

## Folk Religion in the Ise-Shima Region —The *Takemairi* Custom at Mount Asama—

KIMURA Noritsugu

木村 登次

The present paper deals with the folk custom of *takemairi* タケマイリ at Mt. Asama 朝熊山 in Mie Prefecture, Japan. It is part of a wider research project on folk religion, and particularly on Bon observances (Festival of the Dead) in the Ise-Shima region<sup>1</sup> which has been conducted for five years since 1983. The folk custom of *takemairi* has as its purpose not only the climbing of and worshipping at Mt. Asama but also the performance of memorial services (*kuyō* 供養) for the deceased at the Donkai-in 呑海院, which is the *oku-no-in* (“inner sanctuary”) of the Kongōshō-ji 金剛証寺 affiliated with the Nanzenji Sect of the Rinzai Zen tradition, by putting up square *tōba* (“wooden stupa slats”) at both sides of the approach from the Gokuraku temple gate to the inner sanctuary. This popular custom, called *tōba kuyō* 塔婆供養, constitutes in itself an important element of the *takemairi*.

The purpose of the present paper is not to trace the historical development of the *takemairi* custom, but is an attempt to grasp its present condition and, by focusing upon the *tōba kuyō*, to acquire a deeper understanding of its meaning in the Ise-Shima region today. In this context, the following two problems will be discussed. First, the nature of Mt. Asama as a kind of intermediary stage for the spirits of the deceased as manifested in the *tōba kuyō* custom, and second, the relation of this custom to the mortuary rituals and the Bon observances held in the region.

<sup>1</sup> The Ise-Shima region is the area south of the Kushidagawa river and contains, concretely speaking, the following places: Meiwa-chō, Obata-chō, Tamaki-chō, Misono Village, Ise City, Futami-chō, Toba City, Isobe-chō, Ago-chō, Daiō-chō, Shima-chō, and Hamashima-chō.

*Preliminary Observations*

If you go worshipping at Ise, also go to Asama.

If you don't, it is only a one-sided worship.

As this poem indicates, worshipping only at the Grand Shrines of Ise has been called "one-sided worshipping" (*katamairi* 片参り), and since the Middle Ages the custom of going to Mt. Asama after having paid a visit to Ise has taken roots among the populace (Sakurai 1969a, p. 2).

Mt. Asama is a mountain 553 meters above sea level, located almost in the middle between Ise City and Toba City. The people of the Ise-Shima region call the mountain "Take" or "O-take-san," and when somebody dies one usually says: "also this one has gone to Take-san." They think, in fact that all the spirits of the deceased go to Mt. Asama, and so the mountain has for ages been an object of deep faith among the people as the "mountain for the spirits of the dead."

In the Ise-Shima region, climbing Mt. Asama is called "*takemairi*." It is a custom that takes on various forms and in the past research has been done on it from various angles. For example, Miyata Noboru distinguishes three basic forms in the *takemairi*: 1) two relatives climbing the mountain on the day after the death of a family member, 2) climbing the mountain on the first Bon festival after the death, and 3) climbing the mountain on the *en-nichi* 縁日 or "festival day" of Take-san. He further points out that this custom centered on Mt. Asama has gradually spread out in a concentric structure (Miyata 1965, pp. 318-320). Sakurai Tokutarō, on the other hand, tries to explain the custom by clarifying the historical background of the various forms of faith connected with Mt. Asama. He links the *takemairi* to the *mikoyose* ミコヨセ, another custom which used to be performed in that region after the funeral, and he analyzes the meaning of their ritual process (Sakurai 1969b). However, taking into account the period in which both scholars did their research, we have to accept that together with various changes in the social environment, the forms of *takemairi* have since then undergone quite fundamental alterations. In this paper, then, it is not my intention to argue the value of other scholars' arguments and theories, but rather to focus upon the changes that have taken place, based upon more recent field work and using the results of their research as a valuable guide.

As already mentioned, the *takemairi* custom consists of more than climbing and worshipping at Mt. Asama. It particularly involves the *tōba kuyō*, i. e. the putting up of square wooden slats on which the posthumous names of deceased people are written in Japanese ink, on both sides of the approach

## CHART

Proportion of Number of *Tōba* and Number of Deaths  
in Places where *Tōba kuyō* is Performed

Location	Number of <i>tōba</i>	Number of deaths	Proportion
Matsusaka City	24	824	2.9%
Taki-chō	5	105	4.8%
Watarai-chō	19	74	25.7%
Meiwa-chō	77	157	49.0%
Obata-chō	65	89	68.5%
Tamaki-chō	46	83	55.4%
Misono Village	40	47	85.1%
Ise City	565	770	70.1%
Futami-chō	57	58	98.3%
Toba City	192	211	91.0%
Isobe-chō	66	93	71.0%
Ago-chō	106	150	59.3%
Daiō-chō	5	74	6.7%
Shima-chō	13	117	11.1%
Hamashima-chō	35	56	62.5%
Nansei-chō	39	114	34.2%
Nantō-chō	(30)	—	—

\* The thirty *tōba* from Nantō-chō are not *tōba* for recently deceased but for the *kuyō* of fish.

