial Staff 1992, 15, 23

it had various experiences, they did not take root and therefore did not cause emotions or feelings or *karma*. Until the inauspicious conditioning of the three *guṇa* (deceptive empirical principles), it freely disposed of the so-called energy of absolute joy. Following this, desires began to arise in the True Self that would give rise to a degenerative process, so as to lead to the gradual depletion of this energy, until the original state of joy was lost and there was a fall instead into a state of suffering. This is the current condition of human beings (AUM Public Relations Editorial Staff 1992, 14-23), who are bewitched by *maya* and forced to suffer from the continuous cycle of death and rebirth, until they are able to eliminate all desire and passion.

2.4 Soteriology

The soteriological path involves the proposal of three types of salvation:

a. liberation from disease by:
   - use of yoga techniques, in particular the esoteric teachings of Himalayan Yoga;
   - dissemination of the theories of Indian medicine that, on the one hand, refer to Buddhist teachings and a philosophy of space and, on the other hand, are based on a so-called 'spiritual theoretical science';
   - healing with mystical and supernatural powers: for example, by identifying the diseased part with the spiritual eye (clairvoyance), and curing it with an input of energy;
   - use of Astral Medicine: a *siddha*[5] can make so-called 'astral journeys', that is access another dimension with the manifested body (*Nirmāṇakāya*) located in the *maṇipūra chakra*[6] (at the level of the navel). The stone infused with energy that disciples receive, the *hihiirokane*, comes from one of Asahara's journeys in the Astral World, as do various medicines used in Aum hospitals;

b. happiness in this life:
   - administering the *shaktipat*[7] helps one to avoid misfortunes (problems in love or friendship, economic problems) and to have success;

c. enlightenment[8] and emancipation:[9] those who have attained salvations a) and b) will thus come to have total faith in Asahara and follow him to the supreme condition.

5 Ascetic who through mystical practices acquired superpowers (*siddhi*), see Raveri 1992, 126-7.

6 *Chakra*: spiritual centre in a particular point of the body. In common people they are dormant and they develop with the awakening of *kundalini* (energy that resides at the base of the trunk and is represented in Hinduism by a snake or the female representation of the god Siva). This awakening is obtained with ascetic practices that guarantee more or less high spiritual levels depending on the position of the *chakra* to which they refer.

7 That is, illumination of what is true: transmission of energy by an enlightened mystic. This advances the practice, but the giver feels pain in absorbing the negative *karma* of the one who receives it (see AUM Public Relations Editorial Staff 1992, 101).

8 *Satori* as logical realisation.

9 *Gedatsu* as physical realisation.

In order to attain absolute salvation, which is to say emancipation and enlightenment, members of Aum Shinrikyō must undergo a series of seemingly exhausting practices: The Six Extreme Disciplines, the meditation to eradicate the desires of this world, and the meditation of the Fourfold Mind.

The Six Extreme Disciplines through which *karma* can be modified consist of:

1. **offerings** (*fuse*). They correspond to *niyama* yoga (things that must be done),[10] and are of three types:
   - material (*zaise*) – these help one to become less attached to one's possessions;
   - of mental peace (*anshinse*) – these give one spiritual tranquillity, the means not to be attached to the world, and also to grant other relief from suffering;
   - of *dharma*, or Truth (*hōse*).
2. **observance of the commandments** (*jikai*):[11] the guru assigns commandments according to the practitioner; by following them, one changes the world around oneself, obviating unpleasant things.
3. **patience** (*ninniku*):[12] endurance to the extreme limit in order to strengthen will and concentration.
4. **devotion** (*shōjin*):[13] unconditional application of the three previous disciplines, as concentrating on them enables one to control one's breath and senses.
5. **meditation** (*zenjo*): one prevents deviations of the mind and remains in contemplation, striving to answer the question: 'Who or what am I?', until one understands that one is 'only transparent water'[14] and thus reaches enlightenment.
6. **supreme wisdom** (*chie*):[15] one transcends the objects of contemplation, thus reaching the next step after enlightenment, which consists in emancipation from duality. The True Self is now freed from all passions and can return to *Maha Nirvana*.

10 *Niyama* yoga and the eight yogas that follow are the stages of *Raja* yoga as described in the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali. Asahara Shōkō relates them in his texts to the Six Extreme Disciplines, stating that "the teachings of truth do not contradict themselves" (Asahara 1989a, 78).

11 This phase corresponds to *yama* yoga: what should not be done.

12 *Asana* yoga: recollection in perfect immobility.

13 Included in this discipline are *pranayama* yoga (control of breath) and *pratyahara* yoga (withdrawal of the senses).

14 Asahara argues that this corresponds to the state of buddha *mahāyāna*, which also guides other people to the 'real world'.

15 *Chie* is considered as *samadhi* (reunion with the Self), the mystical ecstasy of the yoga path.

According to Aum teachings, there are two types of buddha: Mahayana and Tantric. The latter, besides attaining and spreading the truth like the former, acquires additional superpowers (*siddhi*) and thus elicits more confidence from people so that this practitioner can easily lead them to the truth. The Aum ascetic must try to elevate themselves and become a Guyasamaja tantric buddha[16] in this life, following the esoteric techniques of tantrism, which are made even more effective and 'actual' by Asahara.

The fundamental concept of the whole process would seem to be that of the 'subconscious' (the place where desire is rooted), which Ashara associates with the Astral World (the plane of form). By modifying the subconscious, one can annihilate the experiences one has had in that dimension and eliminate the consequent *karma*, so that the True Self might return to the Causal World (the plane of non-form), destroy its *karma* and become free to finally enter *Maha Nirvana*.

In order to access the subconscious, the Aum teachings indicate two paths:

1. to follow the first four of the Six Extreme Disciplines, which are nevertheless considered "hardly accessible to everyone" (Asahara 1989a, 89);
2. *to maintain a stable posture through *asana*,
   *to control life energy by means of *pranayama*,
   *to penetrate the subconscious by practicing *mudras*,[17]
   *to receive initiations into the secret methods of meditation (*guru* yoga, *chandali*…) leading to the modification of the subconscious mind by infusing it with the 'buddha mind', which will guide the consciousness along the Six Extreme Disciplines, until the supreme condition.