\*\* Besides the places mentioned in this list, also people from other places erect *tōba*, such as Yokkaichi City, Suzuka City, Tsu City, Hisai City, and Ichishi County in Mie Prefecture, and Aichi, Osaka, Hyōgo, Nara, Shiga, and Aomori Prefectures, and even Tokyo.

leading from the Gokuraku temple gate to the Donkai-in, the inner sanctuary of the Kongōshō-ji (see Chart).<sup>2</sup> Although the Kongōshō-ji itself belongs to the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, the *tōba* are offered irrespective of any sectarian affiliation. The festival of the founding of the temple is held every year from 27–29 June (formerly on 28 May of the lunar calendar). Since it is said that “the ancestors are there,” crowds of people from the Ise-Shima region gather at the temple, and the usually quiet precincts bustle like a big city. They visit the *tōba* which were already put up there, and perform the *mizu tōba kuyō*, i. e. the putting up of smaller wooden slats, in front of the Donkai-in. This festival is the biggest annual event at the Kongōshō-ji.

This study on the *takemairi* custom, focused on the *tōba kuyō*, is based on temple records of the *tōba* that were set up at Mt. Asama during the years 1982, 1983, and 1984, and on an actual survey of the *tōba*. Field work was done on the faith practices with regard to Mt. Asama in the surrounding area (one part of Ise City; Ijika-chō, Ōsatsu-chō, Matsuo-chō, and Kōchichō in Toba City, Kou in Ago-chō, Nakiri in Daiō-chō, Hamashima-chō, and Goza in Shima-chō, all in Shima County, and other places).

At present, waves of urbanization, accompanying the development of holiday resorts, are surging upon the Ise-Shima region. This “second development boom” as it is sometimes called, naturally also influences religious practices in the area such as the Bon observances. Therefore we must raise the question as to what in those religious practices becomes more widespread and what practices undergo a process of withering. Indeed, looking at what is newly created and what, on the other hand, disappears offers valuable insights for our research.

### *The Takemairi Custom*

#### Mt. Asama and the Kongōshō-ji

Mt. Asama, located on the border between Ise City and Toba City, is the best known mountain in that region and cannot fail to attract everybody's

<sup>2</sup> Field research shows that, from Mie Prefecture, many *tōba* are erected by people from Meiwa-chō, Obata-chō, Tamaki-chō, Misono Village, Ise City, Futami-chō, Toba City, Isobe-chō, Ago-chō, Hamashima-chō, and Nansei-chō. There are also *tōba* from Yokkaichi City, Suzuka City, Tsu City, Hisai City, Ichishi County, Taki-chō, Watarai-chō, and Matsusaka City, but the number is proportionally low compared to the total number of dead. This might be due to the fact that in the Chōden-ji in Asada-chō, Matsusaka City, a custom exists which performs a function similar to the *tōba kuyō* at Mt. Asama. Finally, there are also *tōba* erected by people from Aichi Prefecture, Osaka, Hyōgo, Nara, Shiga, and Aomori Prefectures, and from Tokyo, and other places (see Chart).

attention. Mt. Asama splendidly fulfills the conditions for becoming an object of faith as so many other mountains in Japan do. It forms the watershed of the region, its peak rising above the other surrounding mountains, and it displays its imposing figure to the people living in the surrounding area. All these elements contribute to the fact that it has become a sacred mountain, the object of people's worship (Sakurai 1969a, p. 4). One can easily understand how in ancient times people already felt this way and how mountain ascetics selected it as a preferable place for their practices. It did not take long before the general populace also started climbing the mountain and the custom of *takemairi* gradually took roots there.<sup>3</sup>