16 Guyasamaja is identified with Siva: "(benevolent, friendly, lucky […]), Hindu deity with an ambivalent character, protector of his devotees even at the cost of destroying the law of karma, destroyer of the worlds and at the same time destroyer of illusions and earthly attachments […] learned expositor of all forms of knowledge, and secretly of magical and secret ones" (Filoramo 1993, 704; Author's transl.). Moreover, Siva is connected to the cult of *sakti*, the divine energy that manifests itself in the feminine aspect of a god: "Siva is, in her essence, purely spiritual and impassive, but acts in the world through her *sakti*, which takes the form of the goddess Mahadevi (the Great Goddess) or one of her terrible forms, Kali or Durga […]. [*S*]*akti* plays a predominant role in Hindu tantrism: she is present in each of us in the form of a snake that is curled up at the base of the spine: the *kundalini*. The purpose of tantric exercises (yoga) is to awaken this energy and make it rise to the top of the skull (*sahasrara chakra*), where it joins with the atman, the male principle (Siva)" (Crepon 1987, 104; Author's transl.). In the Aum texts, Siva is associated with the True Self and represents the guru of all the saviours.

17 *Mudra*: "ritualised gestures and positions of the hands and fingers, which, through an extremely complex and rarefied symbolism, refer the mind to images and attributes of the body of a buddha, and in a metaphysical sense, to the body of the dharma" (Raveri 1992, 121).

Initiation consists in the secret transmission of a guru's teachings to their disciples: the process of emancipation is accelerated thanks to the transfer of the experiences of the master, who, by virtue of his powers, identifies the potential passions that the disciple alone would not be able to recognise (and consequently would not be able to get rid of), adapting them to the object of meditation. The Aum practitioner will suffer or rejoice intensely when confronted with pains or pleasures equal to those of a hundred or two hundred lives, but by overcoming them he will advance rapidly towards Absolute Salvation.[18]

The intervention of the guru is considered indispensable for the realisation of a process that otherwise would be too dilated in time and would not ensure happiness in this life. To follow the eightfold path described in the *Agamasutra* is considered by Asahara practically impossible, since the first step has become inaccessible in modern society: 'seeing correctly' – that is, understanding the chain of the twelve relations for which everything is suffering – is not possible because of the continuous image of happiness that society proposes. A simple, 'modern' and immediately 'effective' path becomes imperative for the laity.[19] However, the fundamental need for a more direct path to salvation is motivated by the ever more impending Apocalypse.

18 There are four types of initiation described by Asahara: a) a ceremony to become the five buddhas – buddha Akṣobhya (with the donation of water and method), buddha Ratnasaṃbhāva (with the delivery of a mystical sword and teaching to strengthen the will and eradicate futile thoughts), buddha Amitābha (with the assignment of the *vajra-bell*: the voice of the *dharma* with which one can save others), buddha Amoghasiddhi (with the acquisition of special powers that allow one to act in this world, and the conferral of a *sutra* of the astral world), buddha Vairochana (with the transference, both telepathic and material, of an image of a relationship with the opposite sex through which one constitutes the astral body of the disciple); b) secret initiation in which the master's sperm and blood are delivered, symbolised by yogurt and tea, or, to advanced practitioners, in real form: the blood will circulate in the blood vessels and brain cells while the semen will convey the experience of the guru. The initiate thus becomes a 'child of the guru'. c) *Mahasuka*, supreme pleasure: showing the representation of *Dakini*, celestial maiden, the sexual energy is stimulated, made to ascend to the Brahma Randra (point of connection with the astral world, which is located in the skull box) so as to transform it into 'knowledge' (*chi*), which, descending, purifies the mind. This is referred to as the passage from *tumo* (awakening of *kundalini*) to *chandali* (experience of *tairaku* or extreme pleasure). One thus acquires the body and mind of the buddha, the 'subtle body' and the 'clear light'. d) The guru leads the disciple from mystical experiences to emancipation, merging the body and mind of the buddha, which were previously separated: *karma* is completely dissolved, and one becomes Guyasamaja: the tantric buddha (see Asahara 1989a, 118-29).

19 Asahara insists a great deal on the 'efficacy' of his teaching, constantly proposing technical and 'scientific' proofs of the state reached by the practitioner. His language, in the texts published after the 1990s, is increasingly scientific and technical, enriched with diagrams and photographs proposed as documents. In fact, he argues that the truth must be verified using the most modern means that medicine can offer, and even considers the electrical activity of the cerebral cortex measured with an electroencephalogram an objective reflection of mental activity. For an example of this, see Asahara 1994.

2.5 Prophecies

In a text from 1987, Asahara qualified as 'premonitory signs' of the Apocalypse a series of events (in act or in progress) such as Halley's Comet, the frequent appearances of UFOs,[20] the democratisation of the Soviet Union and the adoption of the presidential system,[21] the unification of Europe, and the situation in the Middle East etc.

The *Book of Revelation* of John is completely reinterpreted in the light of his teachings in a series of comics including *Metsubō no hi*, (The Day of Extinction), published in 1989. In it, Asahara states that "the one who will become president of the United States in the 1995 elections and the one who will be the General Secretary of Russia by then will lead the world towards a disaster" (Asahara 1989b, 223); then "the number of those who will not be afraid to die for the truth will grow, and god will make a bloody reprisal against the wicked" (139).

> The victims of this conflict may be limited to a quarter of the world's population, and the salvation of the remaining three quarters depends on the salvific activity of the Aum: this is my mission. However, this is the age of divine wrath […]. [I]f the negative actions of mankind continue to accumulate,[22] the terrible God will apply the laws of *karma* and make them happen, so as to make them understood. Although it is called judgment of God's dreadful wrath, in truth this is love. (223)

In other passages he tries to comfort his disciples by promising the construction of an atomic shelter and the purchase of a 100,000 square-meter piece of land, where they can protect themselves from nuclear wars and bacteriological or chemical weapons, and where they can continue to practice in order to reach *Maha Nirvana*: those who, having intensified their practice to the maximum, have reached this condition, need not worry, since they will be ready to die at any moment. Lay practitioners will at least have to try to earn merit so as to enjoy this life and to be able to move on to a higher one in the next.

The predictions have a caveat: it will be possible to avoid total disaster if Aum manages to spread to every country in this world (or at least to gain a foothold in the United States, Europe, and the

20 He understands UFOs as a means of movement for beings living in one of the six worlds of the Kingdom of Desire: the *asura*.

21 Considering the commune as the organisational structure par excellence, any other type of order would be negative.

22 Not leading mankind to the truth, not following or spreading Aum teaching, are also considered negative.

Himalayas), since the teaching of the Supreme Truth will be followed everywhere, and the enlightened ones, at the heads of every nation, will guarantee peace.

Bibliography

Asahara Shōkō 麻原彰晃 (1989a). *Initiation. Inishiēshon* イニシエーション (Initiation). Tōkyō: AUM shuppan.

Asahara Shōkō (1989b). *Metsubō no hi* 滅亡の日 (The Day of Extinction). Tōkyō: AUM shuppan.

Asahara Shōkō (1994). *Kenshō "shi" (samadi)* 検証「死(サマディ)」 (Inspection. "Death" *Samadhi*). Tōkyō: AUM shuppan.

AUM Public Relations Editorial Staff (ed.) (1992). *STEP TO shinri. Uchū no hōsokuhen. Asahara Sonshi no shinri nyūmon seminā* STEP TO 真理—宇宙の法則編—麻原尊師の真理入門セミナー (Step to the Truth: The Laws of the Universe. Introductory Seminar to Truth by Guru Asahara). Tōkyō: Aum shinrikyō.

Crepon, P. (1987). *Piccolo dizionario della spiritualità orientale*. Roma: Gremese Editore.

Filoramo, G. (a cura di) (1993). *Dizionario delle religioni*. Torino: Einaudi.

Mariotti, M. (1995). "Asahara Shōkō e l'OM Shinrikyō. L'insegnamento della verità suprema". *Religioni e sette nel mondo*, 115-28.

Raveri, M. (1992). *Il corpo e il Paradiso. Esperienze ascetiche in Asia Orientale*. Venezia: Marsilio.

Shimazono, S. (1995). "In the Wake of AUM. The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 22(3-4), The New Age in Japan, 381-415.

Itineraries of an Anthropologist
Studies in Honour of Massimo Raveri
edited by Giovanni Bulian and Silvia Rivadossi

The Android and the Fax: Robots, AI and Buddhism in Japan

Erica Baffelli
The University of Manchester, UK

Abstract In March 2019, a temple in Kyoto, Kōdaiji, unveiled to the public 'Mindar', a robot developed in collaboration with Ishiguro Hiroshi, a well-known robotics professor at Osaka University. The android is presented as the manifestation of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion. It can move, speak, and record what it sees. Mindar delivers sermons based on the Heart Sutra and, according to the temple's priest, it will keep evolving and its knowledge will become endless. Mindar has received mixed responses from visitors, from those who cry during the sermons to those who feel it inappropriate for a robot to preach in a temple. Media coverage has mainly focused on the potential for Mindar to change the image of Buddhism in Japan, a tradition often portrayed as antiquated and mainly focused on funerary rituals. By examining the declarations of Mindar's creators and varied responses of its visitors, and drawing on observation of Mindar's practice, this chapter explores the interaction between AI, robotics, and Buddhism in contemporary Japan. It highlights the affective potentialities and possibilities of AI, in particular as they relate to emotional connections between humans and robots, and the implications for Buddhism in contemporary Japan.

Keywords Japanese Buddhism. AI. Robots. Affect. Mindar.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Robots and Religious Practice in Japan. – 3 Multimedia Performance of Buddhist Teachings. – 4 Audience Reactions and the Buddha in the Robot. – 5 Affective Possibilities.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 14 | Religion and Thought 4
e-ISSN 2610-9417 | ISSN 2610-900X
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-527-8 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-528-5

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2021-01-14 | Accepted 2021-03-10 | Published 2021-10-18

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-527-8/012

私は、「観音」の名前で知られる観自在菩薩
I am Kannon, known as the Kannon Bodhisattva
(Andoroido Kannon Maindā[1])

1 Introduction

Early in the morning of 4 January 2020 I boarded a bullet train from Tokyo to Kyoto to visit the Kōdaiji, a temple of the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism established in 1606 and located in Kyoto's Higashiyama District. The remaining original structures of the temple are designated as important cultural heritage in Japan and Kōdaiji is one of Kyoto's major tourist attractions. The aim of my visit, however, was not to admire the beautiful garden and historic buildings, but to listen to sermons delivered by an android[2] called Android Kannon Mindar (in Japanese *Andoroido Kannon Maindā*, hereafter Mindar). Mindar was unveiled in February 2019 via a press release by the Android Kannon Production Committee, established in 2017. The robot is the result of a collaboration between the temple and Ishiguro Hiroshi, one of Japan's most famous roboticists and a professor of robotics at Osaka University. Mindar is designed to represent the bodhisattva Kannon (Sanskrit: Avalokiteśvara; Chinese: Guanyin), the bodhisattva of compassion,[3] who is worshiped across the Buddhist world. Chapter 25 of the *Lotus Sutra*, commonly known in Japan as *Kannon gyō* illustrates thirty-three manifestations of Kannon, a universal saviour who responds to humans' cries for help, and who assumes different identities in different contexts (Yü 2001). Kannon can take any form. In its android manifestation as Mindar, the bodhisattva can move, speak, and deliver sermons based on the *Heart Sutra* (*Hannya shingyō*), one of the most well-known sutras, pregnant with Buddhist doctrinal meaning.

Beth Singler argues that AI can be "potentially disruptive" (2017, 215) for society and religion, but it can also have a potentially reinvigorating effect on religion, by both revitalising existing traditions and practices and creating new religious movements. In particular, media coverage about Mindar has focused on the potential for the android to change

1 The first sentence of the sermon performed by Android Kannon Mindar at Kōdaiji, complete with the English translation simultaneously projected on to a wall during the performance. The Japanese sentence reads *Watashi wa, 'Kannon' no namae de shirareru kanjizai bosatsu* (lit. 'I am Kanjizai bodhisattva, known by the name of Kannon').