Kongōshō-ji, on the top of the mountain and also known as the Shōhōzan-tosotsu-in, owns several accounts of its history. They all attest to the traditional faith of the populace. According to those historical records, a certain Gyōdai 暁台 first entered the area during the reign of Emperor Kinmei (539–571) and built the Myōjō hall which was also patronized by successive emperors. Later, in the second year of the Tenchō era (825), the monk Kūkai is said to have built a big temple there as a place of practice for esoteric Buddhism, and he gave the temple its present name. This event has been considered the official founding of the temple. In later years the temple fulfilled the role of a center for Shingon Esoteric Buddhism in the region, but with the vicissitudes of the times it also knew a period of decline. During the Ōei years (1394–1448), however, Tōgaku Bun'iku 東岳文晷, a Zen master from the Kenchō-ji temple in Kamakura, restored it and brought it under the tutelage of the Rinzaï sect. Moreover, during the Bunroku era (1592–1596), it became a temple of the Nanzenji sect of Kyoto and has remained so up to the present day. The temple possesses about twenty-four branch temples in the Ise-Shima region. Not only those branch temples but also temples from other sects help out in the running of the Kongōshō-ji, particularly at times of annual festivals, proving that this temple is indeed the most important one in the whole area.

### The *takemairi* custom

We can distinguish the following types in the *takemairi* custom which rep-

<sup>3</sup> In his *About Our Ancestors*, Yanagita Kunio speaks in the following terms about the conditions for mountains to be considered sacred:

“People who have passed through life safely go to a place that is quiet and pure, far from the turmoil of this world, yet which we can actually see in the distance. There surely are found traces of such a place. For example, there are customs still practiced widely in mountain villages at Bon, such as clearing a path for the spirits to come down from a beautiful peak in the mountains surrounding the village, meeting the spirit at the bank of a mountain stream, or gathering flowers from the hill upstream” (1970, pp. 148–149).

resents the faith in Mt. Asama (see Sakurai 1969a, pp. 6–12):

- i. the *shiage* シアゲ *takemairi*,
- ii. the *takemairi* on the temple anniversary,
- iii. the Bon *takemairi*,
- iv. the *takemairi* on the annual death anniversary,
- v. the spring and autumn *takemairi*,
- vi. the *takemairi* at the periodic death anniversaries,
- vii. the *jūsan* 十三 *mairi*.

#### The *shiage takemairi* and the *mikoyose*

The *shiage takemairi* is the most basic type and involves memorial services for recently deceased (*shinmō* 新亡, also called *arabotoke* 新仏 or *nūjōrō* 新精霊 (see also Yanagita 1970, p. 92). On the day after the funeral of a family member (called the day of *shiage* or “completion”), the relatives come together. The women call a *miko* or medium who performs *kuchiyose* 口寄せ, i.e. comes into contact with the world of the spirits. The men, on the other hand, conduct *takemairi* at Mt. Asama. They climb the mountain with some hair of the deceased, some cloths, and other possessions, which are offered at the Donkai-in. They also have the posthumous name of the deceased written in Japanese ink on a provisional *tōba* and the priest reciting sūtras as a memorial service. (A definitive *tōba* is set up later on by the temple authorities along the approach to the Donkai-in.) After this they perform the *mizumuke* ミズムケ in front of the *tōba*. This consists of offering *shikimi* シキミ (“Japanese star anise”), incense, etc., bought at the little shop near the temple. The *shikimi* they buy is called *takemiyage* or “Take souvenir” and one does not forget to take some of it home and offer it on the grave of the deceased and in the *butsudan* (“Buddhist home altar”). The areas where the *takemairi* is limited to the day of the *shiage* are Ise City, Toba City (except for the area close to the sea), and one part of Shima County. There are also areas where only two persons perform it. Since the Ise-Shima Skyline Highway was opened to traffic it is possible to reach the temple by car in about twenty minutes. In former times one climbed on foot along a special path. As it took a considerable time to reach the top of the mountain, the *takemairi* pilgrims stayed overnight at the temple lodgings and performed the *tōba kuyō* the next morning.

The *mikoyose* custom, which used to be performed parallel to the *takemairi*, could be found almost everywhere in the Ise-Shima region. The people also call it *michiarake* or *michiake* (both meaning “opening of the way”) as the medium tells the spirit of the deceased, who is still wandering

about and does not know yet where to go because death just occurred, its destination. In Matsuo-chō of Toba City, on the day after the funeral (the *shiage* day), the women call the *miko* to the house of the deceased once the men have left for the *takemairi*. Two trays are prepared. One is used to put on things that the deceased wore or was attached to (particularly an *obi* or “sash,” a pipe, clothes, or the like), while on the other one a full measure of polished rice with some *shikimi* on top is placed. In front of those two trays the *miko* performs *utayomi* ウタヨミ, a kind of Buddhist song with a special melody, which brings her at once into trance and leads to a conversation with the spirit of the deceased and the bystanders. In almost all cases the content seems to be an expression of thanks for services during the departed’s lifetime.