2 I define an android as a robot that looks like a real human with body parts made of silicon resembling human skin. I follow the definition of robots suggested by Robertson: "A robot is an aggregation of different technologies – sensors, lenses, software, telecommunication tools, actuators, batteries, synthetic materials and fabrics – that make it capable of interacting with its environment, with some human supervision (through teleoperation) or autonomously" (2017, 6).

3 In Mahāyāna Buddhism, bodhisattvas are beings who have renounced seeking personal *nirvāṇa* in order to dedicate themselves to the salvation of others.

Figure 1 Android Kannon Mindar. Kōdaiji Temple, Kyoto, Japan (photo by the Author)

the image of Buddhism in Japan, a tradition often portrayed as antiquated and mainly focused on funerary rituals (Rowe 2004; Reader 2011).

By examining its creators' declarations and visitors' varied responses, as well as drawing on observation of Mindar's practice, this chapter explores the interaction between AI, robotics, and Buddhism in contemporary Japan. It highlights AI's affective potentialities and possibilities (as yet still not fully attainable), particularly as they relate to emotional connections between humans and robots, and the implications for Buddhism in contemporary Japan.

2 Robots and Religious Practice in Japan

Mindar is not the first example of a robot being engaged in religious practices and rituals in Japan.[4] Examples reported by Rambelli (2018)

4 For examples of robots used in religious practices in another context see Travagnin (2020) on robot-monk Xian'er at the Longquan Monastery in Beijing, China. Another example is BlessU-2, a blessing robot that was part of an installation by the Protestant Church in Germany to mark the 500 years since the Reformation (Sherwood 2017). A researcher at Waseda University, Gabriele Trovato, has been developing a type of social robot that he defines as "theomorphic", that is a robot that "carries the shape and the identity of a supernatural creature or object within a religion" (Ackerman 2018). He designed SanTo, a robot with the appearance of a Catholic saint, and DarumaTo, a robot shaped like a Daruma doll, which is designed to keep company with and monitor the health of elderly people.

include rather unsophisticated machines similar to moving dolls, like the robot monk at Hōtokuji, a Nichiren temple in Hyōgo Prefecture. When its sensor detects an approaching visitor, the robot will start chanting a Buddhist scripture.[5] This type of robot represents a modern innovation in the machinery for chanting prayers and invocations; mechanical devices have been used in Buddhist temples for these purposes for centuries. More recently, new technologies have been employed to create attractive spectacles using Buddhist iconography and statues, such as the performances of 'drone' buddhas at the Ryūganji Temple in Kyoto, which featured 3D printed miniatures of bodhisattvas floating around the main hall standing on drones.[6]

Robots have also been employed in funerary practices. An early example is the robot priest employed by a funerary chapel in Yokohama since 1993 (Rambelli 2018, 66). Programmed to deliver prayers for different religious traditions (seven Buddhist sects, Shinto and two Christian denominations), this Robo-priest is an example of the digital forms of ancestor worship introduced by some temples during the 1990s, which also include online *butsudan* (Buddhist altars) and digital graves (Duteil-Ogata 2015; Gould, Kohn, Gibbs 2019). More recently, in 2017, another robot, Softbank's Pepper, gained media attention when it appeared at a funeral ceremony, dressed in Buddhist robes, reading Buddhist scriptures, chanting prayers and tapping drums. Funeral rituals for machines and other devices have also been performed at Buddhist temples. Memorial rituals for nonhuman entities and inanimate objects have a long history in Japan (Rambelli 2007). They include rituals for personal computers (Robertson 2017, 186) and, more recently, for robots. For example, in 2015, funeral services were performed for dismissed AIBO robots. AIBO, a robot dog produced by Sony, was on the market from 1999 to 2006. In 2014 Sony stopped producing replacement parts, which led to robot dogs that were beyond repair being used as spare parts.[7] In 2015 a funeral service for nineteen of these 'dismissed' AIBO robots was performed at Kōfukuji, a Nichiren temple in Chiba prefecture, and received extensive media coverage.

This brief summary demonstrates that the android Mindar represents a recent development in a much longer history of the development and use of technology in Buddhist contexts. Mindar's creation and employment follows earlier examples of the design and use of mechanical devices and robots in religious activities and practices

5 Images of the robot monk can be seen on the temple website: `https://temple.nichiren.or.jp/5111011-houtokuji`.

6 Videos of the drone buddhas are available on the Ryūganji website: `https://ryuganji.jp/activity/drone-buddha`.

7 A new generation of AIBO was launched in 2018.

in Japan, often with significant financial investment by enthusiastic priests. However, Mindar's role exceeds that played by these earlier examples. Unlike Pepper the robot monk, who was devised to help during funerals, Mindar is not limited to being a support for priests during their regular ritual activities. Nor is Mindar merely an ingenious prayer-chanting device to attract visitors. Mindar *is* Kannon, a bodhisattva. Its role is therefore to create a particular experience for and emotional reactions in its viewers. Before discussing this in more detail, however, a short description of Mindar's performance and how it is presented to the public is necessary.

3 Multimedia Performance of Buddhist Teachings

Mindar is hosted in a hall adjacent to the car park, separated from the main temple buildings. On the day of my visit, while many tourists were queuing to enter the main temple complex, only a few, about ten people, attended the performances by the android, one held in the morning and one in the afternoon. People can freely enter the hall to see Mindar, but when its sermon is about to start, only those who have registered can stay. Mindar's performances are usually advertised on the temple website; there is no fee, but booking via fax is required.[8]

Mindar is 195 centimetres tall with silicon head and hands. The rest of the body has been deliberately left to look like a machine, with visible servo motors and exposed wires **[fig. 1]**. When visitors enter the room Mindar welcomes them with open arms while rotating its body. It cannot walk; only its head, face, hands and, to a limited extent, upper torso can move. Its eyes blink and these movements feel real – they feel human – giving the impression that the android is looking its visitors in the eye while transmitting a sense of calm and serenity.

At the beginning of the event a staff member makes a short introduction. She explains that she initially referred to Kannon as a 'she', but was then told that the bodhisattva was male.[9] As an android, she says, we are now free to relate to Kannon as we prefer. She invites visitors to listen to the teaching and reminds us that we cannot take photographs during the sermon. After the event, the same staff member will ask the attendees if they enjoyed the performance and invite them to visit again (and to buy the manga sold outside).