At present, this custom of *mikoyose* has mostly disappeared. Where it still is observed the *miko* is no longer invited to the house of the deceased but one mostly goes oneself to the place where the medium lives. Also for the *takemairi* custom, one generally waits until the seventh day after death instead of performing it only on the *shiage* day after the funeral.

With the development of various means of transportation, the *takemairi*, which used to be performed only by men, is nowadays also often attended by women who join the men in a private car or a microbus. While the *takemairi* and the *mikoyose* traditionally were mortuary rites which formed a pair, nowadays the latter custom has greatly declined, but increasing importance seems to be given to the former custom. I will deal later with the meaning given to these rites and to the opinions people have about them.

The *takemairi* at the anniversary of the temple founding (*kaisanki* 開山忌)

The temple anniversary is the day on which memorial services are held for the high Zen master Tōgaku Bun’iku who changed the affiliation of the temple from Shingon Esoteric Buddhism to the Rinzai sect of Zen, and also for other priests related to the Kongōshō-ji. The festival was formerly held on 28 May of the lunar calendar, the day on which the Zen master passed away. At present, the anniversary festivities are held from 27 till 29 June, for three days in a row. In this sense, the festival is historically one for the founder of the temple, its reformer, and other priests, but most of the people who attend seem to be much more interested in the memorial services for their own recently deceased family members and their own ancestors, and they pay little attention to the great memorial service held for the deceased priests.

Crowds of people from the Ise-Shima region come to the temple on those three days of the anniversary festival. Many small street stalls are set up

near the Gokuraku temple gate and the usual calm atmosphere of the approach to the inner sanctuary all of a sudden changes into that of a bustling thoroughfare. Most of the people perform the *mizutōba* or offering of small *tōba* slats, pray for the souls of recently deceased relatives, ancestors, and — increasingly so in recent years — also for the souls of aborted children, and order new *tōba* for them. Those who have already put up a *tōba* in previous years visit the place where they stand and offer *shikimi*, flowers, incense, and other things they buy at the shop near the Donkai-in. Of course, part of the *shikimi* is taken home to offer at the grave or the *butsudan*.

The crowds are big especially on the evenings of the 27th and 28th, and many people stay overnight. On the 28th most are from various parts of the Ise-Shima region, but on the evening of the 27th the Kaisan hall is filled with people from Ijika-chō and Ōsatsu-chō of Toba City. Whether relatives of recently deceased or just sympathizers, many from those two areas climb the mountain and regale each other with local songs and festive dances. The Kaisan hall, which usually is a dull place, changes into a sort of banquet hall and one forgets that the night wears on. Early the next morning they all go to the Donkai-in, perform the various *kuyō*, and they return home without attending the great memorial service and other official rites for the dead held that day by the priests. Of course, they also buy *shikimi* to take home with them as a souvenir. (In former times *shikimi* was not bought but people picked it themselves on the mountain.) The people from Ijika-chō used to drop in at Ise City on their way home and to buy articles for daily use and articles of value, which also were kept as Take souvenirs.

#### The other types of *takemairi*

Besides the two types of *takemairi* described above, there are also other types such as the one called *tachibimairi* 夕チビ参り on the *meimichi* or death anniversary, the *higanmairi* 彼岸参り on the spring and autumn equinoxes, the *nenkimairi* 年忌参り on the periodic death anniversaries, the Bonmairi at the Bon festival, and others. All of them are private customs and, as such, not to be considered really local observances. There are, however, areas where the Bon *takemairi* is part of the set of Bon customs and thus also of the traditional annual observances.

In Ijika-chō and Sakate in Toba City, *takemairi* is performed on 15 August during the period of the Bon festival, with services held for the *shinmō* or recently deceased. Those who take part in this Bon *mairi* are family members and relatives of the deceased, all of them coming together in groups. They return after attending the sūtra recitation of the priest at the Donkai-in and the offering the incense. The people from Sakate, however, gather



in front of the *sangai-banrei-tō* 三界万霊塔 (“tower for all the spirits of the three worlds”) at the side of the temple approach, where they place a *tōba* of about 50 cm. high with the name “all spirits of the three worlds” written on it in Japanese ink, and offer light and incense.

Another type of *takemairi* is called *jūsanmairi* or “thirteen worship.” This custom does not exist at all in the Shima area, but is largely observed in the environs of Ise City where Mt. Asama has a close connection with the local society. Boys and girls who become thirteen years old go to Mt. Asama on the thirteenth of January of that year and pray for the warding off of evil, cultivation of one’s fortune, and good health. Since this is also the *ennichi* or festival day of Kokūzō bosatsu, who is venerated as the main object of worship at the Kongōshō-ji, the temple visit of the children in festive attire is also considered as a kind of initiation ceremony (see Sakurai 1969a, pp. 6–12).