8 When I visited the temple in January 2020 Mindar's service was shown twice (at 11 am and 3 pm). I attended both performances and conducted an interview with the head priest between them. As I didn't have access to a fax machine I was allowed to book via phone.

9 In the Japanese context Kannon is sometimes portrayed as a 'mother' but often as androgynous.

Mindar's performance is about 25 minutes long. It starts with a recorded voice inviting viewers to look at a fixed point if they feel dizzy and to leave the room at any time if they feel unwell. Then the room darkens and images start appearing on the wall; only the android is illuminated as the main performer on a stage. The sermon is in Japanese with subtitles in English and Chinese projected on to the walls. Mindar starts by explaining that Kannon has taken different forms, the current one being the android form. It can transform itself in anything and transcend time and space. "Today, – it says – as you can see, I have decided to greet you in a figure of great human interest as an android".[10] It continues by focusing on basic Buddhist teachings, for example, on impermanence and compassion. When Mindar goes on to discuss suffering, it explains that an android is closer to Buddhahood because it does not have attachments: "as an Android I never seek a constant element that does not change in this fleeting world". In addition, I am not burdened with selfish concepts like I-me-mine". Mindar then asks the audience whether, as an android, "I can easily fulfil the Buddha's teaching of 'emptiness' in this present age?". However, later on Mindar explains that a robot is limited by the fact that, unlike humans, it cannot experience suffering and it cannot have a sympathetic heart: "A robot is not a sentient being that suffers distress. […] A robot like me can never have the sympathetic heart you [the audience] just described. This is the special power that only human beings possess". The event ends with Mindar chanting the *Heart Sutra*.

Mindar's sermon is part of a multimedia performance; it is accompanied by projection mapping images, controlled by a computer to move in sync with the android. The images illustrate the teaching and display the words of the *Heart Sutra* during Mindar's recitation. Images of a virtual audience – recorded with temple staff members – are also projected onto the walls of the room. The android interacts with these virtual participants, turning its body in their direction as they ask questions. Through staged dialogue and interaction with Mindar, these participants show how they move from ignorance to understanding of Buddhist teachings. According to a press release dated 23 February 2019, the aim of the dialogue between Mindar and the two-dimensional figures is to enhance the presence of both and to imbue the android "with an even greater sense of presence".[11]

10 All direct quotes are taken from the temple's English subtitles for Mindar's sermon, which were given to me along with the original Japanese transcript by the temple. I cite the temple's translation rather than providing my own, since it is an integral part of the performance.

11 The press release is available at: `http://www.kodaiji.com/mindar/press_data/data01.pdf`.

Although prerecorded and staged, the experience of the event is immersive. Mindar's gaze, paired with the metallic sound of its body moving, creates the impression that the android is engaging with the audience, even if only momentarily.[12]

In his interviews with media outlets, as well as in the temple's press releases, Kōdaiji's head priest, Rev. Gotō Tenshō, explains his long-lasting interest in AI and his dream of using it to recreate important spiritual figures such as Shakyamuni or Jesus to give people the opportunity to interact with them and ask them questions directly.

> I always remained consumed with the thought of how wonderful it would be to hear these teachings delivered in person by the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, and other patriarchal figures that followed. [...] Recent android and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have given me a glimmer of hope that this desire could be realised after all. Our ultimate goal [...] is to reproduce Siddhartha Gautama and other eminent figures as androids and to hear their words directly.[13]

During our interview, Rev. Gotō said that he had wanted Mindar to look as little like a human as possible, but eventually compromised on the face and hands being made in silicon. This had been recommended by the team led by Professor Ishiguro at Osaka University as a way to encourage viewers to connect with the android. Although building androids is more expensive than building non-humanoid robots, roboticists (and Japanese roboticists in particular) continue to develop them, since human appearance makes us react to robots in a very different way and enhances our emotional connection with them (Lozito 2019; Frumer 2018). Humanoids, that is robots resembling a human being, also tend to be gendered to the degree that some can actually pass as human beings (Robertson 2017, 4). Mindar, however, has a machine-like body and neither its face nor gestures are gender-specific, although its artificial voice sounds more feminine than masculine. Gotō's decisions regarding Mindar's appearance are also explained in a document on the temple website:

> Mindar wears no religious clothing and bears no religious articles. This is because we did not create an image of Kannon out of a robot. Rather, Kannon has transformed into a robot. It was necessary that the entire figure be a machine. The voice is purposely artificial. We took the liberty only of making the face human so

12 Several video excerpts of Mindar are available online. See, for example, the short feature by the *Japan Times*: `https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLoF5_-OUKY`.

13 See `http://www.kodaiji.com/mindar/press_data/data03.pdf`.

> that it could actually look at people and smile or visually express emotions such as sadness and melancholy. Those are things that it could not do just as a machine.[14]

Just as paintings and statues have been among the various media through which Kannon has previously appeared, AI is nowadays another potential tool or skilful means (*hōben*) to transmit Buddhist teachings. Although Gotō does not go so far as to claim a special relationship between AI and Buddhism, he does speak of the android creating a 'new deity' rather than a new human. Despite the current limitations of the project, not least the financial costs associated with maintaining the robot, Gotō's aspiration is to see the android develop and become able to teach Buddhism.[15] The android, he says, cannot die and it can constantly improve, as his successors can continue to input new teachings. Gotō also sees Mindar as a potential educational tool to encourage younger generations, in particular children, to learn more about Buddhism, thus eventually reigniting interest in Buddhism in Japan.

The initial briefing prepared by the temple regarding the building of the android explained that the main aim of the project was to make Buddhist scriptures and doctrine easy to understand and accessible to everybody, including young students from middle and high schools. Mindar is therefore not only the first android Kannon, but, according to the press release, the first Kannon to deliver sermons directly to visitors. These sermons are delivered in a language that speaks to modern people. The *Heart Sutra*, often presented as a difficult and esoteric text, is explained in a simple and straightforward way, to make it accessible and relevant to people living in today's world. The *Heart Sutra* (*Hannya shingyō* in Japanese, *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya* in Sanskrit) is a popular *sutra* in the Mahāyāna tradition and consists of less than 300 Chinese characters. Despite its brevity it condenses important Buddhist concepts, in particular emptiness. It includes the famous sequence "form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form" (in Japanese *shiki soku ze kū, kū soku ze shiki*). In the Japanese context this *sutra* is performed across Buddhist sects and it is also associated with ritual practices, such as pilgrimage or *sutra* copying (*shakyō*), for acquiring merit. It is also regularly discussed in priests' sermons and countless commentaries, and several popular explanatory books about it have also been published (Reader,

14 http://www.kodaiji.com/mindar/press_data/data02.pdf.