#### *The View of Spirits as Seen in the Tōba-kuyō*

##### Mt. Asama as an intermediary stage

Among the many problematic points in the *takemairi* custom at Mt. Asama, one is the nature of the mountain as a kind of intermediary stage for the spirits of the dead. The square *tōba* put up for the memorial services connected with the *takemairi* are taken away by the temple authorities after four to five years. According to the explanation given by the temple, the reason is that after four to five years the posthumous names, written on the *tōba* with Japanese *sumi* ink, become illegible, or that the basis of the *tōba* starts decaying and so constitutes a danger for the pilgrims. Besides these rational explanations, the fact that after the *tōba* is removed no new one is set up and, once the posthumous name faded away, the *tōba kuyō* custom itself is discontinued, point to a way of thinking in which the mourners regard Mt. Asama as a kind of relay station or intermediary stage for the spirits of the dead. Indeed, the spirits of the dead are thought to lose their individuality after four to five years, to become purified, and in the process of becoming ancestral spirits to become “sublimated” into the other world. Yanagita Kunio, in his *About the Ancestors*, says about this process:

This can be explained as coming from the thought that as people climb higher they would overcome the impurities and unhappiness of death. This may hardly be called proof, but there is a faith at present among ascetics who train at Mt. Fuji or Mt. Ontake that along with the years and offerings after death, their souls can gradually ascend from the base of the mountain to the summit and finally become kami (1970, p. 150).

After death the spirits of the recently deceased still possess their individuality. Since they are still in the stage of incompleteness they can easily go astray on the journey after death. Therefore, they first have to dwell at a fixed place in order to become stabilized spirits. In this sense, Mt. Asama can be considered to be a kind of intermediary stage where the spirits of the dead become stabilized so that they can continue their journey to the realm of the dead.<sup>4</sup>

### *Takemairi and mikoyose*

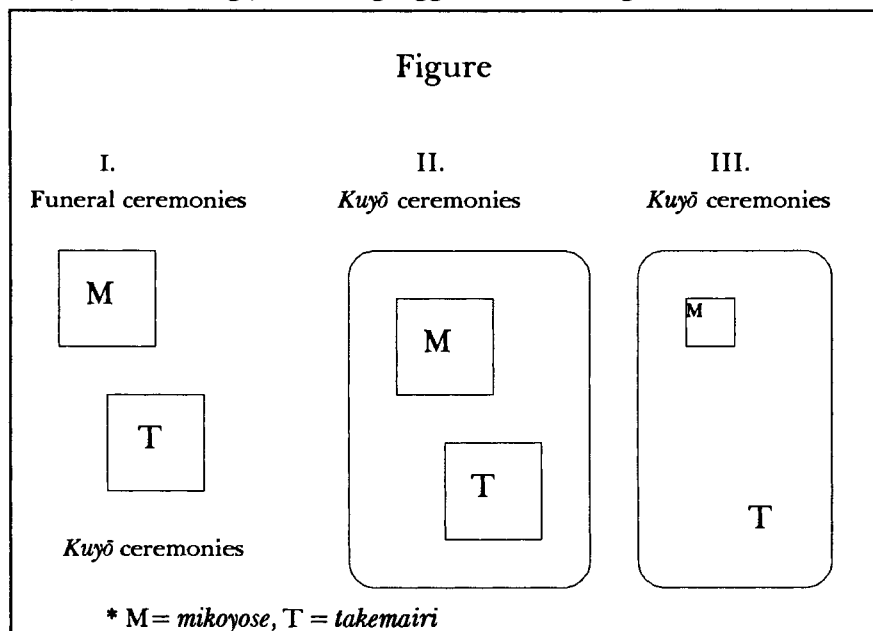
According to the temple records, almost all of the *tōba* erected at Mt. Asama are for the *kuyō* of the recently deceased, and the data inscribed on more than half of them show that they were set up within seven days after death. As already pointed out, this suggests that the *takemairi* should be regarded as forming a pair with the *mikoyose* custom which used to be performed after the funeral. As this *mikoyose* is also called “opening of the way,” the bereaved families seem to understand both customs as rituals whereby the spirits of the deceased can safely set out on their journey to the realm of the dead, since at the start of the journey they are prone to lose their way because of the individuality they still possess and a lingering attachment to life.