15 Mindar was built in two years. The total project costs roughly 50,000,000 yen (over 400,000 euros), while the robot itself costs about 25,000,000 yen (c. 200,000 euros). Additional costs are required for maintenance.

Tanabe 1998, 30). In recent years the *sutra* has also gained social media attention via computer-generated performances that show the vocaloid Hatsune Miku singing it (Shultz 2021).[16]

Mindar's sermon aimed at making the *Heart Sutra* accessible could therefore be seen both as part of an established tradition of performances, commentaries and explanations of the *sutra* by Buddhist temples, and as contributing to the recent rediscovery of and renewed interest in the *sutra* and its message. The pedagogical potential offered by Mindar also lies in the possibility of direct transmission of teachings from the bodhisattva to listeners, without the mediation of a priest. This, however, assumes that there is an audience ready and willing to accept this form of teaching transmission. But how do visitors react to Mindar and its performance?

4 Audience Reactions and the Buddha in the Robot

According to the temple staff, Mindar has received mixed responses from visitors, including Buddhist priests. These have ranged from people crying during the sermons or attempting to touch the android to have contact with it, to criticism of the inappropriateness of a robot preaching in a temple.

Visitors' comments have generally been very positive.[17] Some viewers were impressed by the features of the android, in particular by the movements of its eyes, hands, and face, which give the impression that the robot is interacting with the public ("when moving I felt like it was alive"; "the eyes and mouth moved like a human being"). Other visitors focused on the emotions they felt during the performance, how the android looked "kind", and the warm feeling they felt during the sermon. Some visitors expressed their surprise about these feelings because they were initially sceptical and felt rather uncomfortable or had odd feelings toward robots. In the words of one visitor, they did not think a robot could "have a soul". Many viewers were captivated by the sermon and in particular the teaching on emptiness. They remarked on how the android made this teaching accessible and easy to understand, and some related the teaching to personal struggles. For these visitors, the performance seems to have provided a "sense of tranquillity" and a break from anxieties they were experiencing in their lives. For others, however, the experience

16 The popularity of Hatsune Miku singing the *Heart Sutra* increased with the release online of the video *Hannya shingyō Poppu* (Pop Heart Sutra) in September 2010. See `https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yX4jeu1nGyo`.

17 These observations are based on comments written by visitors who attended Mindar's sermons between March and May 2019.

has not worked. Some people felt uneasy, disliked the features of the robot ("the voice is too young") or struggled to identify the robot as a bodhisattva. Others could not refrain from noticing that the event felt like a staged act rather than spontaneous or real ("I cannot really see the android as Kannon"). For some the sound and images surrounding the robot were distracting, while others noted how this experience differed from listening to *sutras* chanted by a priest. In particular, they remarked on how the full experience of the sermon was compromised by the lack of interaction with and inability to ask questions directly to Mindar.

In my interview with Rev. Gōto, he mentioned that non-Japanese attendees were more critical of the android; they asked why it did not look more human and compared it to Frankenstein's monster. In his opinion, Japanese visitors, who grew up with popular culture representations of friendly robots such as Astro Boy or Doraemon, are more able to relate to androids emotionally and see them as friends. These observations seem to resonate with commentaries in the media that present Japan as a 'machine-loving' nation or as synonymous with the technology of the future, including AI and robotics – a techno-mythology that Morley and Robins (1995) have defined as "techno-orientalism". A recent example of those representations can be found in the British TV programme "Eco Town, Future Farming, Robot Cemetery", which was an episode in the series *Rough Guide to the Future* that aired on the British television network Channel 4 in February 2020. The documentary featured a funeral performed for AIBO robots in a temple in Chiba prefecture so that these robots could be used as spare parts. It explained that Japanese are "spiritual about their technology" and associated the ritual practice with the idea that spirits can inhabit inanimate objects.

Gotō's discussion of Mindar, however, does not refer to animistic or techno-animistic (Jensen, Blok 2013) views of robots as spirits,[18] but rather to a view of human beings and machines as ontological identical, which is grounded in the Mahāyāna Buddhist notion than both sentient and non-sentient beings have buddha nature. A similar argument was brought forward by the roboticist Mori Masahiro – well-known for coining the term "uncanny valley" (*bukimi no tani* or the 'valley of creepiness') – who in 1974 published a book titled *Mori Masahiro no bukkyō nyūmon* (lit. 'Masahiro Mori's Introduction to Buddhism', but published in English as *The Buddha in the Robot*). Inspired by the *Lotus Sutra*, Mori argues that robots have buddha nature and the potential to attain Buddhahood (Kimura 2018). Similarly, Rev. Gōto does not see Mindar as a representation of Kannon or an updated version of a statue, but as the bodhisattva itself.

18 For a discussion on animism in the Japanese context see Thomas 2019.

Gotō's remarks seem to indicate the possibility that Mindar might go beyond fulfilling the role of a bodhisattva as a mediator between buddhas and humans – and thereby potentially replace the role of a priest. Mindar might also introduce new ways of transmitting the Buddhist teachings based on human-robot interactions. However, as Mindar itself explains in its sermon, an android, while able to go beyond human limits, is not (yet) a sentient being able to feel suffering. It is therefore unable to fully feel others' suffering and distress.

5 Affective Possibilities

David White (2018) discusses the "new affective possibilities" for caring offered by a so-called 'emotional machine' like Pepper,[19] which is able to sense feelings and read facial expressions. Social robots offer new opportunities for companionship, care and therapy in a super-ageing society like Japan, and even more so during the Covid-19 pandemic when social distancing restrictions have been imposed (Kimura 2017; Lam 2020). The Japanese government has been actively promoting the development of care-robots and robot-enhanced lifestyles as a way to address pressing social issues (Robertson 2017, 19). Robots can support people living alone, help people with disabilities, and make patients feel looked after. In other words, they can offer assistance and allow humans to go beyond their physical and social limitations and even to construct a social community that "humans alone could not achieve" (Kimura 2017, 15).