In the view of spirits the people entertain, a spirit is not necessarily one individual being. It is possible that when somebody dies his soul is divided in several different spirits. For example, in the Bon observances in that region, when the Bon starts the spirits are welcomed in various places, and when the Bon ends they are sent off again several times. This seems to indicate that also in the Ise-Shima region there exists a multi-dimensional concept of spirits. Perhaps we can say that by putting up a *tōba* at Mt. Asama in the *takemairi* custom, one partial spirit (*bunrei* 分霊) starts the process from being a “spirit of the dead” to being an “ancestral spirit,” while through the *mikoyose* the spirits of the dead who are still lingering on in the

<sup>4</sup> There is also a way of thinking, different from the idea about a stage towards the other world, which considers Mt. Asama as the other world itself located in the mountains. There are indeed a few people who perform the *takemairi* custom on the festival days and death anniversaries also after the *tōba* have been removed once four to five years have elapsed since death. Another small number of people erect *tōba* to honor their ancestors and to celebrate death anniversaries regardless of the time that has passed since death. This way of thinking can also be inferred from the custom of putting clothes, hats, spectacles, etc., that deceased family members had used, on the Jizō statues which stand in a row in front of the Donkai-in, particularly on statues which are thought to resemble those deceased. This is done so that the dead are not deprived of their belongings in the other world. However, at the present time the nature of Mt. Asama as an intermediary stage appears to be much stronger than that as a definite abode.

house are set on their way to the land of the dead. Touching on this point, Sakurai indicates that therefore the *takemairi* is a memorial service ritual for the deceased spirits, while the *mikoyose* is originally a mortuary rite directly connected with the funeral. In other words, rather than expressing the feeling of remembering the dead, the *mikoyose* puts the emphasis on the funeral and on the transition of the spirit of the dead, combining a vivid impression of the corpse itself and of the sense of fear for its spiritual powers. It therefore possesses elements and performs a function which essentially differ from the *kuyō* rite of *takemairi* so that it had to be performed apart (Sakurai 1969b).

Together with changes in the funeral system (a shortening of the time required from death to burying), however, the nature of the *mikoyose* as a funeral rite has shifted into that of a memorial rite performed parallel to the *takemairi*. Moreover, as a result of the decrease in *miko* ("mediums") and, on the other hand, the development of transportation means, the present situation is one of decline of the *mikoyose* custom and the continuance and even new flourishing of the *takemairi* custom, as also attested by the fact that in recent years the *tōba* erected on Mt. Asama show a tendency of increasingly becoming bigger in size (see figure).



We are left with many problems of understanding with regard to the *mikoyose* custom, and more study is required on its historical background,

the view of spirits of the dead, and changes in mortuary customs based upon that view. Since this paper primarily deals with the present situation, I have approached both the *mikoyose* and *takemairi* customs in terms of memorial rites.

#### The *Tōba kuyō* and the Bon observances

Bon observances admittedly tend to decline together with changes in society at large. However, many of them are still preserved in the Ise-Shima region. For example, the *hashiramatsu* 柱松 rituals in Matsuo-chō and Kōchi-chō of Toba City, the Bon observances in Ijika-chō of the same city, and the *dainenbutsu* 大念仏 rituals in Nakiri, Daiō-chō of Shima County all manifest the nature of community affairs based on a town or village unit. They also possess a kind of exotic character in that they are rituals by which all the spirits of the recently deceased who tend to wander about and inflict harm are lumped together and driven away outside the village or town.

In Matsuo-chō of Toba City, for example, the *hashiramatsu* (literally “pole pine tree”) ritual is performed in the evening of 15 August. On the top of a Japanese cedar tree of about thirteen meters high a basket is constructed in which pine torches are thrown so that the tree, called *hashiramatsu*, burns down. By this the spirits of the recently deceased and the hungry spirits are said to be driven away. In Ijika-chō of the same city, the driving away of the spirits of the recently deceased is done by trampling the ground and destroying small sized lanterns of about twenty centimeters made of paper symbolizing the recently deceased. Further, in Nakiri, Daiō-chō of Shima County, the custom of *dainenbutsu* 大念仏 is performed, which is accompanied by a kind of fighting with streamers made of papers on which the posthumous names of the recently deceased are written. All these observances supposedly have the meaning of dispelling the violence of the spirits and, by driving them away from the village or town, of remaking them into spirits who are on the path of becoming ancestors and so bring benefits to the community.

Of course, this does not mean that the Bon observances in the region are only for pacifying recently deceased spirits.<sup>5</sup> But the symbolic actions

<sup>5</sup> Since the Bon observances not only consist of the welcoming and sending off of the recently deceased but also of the spirits of the ancestors of each household, we should not disregard the fact that also the families who have no recently deceased members participate in them. Therefore, in analyzing the Bon observances, both the level of the individual families and that of the local society have to be taken into consideration. In the former case, the ancestral spirits become the central object; in the latter case, the concept of ancestral spirits is of course not absent, but the central object of the observances is indeed the recently deceased.

towards those spirits, such as destruction by fire and by crushing, betray the way of thinking in the village or town community that, in contrast with ancestral spirits, those recently dead are dreadful spirits who easily go astray and still cling to life. Those unstable and dreadful spirits are set on the way to become ancestral spirits and have to undergo a set of trials by the hands of the community in order to become safe and useful. What is common to all Bon observances in the region is that the central actors are the representatives of the local community and that they symbolize the order of their community. In all the places, through the various rituals under the supervision of the community representatives, the spirits are educated in the social order and by this they are for the first time recognized as spirits of the village or town who are on their way to the land of the dead. In other words, it is only through manipulation by the community that the new spirits can become acceptable spirits.

On the other hand, on the side of the individuals, i.e. of the bereaved families who until recently lived together with the deceased whose memory is still very much alive, these spirits are certainly also wandering around and dangerous. But in their hearts a strong feeling of grief still remains. The aspect of supervision and education of the spirits that can be seen in the Bon festival manifests itself on the side of the bereaved families rather in the form of caring. And we can detect the direct feelings of the bereaved families in the elements that constitute the *tōba kuyō* custom at Mt. Asama.

In the regional Bon observances, for example, there is the custom of *kasabuku* カサブク or displaying of articles left behind by the deceased. Although there exist slight differences from place to place, there is a sort of uniformity with regard to those articles which symbolize the deceased in that their number is fixed or that they have to be of a certain kind. However, in the case of the *tōba kuyō* at Mt. Asama, the custom exists of attaching such articles to the *tōba*, but there is no rule whatsoever with respect to their number or kind. All kinds of objects which the deceased was attached to in his or her life, or objects which are thought to be the most appropriate for remembering the deceased, are hung up. They symbolize the direct feelings of caring and of affection of the bereaved family members for the departed one.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in many cases various names of chief mourners are jointly inscribed on the *tōba*, and since they are almost exclusively family members we can infer that in the case of the *takemairi* the recently deceased are treated primarily as the family dead. Therefore, in contrast to

<sup>6</sup> Objects suspended at the *tōba* are, for example, walking canes, bags, neckties, clothes, hats, helmets, spectacles, shoes, records, umbrellas, toys, dolls, and the like.

the Bon observances in the villages and towns, the *takemairi tōba kuyō* should be called a way of honoring the dead, apart from the public character it has in the local Bon festival towards a more private manifestation of affection by each family or household. In other words, we are dealing here with the "private" *takemairi*, different from "public" Bon observances. Admittedly, as in the case of Ijika and Sakate, *takemairi* is sometimes conducted as a village observance and the *tōba* of those places are all erected together in a well-circumscribed area, reflecting a strong territorial bond. If we look at the discrepancy with the number of dead and of *tōba* in other places, we see that this is indeed a *kuyō* of sympathizers from the same area. Generally speaking, however, the nature of the *tōba kuyō* is shifting from a territorial bond to one based on blood ties or family relations. Therefore, although the Bon observance of *kuyō* as a village ritual might be difficult to preserve, this might instead enhance the observance of the *takemairi tōba kuyō*. In other words, together with the increasing urbanization of the local society, observances which allow for a more individual celebration such as seen in the *tōba kuyō* might instead flourish. In this way, the *tōba kuyō* becomes complementary to the Bon observances at the community level. And this in turn also manifests a change in people's views of spirits.

### *Conclusion*

Let me conclude with a brief analysis of the present situation of the *takemairi kuyō*.

In the Ise Shima region quite radical social changes are presently occurring. Therefore, the relation between "urbanization and religion" is expected to provide some valuable insights into our problem. Two points of view can be distinguished in this respect.

One point of view is that when urbanization proceeds in areas where the social structure is strongly of the village type, rationalization of religion and disenchantment are promoted. Also, popular beliefs gradually disappear. In a word, a process of decline can be discerned.

Urbanization in this sense is a concept that can possibly be substituted by terms such as modernization, rationalization, and the growing efficiency of social life.<sup>7</sup> It therefore becomes possible to forecast a process of decline

<sup>7</sup> On the concept of urbanization there are, roughly speaking, two ways of thinking. A narrow definition describes urbanization as "the tendency whereby a rural area gradually changes into an urban area under the impact of the development of modern industries," while a broader definition sees urbanization rather as "the tendency whereby the character of a certain area, whether rural or urban, changes through an increase in urban life styles and productivity functions" (see Kashima Kenkyūsho 1970, p. 65).

of folk beliefs and disenchantment with religion. In fact, changes in mortuary rites in urban regions nowadays, which imply the simplification of funerals, seem to corroborate this point of view. Organizations based on the territorial bonds of the local society such as the *sōshikigumi* or local funeral association, which constituted the core of the mortuary rites, are on the wane, and in their place nowadays professional undertakers with hearses have made an appearance offering a much more bureaucratic and efficient service. Moreover, in the crematoria the bodies are reduced to ashes as if on a factory conveyor belt. Also in the Ise-Shima region the funeral system and the grave system are slowly but surely changing. For example, in Hamashima-chō the method of burying was changed in 1969 from inhumation to cremation, and the scope of the funeral procession too has been increasingly shrinking. Also in other areas similar instances of intervention by professional undertakers, shrinking or disappearance of funeral processions, change from inhumation to cremation, change from a double-grave system to a one-grave system, and the like, are on the increase. In this rationalization of mortuary rites, the problem of the place where death occurs, the problem of changes in family structures and the privatization of death which these changes entail, problems connected with traffic conditions and housing, and the like, are all elements that have to be taken into consideration. The first problem especially seems to be a very important one. With the spectacular progress of the medical sciences it has become possible to extend peoples' lives beyond what was traditionally considered death. In other words, natural death is increasingly receding from us. In Japan, for example, data indicate that since about 1976 more people die in hospitals than at their own home, and it is predicted that this trend will still get stronger in the future. This means that our death will be more and more relegated to an event in a hospital room, separated from society and with only a few people in attendance, where formerly family members and many others stood by when somebody left this world. This individualization or privatization of religion is a result of urbanization.

A second viewpoint is that, instead of bringing about the disenchantment of religion and the decline of popular faith, urbanization promotes the magical nature of religion and irrationalization, and that this precisely gives rise to the continuance and even the flourishing of folk religious elements. The growing spread of *mizuko kuyō* (memorial services for aborted children) in urban areas is an example, and in fact also the *tōba kuyō* on Mt. Asama exhibits this trend. As indicated above, also the *tōba kuyō* can be understood as a private ceremony of the bereaved family for their dead

just like *mizuko kuyō*. Every year about 1,500 to 1,600 new *tōba* are set up at Mt. Asama, which accounts for about 60% of all the deaths that occur in the region. Data taken during the last years indicate a strong possibility that this custom will also continue in the future and might even become more popular. It is worthwhile noticing that the proportion of *tōba* against the total number of deaths is the highest in Ise City and Toba City where the process of urbanization is the most advanced.

From these concrete examples a few further observations can be made. Occupational changes, the widening of the area where spouses are found, changes in family structures, etc., weaken the feelings of solidarity that existed in the traditional village communities, and the existing ritual organizations are gradually dissolved so that public mortuary rites such as funerals and Bon observances become simplified or decline. As a result, private mortuary rites, as represented by the *tōba kuyō* at Mt. Asama, grow stronger and one can even ask whether this does not also entail a strengthening of magic power connected with the dead. The mortuary rites performed by the community have fulfilled the role of cutting off the direct feelings and sentiments of individuals and families towards their dead. By making death a public matter, the concrete relations with individuals and families are weakened, and through the public rituals the consciousness of "our dead" is reinforced. In other words, if one is venerated by magical rites that are based upon norms fixed by the community, as happens in the Bon observances, there is relatively no need for magical rites on an individual basis. However, the opposite can also happen and it is possible that the decline or disappearance of community rites brings instead the immediate relationship between people and their dead into the open. Although the Bon observances held nowadays in the Ise-Shima region will not necessarily disappear because of urbanization, present estimates show that the declining trend is likely to continue. If it becomes impossible, then, to deal with death as a public event by means of the Bon observances, the family's feelings of grief and of fear towards the dead grow deeper, and this might easily lead to a resurgence of mortuary rituals of an individual nature which also have a magical nature. If so, especially in a region which had a rural social character, the phenomenon of urbanization is likely to give rise to a plethora of magical rites. It also promotes the continuance of magical rites of a loose "cult" nature, i.e., a type of group rites where the individual is the central actor. Such rites, as seen in the *tōba kuyō* at Mt. Asama, transcend regional limitations and are a substitute for the traditional community festivals. Therefore, the relationship between folk religion and urbanization is not to be defined in a univocal way.



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