At present, Mindar can only talk and move with information produced and inputted by junior priests at Kōdaiji. Mindar is not yet an emotional machine or emotional robot. However, its features, especially its eyes, and its performance create a "promise of connection", offering to viewers the possibility of (future) emotional connection and a "heart to heart relationship" (Katsuno 2011, 95) with the android, should Kannon-Mindar become able to understand the human heart and interact directly with viewers.

Yet, even if Mindar does one day develop into an 'emotional robot' able to 'feel' suffering, it will probably not be effective for everybody. A long-term assessment of viewers' responses would be crucial to avoid generalisation. A careful analysis of reactions to and interactions with Mindar would also deepen our understanding of viewers' emotional responses to the android, without falling into essentialising representations of 'the Japanese' relating to robots as 'living beings' associated with Shinto (Robertson 2017, 10). Such

19 Pepper was presented in 2014 by the CEO of Softbank as a "personal emotional robot" companion (Robertson 2017, 6).

a view, as aptly discussed by Frumer (2018), not only essentialises Shinto, but also fails to satisfactorily explain how feelings of friendliness towards robots are created. Since the 1970s, robots have had a visible presence in Japan. The possibilities of employing them in the service sectors is widely discussed and has been encouraged by the government. Familiarity with and feelings of friendliness toward humanoid robots may make an android like Mindar more readily acceptable to Japanese visitors. But rather than attributing their responses to some generalised idea of a particular (Japanese) culture, they should instead be contextualised as "a result of a historical process by which robots were consciously designed to elicit positive cultural associations" (Frumer 2018, 158). It is particularly important to consider the role played by different actors, including roboticists, in creating the perception of robots as 'friends' among the Japanese public. Moreover, the limited sample of reactions available so far does not allow for a full evaluation of how people interact with robots such as Mindar and Pepper who perform religious rituals or of the sensorial, aesthetic and material dimensions of these interactions. Further study of viewers' responses will enable a more nuanced understanding of practitioners' appropriation of technology and robots.

In the case of Mindar, some actors, such as the Kōdaiji head priest, may associate the relationship between human beings and technology in the Japanese (religious) context with a specific tradition (in this case, Buddhism), but this view is not necessarily shared among participants of the events, who may not consider Mindar a "spiritual robot" (Geraci 2006). Even so, most visitors are not uneasy in the presence of a humanoid. This familiarity, enhanced by the expectations created by AI and advances in robotics, is what makes Mindar different from earlier examples of prayer chanting devices or ritual-performing robots. Robots are made by humans in specific cultural contexts, but they (and AI) occupy a particular place in the collective imagination that is associated with the sublime (Ames 2018). They are presented (and at times perceived) as potentially capable of going beyond human limitations – in Mindar's case, to fulfil the role of a bodhisattva and guide people to salvation.

According to Rambelli (2018, 70) robots and digital ritual practices move the focus from the ritual specialist to the ritual itself, shifting attention away from the physical co-presence of ritual specialists and participants and from direct performance. Gould and Walters (2020) discuss robots as "techno-salvationist interventions" in modern Buddhist ritual practice. Technologically mediated rituals, they claim, can abate human ritual failures and "hopefully mitigate human corruption and penchant for selfishness and ignorance" (Gould, Walters 2020, 280). They can thereby contribute to exper-

imental efforts to re-vitalise the image of Buddhism (Nelson 2013) and address the declining relationship between temples and parishioners. But can co-presence be created with nonhuman actors such as robots? In an interview,[20] roboticist Ishiguro defines temples as a kind of virtual reality in which imaginaries about hell and heaven exist, making them ideal places to explore new kinds of virtual realities through technology. Is Mindar able to help Buddhist temples change their image as providers of funeral and memorial services and little else? Gould and Walters (2020) discuss the possibility of human Buddhists being entirely eliminated in a future where Buddhism is conceived of as post or transhuman and where "technological perfection of practice" (24) replaces human flaws and weakness. However, at present, the sermon delivered by Mindar is inputted by human priests and, as such, is not immune from human fallibility – and our encounter with this android bodhisattva is still mediated by a fax machine. For now, Mindar is a robot who performs prerecorded sermons in a multimedia environment, creating a staged sensorial experience for viewers. Its evolvement into a "supreme teacher" as dreamed of by Rev. Gōto still has a long (and costly) way to go.

Bibliography

Ackerman, E. (2018). "Can a Robot Be Divine?". *IEEE Spectrum*. https://spectrum.ieee.org/automaton/robotics/artificial-intelligence/can-a-robot-be-divine.

Ames, M.G. (2018). "Deconstructing the Algorithmic Sublime". *Big Data and Society*, 5(1), 1-4. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951718779194.

Duteil-Ogata, F. (2015). "New Funeral Practices in Japan: From Computer-Tomb to the Online Tomb". *Heidelberg Journal of Religion on the Internet*, 8, 11-27. https://doi.org/10.11588/rel.2015.0.20320.

Frumer, Y. (2018). "Cognition and Emotions in Japanese Humanoid Robotics". *History and Technology*, 34(2), 157-83. https://doi.org/10.1080/07341512.2018.1544344.

Geraci, R.M. (2006). "Spiritual Robots: Religion and Our Scientific View of the Natural World". *Theology and Science*, 4(3), 229-46. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700600952993.

Gould, H.; Kohn, T.; Gibbs, M. (2019). "Uploading the Ancestors: Experiments with Digital Buddhist Altars in Contemporary Japan". *Death Studies*, 43(7), 456-65. https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2018.1544948.

Gould, H.; Walters, H. (2020). "Bad Buddhists, Good Robots: Techno-Salvationist Designs for Nirvana". *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 21, 277-94. http://www.globalbuddhism.org/jgb/index.php/jgb/article/view/303.

20 See "Can a Robot be religious? Buddhist Robot Priest Mindar. Japanese Robots": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3VuHpYPU6Y&t=352s.

Jensen, C.B.; Blok, A. (2013). "Techno-Animism in Japan: Shinto Cosmograms, Actor-Network Theory, and the Enabling Powers of Non-Human Agencies". *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30(2), 84-115. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276412456564.

Katsuno, H. (2011). "The Robot's Heart: Tinkering with Humanity and Intimacy in Robot-Building". *Japanese Studies*, 31(1), 93-109. https://doi.org/10.1080/10371397.2011.560259.

Kimura, T. (2017). "Robotics and AI in the Sociology of Religion: A Human in Imago Roboticae". *Social Compass*, 64(1), 6-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768616683326.

Kimura, T. (2018). "Masahiro Mori's Buddhist Philosophy of Robot". *Paladyn. Journal of Behavioral Robotics*, 9(1), 72-81. https://doi.org/10.1515/pjbr-2018-0004.

Lam, D. (2020). "Japan's Robots Fill the Void as Social Distancing Becomes the Norm". *Japan Times*, 22 September. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/09/22/business/tech/coronavirus-robots-social-distancing-japan.

Lozito, N. (2019). "Intervista a Kohei Ogawa 'Costruisco androidi per capire gli umani'". *Il Messaggero*, 4 novembre. https://www.ilmessaggero.it/tecnologia/intervista_kohei_ogawa_costruisco_androidi_per_capire_gli_umani-4839489.html.

Morley, D.; Robins, K. (1995). *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*. London: Routledge.

Nelson, J.K. (2013). *Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Rambelli, F. (2007). *Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism*. Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press.

Rambelli, F. (2018). "Dharma Devices, Non-Hermeneutical Libraries, and Robot-Monks: Prayer Machines in Japanese Buddhism". *Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University*, 3, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.5109/1917884.

Reader, I. (2011). "Buddhism in Crisis? Institutional Decline in Modern Japan". *Buddhist Studies Review*, 28(2), 233-63. https://doi.org/10.1558/bsrv.v28i2.233.

Reader, I.; Tanabe, G. (1998). *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Robertson, J. (2017). *Robo Sapiens Japanicus: Robots, Gender, Family, and the Japanese Nation*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

Rowe, M. (2004). *Bonds of the Dead: Temples, Burial, and the Transformation of Contemporary Japanese Buddhism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sherwood, H. (2017). "Robot Priest Unveiled in Germany to Mark 500 Years since Reformation". *Guardian*, 30 May. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/30/robot-priest-blessu-2-germany-reformation-exhibition.

Shultz, J. (2021). "'Heart Sutra Pop'. Religious Textual Democratization by a Sexy Vocal Android". *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 33(1), 29-47. https://doi.org/10.3138/jrpc.2019-0040.

Singler, B. (2017). "An Introduction to Artificial Intelligence and Religion for the Religious Studies Scholar". *Implicit Religion*, 20(3), 215-31. https://doi.org/10.1558/imre.35901.

Thomas, J.B. (2019). "Spirit/Medium: Critically Examining the Relationship between Animism and Animation". Rambelli, F. (ed.), *Spirits and Animism in*

Modern Japan. London; New York; Oxford; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury, 157-70.

Travagnin, S. (2020). "From Online Buddha Halls to Robot-Monks: New Developments in the Long-Term Interaction between Buddhism, Media, and Technology in Contemporary China". *Review of Religion and Chinese Society*, 7(1), 120-48. https://doi.org/10.1163/22143955-00701006.

White, D. (2018). "Contemplating the Robotic Embrace: Introspection for Affective Anthropology". *More-than-Human Worlds. A NatureCulture Blog Series*. https://www.natcult.net/contemplating-the-robotic-embrace.

Yü, C.-F. (2001). *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies

1. Mariotti, Marcella; Miyake, Toshio; Revelant, Andrea (eds) (2014). *Rethinking Nature in Contemporary Japan: Science, Economics, Politics*. History and Society 1.

2. Miyake, Toshio (a cura di) (2014). *Mostri del Giappone. Narrative, figure, egemonie della dis-locazione identitaria*. Religion and Thought 1.

3. Calvetti, Paolo; Mariotti, Marcella (eds) (2015). *Contemporary Japan: Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition*.

4. Moro, Daniela (2015). *Writing Behind the Scenes: Stage and Gender in Enchi Fumiko's Works*. Arts and Literature 1.

5. Mariotti, Marcella; Nobuo, Kazashi (eds) (2017). *New Steps in Japanese Studies: Kobe University Joint Research*.

6. De Antoni, Andrea; Raveri, Massimo (eds) (2017). *Death and Desire in Contemporary Japan: Representing, Practicing, Performing*. Religion and Thought 2.

7. Ruperti, Bonaventura; Vesco, Silvia; Negri, Carolina (eds) (2017). *Rethinking Nature in Japan: From Tradition to Modernity*. Arts and Literature 2.

8. Bulian, Giovanni; Nakano, Yasushi (eds) (2018). *Small-scale Fisheries in Japan: Environmental and Socio-cultural Perspectives*. History and Society 2.

9. Favi, Sonia (2018). *Self Through the Other: Production, Circulation and Reception in Italy of Sixteenth-Century Printed Sources on Japan*. Arts and Literature 3.

10. Mariotti, Marcella; Novielli, Roberta; Ruperti, Bonaventura; Vesco, Silvia (eds) (2018). *Rethinking Nature in Post-Fukushima Japan: Facing the Crisis*. Arts and Literature 4.

11. Berndt, Enno (2018). *J-Economy, J-Corporation and J-Power since 1990: From Mutual Gain to Neoliberal Redistribution*. History and Society 3.

12. Rivadossi, Silvia (2020). *Sciamani urbani. Rintracciando un nuovo discorso nel Giappone contemporaneo*. Religion and Thought 3.

13. Pappalardo, Giuseppe; Heinrich, Patrick (eds) (2020). *European Approaches to Japanese Language and Linguistics*. Linguistics and Language Education 1.

This volume is a *Festschrift* in honour of Massimo Raveri, Honorary Professor of Japanese Religions at the Department of Asian and North-African Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. This wide-ranging collection features essays that pay homage to his extensive academic interests and his interdisciplinary approach to the study of classical and contemporary Japanese religions. It is a tribute by friends and colleagues wishing to express their esteem and affection towards a scholar who, over the course of his long career, has shared many research experiences with them, in a spirit of unfailing support and collaboration.

Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia