

— Mizuko kuyō —  
Notulae on the Most Important  
“New Religion” of Japan

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The so-called “New Religions” of Japan (including the old new [i.e. 19th-century pre-Meiji], the new, the new new, and the neo-new) have generated a flood of literature also in Western languages, especially in English. In some ways the explosion of popular, semi-popular, and academic literature on the subject was even more interesting than the New Religions themselves. From the first outburst of general surveys we have now, happily, progressed to the stage of more solid monographs.<sup>1</sup> But most of these publications deal with specific religious movements/sects/organizations in alphabetical, chronological, or typological (e.g., Shinto-derived *versus* Buddhist- [more especially Lotus-] derived) order. The most important New Religion, which has also spawned a vast literature (though so far more articles than books), is generally treated — perhaps not without good reason — separately and as a phenomenon *sui generis*.<sup>2</sup> It is generally also treated as an essentially Buddhist phenomenon,

\* The subtitle of this essay is formulated as a somewhat militant *captatio attentionis* (though not necessarily *benevolentiae*). The author uses the term “religion” in the sense of an encompassing set of assumptions, beliefs, and practices, no matter what varieties these exhibit in different religious groups. In other words, in this paper I speak of religion where others would speak of “certain religious practices”; and I say religious groups, sects, denominations, churches, or church-like organizations where others would say “religions.”

<sup>1</sup> The 1st edition of Byron Earhart’s bibliography of Western-language materials on the New Religions (1970) had 96 pages and 810 items. The 2nd edition (1983) had grown to 213 pages and 1,447 items. By now a supplement to the 2nd edition seems to be called for. The most up-to-date publication, reflecting the state of research by the younger generation of Japanese scholars, is INOUE et al., *Shin-shūkyō jūten*, 1990 (over 1000 closely printed pages).

<sup>2</sup> Much of the best research on the subject (e.g., Anne P. BROOKS, HOSHINO & TAKEDA, Bardwell SMITH, and others) has appeared in the pages of this journal. To these should be added articles in other journals and in collective volumes (e.g., Mary PICONE, R. F. YOUNG) and incidental references in books dealing with specific religious groups (e.g., Helen HARDACRE’s volume on Kurozumikyō).

but this is an evident *trompe l'oeil*, though an understandable one, since the correlation, whilst at least *de facto* correct, is theoretically purely incidental. The reproach addressed to Anne P. BROOKS's fine paper (1981) that "she failed in the end to resolve the question whether *mizuko kuyō* is authentically Buddhist" is utterly meaningless and even foolish, and illustrates the pointlessness of much "research"—quite apart from the fact that no serious historian of religion would ever venture to pronounce on what is "authentically" Buddhist, or Hindu, or Jewish, or Christian, or what-not.<sup>3</sup> It is unnecessary to recall the truism that for a Theravādin, Mahāyāna is not authentically Buddhist. Considering the "division of labor" so characteristic of East Asian religions (as regards Japan: Shinto for fertility, life, birth, marriage; Buddhism for death, funerals, and the hereafter), it is inevitable that both the practice of *mizuko kuyō* and our discussion of it will have a largely, though not exclusively, Buddhist slant. But before turning to our subject proper, a few preliminary remarks would appear to be in order.

#### Memorial Services

The expression *mizuko kuyō* 水子供養 is today generally employed to designate religious "memorial services" for the souls of unborn (i.e., naturally or artificially aborted) embryos. But this terminology is less than unequivocal. As for the term "*mizuko*" in the specific sense used here (aborted fetuses; in other contexts it used to mean children dying at a young age), I have been unable to trace the earliest literary testimonies. Even the ever helpful Morohashi and other dictionaries left me completely in the lurch. The word (literally, "water child") can mean an artificially aborted child (*datai* 墮胎), as well as stillbirth (*ryūzan* 流産), miscarriage (*shizan* 死産), or even postnatal death—the number of years required for full "humanization" varying in different localities and periods. The term "*kuyō*" can mean a ritual of gratitude towards objects that have faithfully served their purpose—the lines of demarcation between animate and inanimate being rather fluid.<sup>4</sup> Hence such rituals as *hari kuyō* and *hashi kuyō* for disused sewing needles and chopsticks (not a Buddhist monopoly; I have attended such *kuyō* in Shinto shrines). In one temple I found a very moving inscription of gratitude to old teeth

<sup>3</sup> An eminent Japanese Buddhistologist has recently argued that the doctrine of "inherent enlightenment," Yogācāra, the non-dualism of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, Zen, and the so-called "Kyoto School" (here I wholeheartedly agree!) are not Buddhism! Cf. HAKAMAYA 1989; for a brief summary see SWANSON 1990.

<sup>4</sup> J. J. M. DE GROOT has published a monograph on *Buddhist Masses for the Dead in Amoy* (1885), and I have (*Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., 1967) flatly asserted that "many Mahayana rituals are simply 'masses for the dead'."

that, having faithfully served for a lifetime, had now become useless. The corresponding Shinto version would be an invocation of the appropriate kami, as in the ceremony sponsored by a manufacturer of chewing gum and addressed to *gamu-no-kami*.

As already noted, no strict distinctions can be drawn between divine, human, animal, animate, and inanimate beings. Hence also *kuyō* for dolls, on silkworm farms, on whaling and other fishing boats, and in laboratories using animals for experiments. I also know of hospitals requesting temples to hold wholesale *kuyō* for all the abortions performed during the year. The funniest *kuyō* I ever attended was organized by the Schick razor company. Old and used blades were offered, and the extremely solemn ceremony was presided over by the chief abbot of the Zōjō-ji. Since, as we shall see, the financial aspect of *kuyō* is an important part of the phenomenon, I wrote to the Public Relations Dept. of Schick to enquire how much they had paid the Zōjō-ji for the ceremony, but (obviously) never received a reply. I am regularly reminded of this *kuyō* since I am still using the two razors that I received as a present on that occasion. Another *kuyō*, bordering on the obscene at least to some Western sensibilities whilst amusing to others, was held for used bras. These were burned to the musical accompaniment of Mozart's "Ave Verum Corpus."<sup>5</sup> Compared to this, a Shingon-type New Religion ceremony accompanied by Pachelbel's canon was definitely less offensive.

### *Graves and Their Paraphernalia*

Two more preliminary remarks are necessary before focussing on our main theme, *mizuko kuyō*. The one refers to what may be called the almost obsessive need of the care of, or adequate provisions for, graves. It would be an interesting subject for a seminar paper to examine the contemporary form of this phenomenon exclusively on the basis of advertisements by cemeteries and funeral companies. (I deliberately use the adjective "contemporary," in order to distinguish it from traditional.<sup>6</sup> On the whole, the contemporary character of certain traditions—and the Imperial Enthronement Ceremony is not the only one—requires special research. It is not without reason that "inventing tradition" has

<sup>5</sup> To add variety and spice to an otherwise too specific article, we may add here that participants who closed their eyes could at least enjoy the real Mozart and not the heavily sentimentalized transcription by Liszt, titled, with characteristic lack of taste, "Prayer in the Sistine Chapel." Tchaikovsky, who did not know Mozart's original but only Liszt's version, further sentimentalized the latter by perpetrating another, secondary transcription. This is the origin of the dictum that it was not Salieri who murdered Mozart but Tchaikovsky.

<sup>6</sup> See note below for references to the thesis that preoccupation with ancestral graves, at least in its known (buddhicized) form, is post-Heian and possibly Kamakura.



become a standard technical term in modern sociology).<sup>7</sup> In recent years, newspaper and TV features frequently report on some of the consequences of the increasing shortage of land and spiralling prices.<sup>8</sup> The relevance of this to *mizuko kuyō* resides in the fact that some temples amass fortunes by selling tens of thousands of small Jizō statues plus the miniplots on which they stand. The Hase-dera has sold over 50,000 statues in recent years. The Enman-in and its fifty affiliated member-temples (the organization is called Nihon Mizuko Kuyō Reijōkai) solves its problem by selling tablets (¥40,000; rebate for larger numbers) to be taken home. In one temple the installation of a very small statue costs at least ¥100,000. Other temples, like the Zōjō-ji, have discovered that 1,300 little Mizuko Jizōs were more than the temple grounds could cope with, and have

<sup>7</sup> In fact, the invention, though more frequently the reinterpretation, of traditions can function as one of the most potent mechanisms of (often radical) change—whether you call the Meiji revolution a “restoration,” or a neo-Hindu advocates the abolition of the caste system by appealing to the *Gītā* and writing a new commentary on it.

<sup>8</sup> At this point, although only indirectly related to the theme of *mizuko kuyō*, a brief note should be inserted illustrating some modern developments of the “obsessive” need of adequate funerary arrangements. According to newspaper and TV reports some time ago, shortage of land and rising prices cause young people to take out a “grave insurance,” as it were, by making the appropriate arrangements already at an early age. It is almost like buying a condominium even before the building operations have begun. Tokyo families acquire graves at a distance of several hours’ bus ride from the city. Less than 2 sq. m. of land plus a stone (usually imported from Korea), plus the stonemason’s and calligrapher’s work, may cost the average family between 1 and 1.5 million yen. Depending on the prestige of the temple, prices may be much higher. As an example I may cite the intensive building activities going on in many temples that may appear financially inexplicable and must have left many a visitor more than puzzled, especially if he had seen these same temples a few years earlier in a miserably neglected and dilapidated state. Of course there always are charitable donors (including big business companies; on this subject see the highly interesting though tantalizingly brief details furnished by Michael PYE [1989, pp. 291ff.]; cf. also the avenues on temple grounds leading to the main sanctuary and lined on both sides by stone pillars inscribed with the name

ceased to erect new statues (without, however, discontinuing the profitable *kuyō* services). Even the forest of Kosodate Jizō (see below) banners, so characteristic of the Zōjō-ji landscape, has disappeared. (I have been given different reasons for this by different Zōjō-ji priests.) Fortunately the present writer had taken a sufficient number of photographs before the recent “deforestation.”



Kosodate Jizō at Zōjō-ji

of the donating firm and the amount donated – not less than a million yen). But one of the less obvious secrets is: simply to sell part of the temple grounds as individual grave plots. Thus one temple (which shall remain unnamed) decided to improve its finances by creating close on a hundred grave plots (= small concrete squares) at a price of about ¥1.75 million each. To this should be added the consequent regular income from memorial services paid by the families of those buried there. The fee to be paid to a temple for a *kaimyō* (posthumous name) can vary from 0.5 to 1.25 million yen.

Tombstones are made increasingly of stainless steel or ceramics, successfully imitating granite. The latest development is a beehive or dovecote type of mausoleum (i.e., niches viz. pigeonholes for the urns containing the ashes). These “high-rise” grave temples can contain thousands of such pigeonholes. The Higashi Hongan-ji officials are rather proud that their new “condominium-style” cinerarium is not only one of the biggest (three stories tall and four basement floors) but also one of the most expensive. Coming in three sizes, prices of grave niches range from 2 to 10 million yen.

Another modern possibility is to have your ashes, together with that of thousands of others, baked into a Daibutsu statue. At any rate the *Daily Yomiuri* (7 November 1990) overstated the case, in good newspaper fashion, with its headline “Even dead affected by land shortage.” It is the living who are keen on proper funeral arrangements that are so affected. Other innovations are regularly reported in the Japanese press.

## Souls

Our second preliminary remark bears on ancestor cult.<sup>9</sup> It would be a grave mistake to see this phenomenon merely in relation to preceding generations, i.e., to ancestors *stricto sensu*; it must be seen in the context of the continuity of generations. The subject assumes special importance in Shinto contexts, for there it is not a matter of pacifying potentially dangerous *gaki* ("hungry ghosts"), but of integrating the *mizuko* souls in the company of family/clan souls. This is evident also from the *norito* used at Ishikiri Jinja, one of the few Shinto shrines performing *mizuko kuyō*.<sup>10</sup> Obviously a *jinja* (Shinto shrine) would have to manage its *mizuko kuyō* without the usual paraphernalia of Kannon, Jizō, Nenbutsu, Makahannya (chanting of the *Heart Sūtra*), etc., and I am much indebted to the chief priest of Ishikiri Jinja, the Rev. Kobayashi Noboru, for having taken the trouble, with characteristic Japanese courtesy, to copy for me by hand their whole *norito* instead of simply sending me a photocopy (see Appendix B). The official Shinto attitude to *mizuko kuyō* is rather reserved, and, in fact, Ishikiri Jinja is not affiliated to the Jinja Honchō (the official association of Shinto shrines). But also in Buddhist temples I have encountered the phenomenon of cohesion of family souls. I have interviewed families (i.e., not merely lonely women fearing the vindictive *tatari* [misfortune and curses brought about by vengeful ghosts] of aborted *onryō* [vengeful spirits]), where two or three generations (often including children, from elementary to high school age) attended the *kuyō*, the explanation being: "We want our children to feel a family

<sup>9</sup> A thorough discussion of the subject of ancestral souls (or, to be more exact, souls in general and not merely ancestors or Buddhist rebirth-souls) would constitute an indispensable introduction to our theme, since *mizuko* souls are merely a subspecies of the wider genus "souls." Within the limited scope of this essay, a brief hint must suffice. The preoccupation with the care of ancestral graves may not antedate the Kamakura period, and is certainly post-Heian; see HOSHINO & TAKEDA 1987, p. 307. Colleagues specializing in Japanese pre- and proto-history assure me that the Yayoi and Kofun tombs are irrelevant to the present argument. But in order to relate the subject more closely to our main theme, I should like to remind the reader of the well-known fact that about 50 to 60% of the known pottery burial-jars of the Jōmon period contain the remains of embryos and young children.

At any rate, the ancestor cult is undergoing a massive revival today. Publications on ancestor cult (*Senzo no hanashi*, in the words of one of Yanagita Kunio's titles) have been steadily snowballing. A random English sample: R. J. SMITH 1974, and (for China) Hsu 1967. For China and Japan (comparative) see also NEWELL 1976. Cf. also the review of SMITH 1974 by OOMS 1975. MORIOKA 1977 is important. Cf. also OOMS 1967—practically a monograph filling the whole double number of the journal in which it appeared. The above also contain full bibliographies of publications not mentioned here. For an excellent threefold (China-Japan-Korea) comparison see chapter seven in JANELLI & JANELLI 1982. "Modernity" has not in the least impaired the importance of the subject, especially in the "New Religions"; see SHIMAZONO 1987 and MIYATA 1988, reprinted in 1989.

<sup>10</sup> My attention was drawn to Ishikiri by OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1984.

relationship also towards their unborn siblings.” Further questioning confirmed the obvious guess that these “family *kuyō*” were matters of *shizan* and *ryūzan* rather than abortions.

Our earlier observation to the effect that *mizuko kuyō* was only “incidentally” Buddhist was meant to imply that it is an essentially Japanese phenomenon and has to be seen in a Japanese context.<sup>11</sup> As every historian of religion knows, the interesting thing about religious “mergers” is always the presence of elements that facilitate (or the absence of elements that obstruct) absorption. Thus the ancient Chinese notion of *kuei* facilitated the absorption of Buddhist *preta* beliefs; filial piety (*hsia*) helped to legitimate Buddhist “masses” for departed ancestors. Old Japanese beliefs in “vindictive spirits” (*onryō*) and the distinction *uenrei* (spirits with relations in this world who can care for them and perform rites) *vs* *muenrei* (spirits without such relations), as well as *goryō shinkō*, i.e., belief in fearful spirits that have to be appeased (for *goryō*, too, are *onryō* that harbor *tatari* and therefore need to be appeased) are an essential part of the background of *mizuko kuyō*. The first attested instance of official *goryō-e*, in which eight departed spirits were elevated to kami rank, can be dated to 863.

In other words, we should not think exclusively in terms of (Buddhist) *preta/gaki*. The case of Kankō (Sugawara no Michizane) may serve as a random illustration. This paragon of Confucian virtue and loyalty even bowed daily, from his place of exile in Kyūshū, in the direction of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto. Yet after his death the capital was visited by epidemics and other disasters that the court shamans ascribed to the vengeful spirit of Kankō, who was subsequently pacified by being elevated, by imperial edict, to kami rank. The many Tenmangū shrines may serve as a permanent reminder of this role of spirits. In this connection it may also be useful to remember that Yasukuni Jinja started its career as a *shōkon-sha* 招魂社 (“soul-beckoning” shrine); by 1901 there were over a hundred such *shōkon-sha*. Although here we are dealing with a special (patriotic-chauvinistic) case, the subject may not be completely irrelevant. In fact, the key words to be found in all Japanese manuals for *mizuko kuyō* (a vast literature, too vast to be listed here — both those written for the use of priests and those written for the lay “consumers” —) are *osore* 恐れ (fear), *tatari* 祟り and *sawari* 障り (envious revenge), and *shizume* 静め (pacification). This remains true in spite of some recent vehement disclaimers. *Mizuko kuyō* is therefore neither a “requiem mass” nor a “memorial service,” but a pacification rite. This is not the original thesis of a historian of religion, but simply the literal translation of tra-

<sup>11</sup> For this reason I would prefer to substitute “Japanization” for the term “Mahayanization” used by SWYNGEDOUW (1985). On the subject raised by Swyngedouw see also REID 1989.

ditional Japanese terminology (*shizume*). In due course we shall have to return to the pacification aspect in a more differentiated manner.

### Mizuko and Mizuko Research

At this point, and before proceeding further, the present writer wishes to apologize formally for deviating from the sacrosanct Weberian dogma of *Wertfreiheit*. Purely factual and “value-free” descriptions are extremely difficult to sustain when the subject is life, death, and human suffering (especially the suffering of women, imposed on them by a dominant male society). There will be enough – perhaps excessive – factual detail in the demographic and statistical material presented in the sequel. This presentation will be inevitable, since the subject of *mizuko kuyō* cannot be adequately dealt with, also from a religious point of view, unless we take into account first the demographic factors and the public health statistics involved.

Perhaps we best begin by simply stating that abortions should be viewed as a special case of beings that have met a premature, *in casu* violent, death. Children, whether aborted, killed, or dying a natural post-natal death, are “beings” – though, up to a certain age, not yet fully human beings. In any case they all need postmortem help, and *datai* souls in particular have to be pacified lest they vent their grievance on the living, which here means their “selfish parents” or next of kin. Psychoanalytically this means very simply that there is an overriding need to pacify something in the subconscious. I insist on the psychoanalytic explanation, for we are dealing here with powerful mechanisms of projection. Even the “objective” misfortunes troubling *mizuko*-ridden families (whether abortions, stillbirths, or miscarriages) are easily accounted for in terms of projections: your own projections coming back to you as revenants, as it were. A most telling example is provided by Carmen Blacker’s account of a young couple coming to a Buddhist priest for a *kuyō* to put to rest two infant souls lost through abortion. The priest feels a tap on his shoulder, turns round, and sees two other embryo ghosts who say in chorus “Don’t forget us.” The wife confesses to her husband that there had been two more abortions she never told him about. All four were given *kaimyō* 戒名 (“posthumous names”) and *ihai* 位牌 (soul-tablets), and placed in the care of Mizuko Kannon.<sup>12</sup> I need not go here into details describing the various kinds of misfortunes and troubles visited on the unfortunate mothers and families. They are described in ever so many books and pamphlets, not to speak of advertisements. The

<sup>12</sup> See Carmen Blacker in DAVIDSON 1989. I have not seen Blacker’s article and am quoting from a quotation in a review.



English reader has probably been initiated into this unpleasant subject by the successful *mizuko kuyō* bestseller, Domyo Miura's *Mizugo*, published in English under the title *The Forgotten Child* (1983). And since many foreign researchers gather their knowledge from a visit to the Shiunzan Jizō-tera in Saitama Prefecture, we might as well add the Rev. HASHIMOTO Tetsuma's (untranslated) "collection of experiences" entitled *Mizuko Jizō-tera reiken-shū* (1978).

Much of the so-called research on *mizuko kuyō* leaves the reader slightly puzzled. Not enough interviews (with married as well as unmarried women, with families, with priests: how many *mizuko*? at what age? your own initiative or were you persuaded/forced? did you consult with anyone?) have been conducted to permit valid generalizations and a valid typology. One of the most promising avenues has not been sufficiently explored: the inscriptions on the reverse side of (Kannon or Jizō) *mizuko ema* (votive tablets). Their systematic recording (perhaps on microfiche) and their content analysis by computer should be a top priority. Nothing of the kind has, to my knowledge, been done so far,<sup>13</sup> and even the present essay does not, alas, go much beyond impressionism.



*Mizuko ema*

<sup>13</sup> A first step in the right direction (though not concerned with *mizuko ema*) has been taken by Ian READER in his valuable paper on *ema* (1991). Reader's account should be supplemented by further research into the Chinese background of letters, viz. written communications to the gods. The bureaucratically organized system of Chinese religion knows no prayers to gods but written petitions. Taoist gods are not addressed in oral prayer but, like the Imperial Throne, presented with memorials. Chinese gods are *literati*: they do not hear (prayers) but read (petitions).



Mizuko Jizō lanterns

The temples visited by researchers are (with the exception of the well-known *mizuko kuyō* centers like the Hase-dera, for which one automatically makes the tourist beeline) a hit-and-miss affair. Who would know beforehand that a visit to the Tō-ji in Kyoto, at the right moment, might be more rewarding than an account of the Enman-in? I had the good fortune of dropping into the Tō-ji not on a festival day but the day before. Dozens of staff members and their wives were busily wielding brushes and preparing hundreds of *tōba* for the next day's *kuyō*. The foreign scholar was supposed to be duly impressed by the information that the *kanchō* ("archbishop") himself would conduct the final service and burn all the *tōba* in a specially consecrated *goma* fire. One of the *mizuko* subtemples was surrounded by an impressive display of *chōchin* (folding, collapsible paper lanterns) bearing the inscription *Mizuko Jizō Kuyō*—lest a potential customer go astray. (I succeeded in acquiring several, in case I decide one day to set up shop in the *mizuko* business.) I have nowhere, in the "research literature," found a reference to the (Tendai) Hannya-ji (thus its official name), popularly known as Sai-no-kawara Jizō-dō (!), perhaps because Kanagimachi Hirosaki in Aomori Prefecture is too far north. This temple deserves honorable mention because it performs *kuyō* on request, also for children who died young, but not on fixed dates, and because it does not take part in the *mizuko kuyō* business. Parents who want a *kaimyō* for their *mizuko* are referred to their family temple. Unfortunately, the chief priest, Rev. Saikawa Eichō, could not recall the date, although admittedly recent, when *mizuko kuyō* were introduced.

Once the student has a complete list of the temples he has visited, he may find it useful to consult the forbidding four volumes of the *Zenkoku ji-in meikan* [All-Japan temple name list], which, though antiquated (1969), might give him a better idea of the history and denominational affiliation of the temples concerned and help him relate this information to their introduction of *mizuko kuyō*. For the same reasons he might then turn to the new edition of the Japanese Jizō dictionary (the *Shinpen Nihon Jizō jiten*, MOTOYAMA 1989), a massive volume of over 500 closely printed pages.

An English questionnaire, without name or date but evidently part of a larger research project that accidentally came into my hands, turned my attention to the Hase-dera in Kamakura. It seemed extremely unlikely that the chief priest of that temple would take the initiative to poll foreign tourists visiting Hase Kannon, but the type of questions asked (five in all) reminded me of the orientation of the work of Bardwell Smith and Elizabeth Harrison. "Research" in the archive of the Hase-dera yielded the following (possibly very incomplete) result: ca. fifty replies in English, mainly by Americans (and judging by the spelling, rather illiterate ones), and about the same number (in many respects far more interesting) in Japanese, mostly by women. The Japanese version of the questionnaire, however, explicitly states "B. Smith and E. Harrison research project."<sup>14</sup> A parallel poll, also at Hase-dera, was conducted at about the same time by Nakamura Kazuki of Iwate University (ca. forty replies) with a rather differently oriented questionnaire, hence it yielded more interesting replies. I do not know whether what I saw in the temple archive represents the whole poll or only a fraction. Obviously 140 replies (of which about one-third by foreigners) can hardly be said to constitute a sociologically meaningful sample. EARHART's recent study of the Gedatsu-kai (1989), a relatively small "New Religion" (ca. 250,000 followers), is based on over 5,000 questionnaires! This, in addition to a multitude of "in-depth" interviews. A first draft of the Smith-Harrison paper circulated as early as 1987. Its main emphasis was on the psychological side of the matter, and to this it made a real contribution. The historical background and other aspects were rather neglected. The revised version was printed as an article under the name of SMITH alone (1988). The Smith-Harrison research was given some publicity (including a photo of the team) in a full-page coverage in the *Asahi Shinbun* of 19 November 1988. Other polls will be mentioned below.

<sup>14</sup> This also implies that in accordance with the rules of scholarly ethics I am precluded from making use of the material, except for simply noting that it does not make much difference to the contents of this article.

*Abortion and Infanticide*

By asserting that the current *mizuko kuyō* boom (it has become “big business” for many temples and given Buddhism a bad name in Japan) was a modern phenomenon, a “New Religion,” I did not intend to ignore abortions in earlier periods. In fact, abortion is as old as human history, but it has to be seen in conjunction with the practice of infanticide (occasionally occurring even today). Years ago Solomon REINACH (1906) observed that in antiquity also there was a close relation between the two. Whenever infanticide was outlawed, the number of abortions rose. Both abortions and *mabiki* 間引き were widely practiced in the Edo period. Incidentally, *mabiki* (“thinning out”) sounds less like a euphemism than a technical demographic term related to family planning. It is definitely wrong to relate traditional infanticide to periods of famine, poverty, and economic depression. Other factors also played a role and still require closer examination.<sup>15</sup>

If, as suggested in these pages, no *kuyō* were performed in earlier periods after *mabiki* and abortions (although Chinese “Hell Pictures” show infants presenting writs of accusation of infanticide to the Infernal Judge), this does not mean that no memorial services were held for neonatal deaths. The high rate of infant mortality made this almost a necessity, and temples derived a considerable income from these *eitai kuyō* (also called *eitai kyō* 永代経; these were permanent, annual sūtra chantings for deceased infants).

Nowadays, medically performed for good money by the gynecologist mafia,<sup>16</sup> abortion is far less dangerous than it used to be. For this reason (and not only because of legislation) abortion is the preferred, or rather exclusive, method, whereas in earlier periods *mabiki* seemed preferable and was certainly much safer. But both must have been traumatic. Unfortunately, although *mabiki* was a routine method of family planning and there must have been mechanisms for minimizing the concomitant emotional traumas, we do not know how this was done and emotionally handled. There is no evidence whatever suggesting that *kuyō* were performed, though I have met a very small number of priests vehemently asserting the contrary. *Mizuko kuyō*, like the *petto kuyō* (*kuyō* for pet ani-

<sup>15</sup> On the whole question see also SKINNER 1987. This paper is part of the Nobi Regional Project. Skinner presented the paper at the Stanford University Nobi Regional Workshop in March 1987, and was kind enough to pass on to me a copy of his manuscript.

<sup>16</sup> As regards the anything but “value-free” term “mafia,” this writer had the amusing experience of being attacked from two sides. He was severely taken to task for using such an “unobjective,” emotion-charged, and morally censorious vocabulary, whereas certain noted public health authorities faulted him for using a term that implied illegal, secret, underground activities whereas the Japanese medical establishment openly and unabashedly expressed their self-interest in the abortion racket.

mals) seems to be a modern development.<sup>17</sup> But in that case the history of its development in the wake of the *Yūsei hogo hō* 優生保護法 [Eugenic Protection Law], its spread both in time and space, in which social strata, in which areas, its relation to urbanization and especially to housing patterns, which temples were the first to perform and propagate the practice of *kuyō*—all these require more detailed research.

*Mabiki* was usually performed immediately after birth.<sup>18</sup> As has been noted before, both infanticide and abortion were commonplace throughout the Edo period, even in villages affiliated with Shinshū (which strictly prohibited either method of taking life), and although both moralists and domain governments condemned the practice, it remained “a normal, even conventional form of behavior” (SMITH 1977, p. 85, italics mine). Specific to Japan, and connected with its kinship system, is the equal frequency of male and female infanticide. This makes Japanese *mabiki* different from China’s or India’s. The little quantitative information available to us can only be *inferred* from the basic register of village population, the *shūmon-aratame-chō* 宗門改帳 (literally, the register of religious [i.e., temple] affiliation).<sup>19</sup>

As regards the oft-invoked Shinshū opposition to abortion, it should



A corner for *petto-kuyō*

<sup>17</sup> See BROOKS 1981, who also introduces the subject of *petto kuyō* into her discussion of *mizuko kuyō*. Of special value is her bibliography, which includes references to smaller papers and to the sometimes sensational newspaper write-ups.

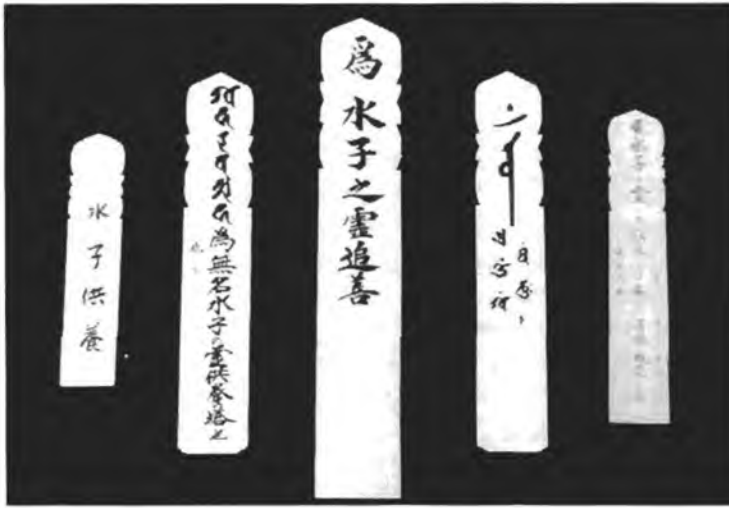
<sup>18</sup> For this, as well as the attendant and surrounding circumstances and the methods used (it does not make pretty reading!), see MURAOKA 1972, NAKAMICHI 1974, and, of course, ONSHI ZAIDAN BOSHU AIKU-KAI 1975.

<sup>19</sup> On the whole problem of “detecting infanticide” see the relevant section in Skinner’s paper.

be noted that in actual fact most temples either catering for, or even specializing in, *mizuko kuyō* have *nenbutsu* (!) as part of their name. It is true that the Hongan-ji does not go in for *mizuko kuyō*, but obviously the claim that Amidist temples do not cash in on the *mizuko* business (only *mikkyō* ones are supposed to do so!) is patently false. In fact, every *mizuko kuyō* temple is basically, and at least metaphorically, Amidist, since even non-Amidist (e.g., Shingon) temples performing *mizuko kuyō* have the recitation of the *nenbutsu* as a main part of their liturgy, in addition, of course, to the ubiquitous chanting of the *Heart Sūtra*. (For the Shinto version of *mizuko kuyō*, see above and Appendix B). Of course there are minor or less minor liturgical differences in the *kuyō* as performed by different sects, e.g., different sūtras may be chanted. A Kōya-san derived version directs its prayers not only to the Jizō triad (*sanpei* 三平) but also to Kūkai [Kōbō] Daishi. The Jizō triad consists of Byōdō 平等 Mizuko Jizō, Heian 平安 Mizuko Jizō, and Heiwa 平和 Mizuko Jizō.<sup>20</sup> Of the multitude of larger and smaller *mizuko kuyō* temples in Kyoto alone, it may suffice here to mention the two “high places”: the Adashino Nenbutsu-ji and the Mizuko Nenbutsu-ji. The smaller temples are too numerous to list. One small temple in the Matsugasaki quarter of Kyoto shall nevertheless be mentioned here because it so beautifully exhibits the pre-Meiji *shinbutsu* combination. In this mixed sanctuary Shinto and Buddhism coexist in neighborly brotherhood. Large posters on the main street direct you to the *mizuko kuyō* place, which turns out to be a Shinto shrine (Daikokuten) plus a sectarian Nichiren temple (Myōen-ji). The *mizuko kuyō* section, dominated by a statue of Mizuko Kannon, belongs, of course, to the Buddhist part. *Geographia sacra* has its own ways of making unintended jokes: this particular *mizuko* temple happens to be right across from the convent of the Roman Catholic Maryknoll sisters.

We have already emphasized the need of (alas, unobtainable) statistics for earlier periods. The claim of a few Buddhist priests that there was physical evidence of *kuyō* (meaning Jizō stones) does not count for much in the context of the general subject of Jizō stones (reminiscent of the Hermes stones in ancient Greece). For a time I pinned my hopes on a systematic examination of temple *kakochō* with the many *mizuko* appearing in their pages, but it soon became clear that these referred to stillbirths and miscarriages, more often to neonatal death—and infant mortality was high until not so long ago. *Kakochō* list the names (including age, sex, etc.) of the dead that are commemorated in that particular

<sup>20</sup> The three words mean harmony, tranquility, and peace. On the relation between Jizō and Shingon (and Chinese tantrism), see DE VISSER 1914, p. 32; for Jizō and Kōbō Daishi, p. 76 ff. The literature on Jizō is immense and there is no need to add yet another bibliography. See DYKSTRA 1978, especially the short bibliography in note 1.



Mizuko tablets

temple, i.e., the dead of families associated with the temple. But the many *mizuko* appearing there can hardly refer to aborted embryos, since these generally have no names. They are given no *kaimyō* (posthumous name) and hence have no *ihai* (proper “soul-tablet”). The wooden *tōba* have the standard inscription (following a *mikkyō*-derived Sanskrit letter): *tame-ni mu-mei mizuko-no-rei kuyō tō[ba]* (“*kuyō tōba* for the soul of a nameless [!] *mizuko*”). Many temples sell *tōba* that omit the words *mu-mei*, but this does not mean that the aborted *mizuko* receives a name. The inscription simply says *mizuko kuyō*, and in the margin the mother adds her name. Other sects, on the other hand, do give *kaimyō* and even place proper *ihai* in the temple. (Let us not discuss prices and fees at this stage.) In one temple only lack of film prevented me from photographing all the 20,000 *mizuko ihai* deposited there. There are special manuals for priests giving very detailed instructions in the matter of *kaimyō*: for children who died between the ages 4–5 to 14–15 (sometimes the ages are subdivided differently, e.g., 4–5 to 7–8); one full year to 3–4 years; between birth and one year; and, last but not least, stillbirths and miscarriages (a two-character *kaimyō* plus the two characters for *mizuko*). No name at all for aborted fetuses, though the manual adds “there are considerable differences according to areas and particular temple traditions.” The thousands of *Jizō* statues in, e.g., the *Shiunzan* do not even mention family names but only, at the base of the statue, the home prefecture of the family. Of course there are also many temples that perform *mizuko kuyō* but do not keep stocks or supplies of *mizuko kuyō tōba*. These are simply prepared *ad hoc*. (The *Sensō-ji* in Tokyo, better known as the *Asakusa Kannon*, is such a temple.)

A complete survey of *mizuko kuyō* would also require an examination of the practice of the New Religions. Many simply include the *mizuko* souls in their prayers for all souls, but hold no special *kuyō*. Seichō-no-Ie sets high store by *mizuko kuyō*. Agon-shū is going into the *mizuko kuyō* business in a rather big way and even uses paper-cuts in the stylized likeness of a human figure, bearing the inscription *Sangai mizuko no rei* 三界水子之霊. A short but excellent account is given by Helen HARDACRE in her Kurozumikyō book (1986, pp. 151–52). Although spirit possessions and exorcisms play a major role in Mahikari (see YOUNG 1990), it has no special rituals for *mizuko*. When I asked a Mahikari teacher about malevolent and vindictive *mizuko* spirits, he snorted contemptuously: “*meishin*” (superstition). An almost identical assertion comes from a Zōjō-ji priest: “The sales ploy temples are using to sell Mizuko Jizō comes down to a threat. But the souls of the children do not come back to haunt you. There are no ghosts” (*sic*)!<sup>21</sup>

#### *Abortion, Contraception, and Demographic Statistics*

We have already noted that in contemporary Japan, with infanticide outlawed, the only legal method of birth control is abortion; the world’s most widely used contraceptive, the pill, was not used (until quite recently) as a result of the successful brainwashing of both the public and the Ministry of Health by the gynecological mafia. The pill is dispensed only against specific medical prescription; otherwise doctors prefer abortion to contraception (see below and Appendix C). The touching solicitude of the Japanese medical establishment for the hormonal health of its female population is illustrated by the fact that the ban on the pill as a measure of health protection was completely unrelated to the question whether steroidal preparations could be manufactured and sold. What matters, and what concerns us here, is the fact that it could not be sold as a contraceptive. “Over-the-counter sale of preparations containing female hormones [was] not included in the prohibition. One patent medicine that is [freely] sold . . . contains diethylstilbestrol, a synthetic estrogen that has been strongly linked to cancer. . . .” (COLEMAN 1983, p. 38; see also Appendix C). Whenever one of my female *gaijin* acquaintances makes a trip abroad (e.g., to Hong Kong), she is inundated by requests from Japanese friends to bring back supplies of “the pill,” more easily obtainable in any Hong Kong pharmacy.

Also, Bardwell SMITH, in a popular essay (1989), admits “it would be naive to deny that this whole phenomenon has commercial overtones.” The understatement of the year! The slightly antiquated but still au-

<sup>21</sup> See also Mother Teresa’s letter quoted below.



thoritative monograph of S. COLEMAN (1983) confirms that the income from abortions represents a substantial part of the Ob-Gyn (=obstetrical-gynecological) market. The total market value for 1975 represented about \$100 million, exclusive of related fees, drugs, etc. The Japanese Tax Bureau unearthed about \$9 million in untaxed income from abortions. On 26 October 1990, the *International Herald Tribune* still thought it worthwhile to carry a front-page report “Where the Japanese lag: Birth Control,” and in the sequel: “The story of abortion and birth control in Japan is about the low status of women, and about a male establishment marked by tradition and—critics assert—greed.” What the *Herald Tribune* had as a short story, was a very long story in the *National Geographic*, April 1990 (32 pp.) under the title “Japanese Women.” The article is embellished by a color plate of a Buddhist priest performing *mizuko kuyō* (FALLOWS 1990, p. 74).

The so-called Eugenic Protection Law of 1948 (*Yūsei hogo hō*)—see below, Appendix A—makes abortions easy and, though not exactly legal, at least “not illegal.” The social (and, for our purpose more important, “religious”) consequences of this law have, of course, to be seen in conjunction with the “Pharmaceutical Affairs Law: Enforcement Order Thereof and General Pharmaceutical Affairs Council Order,” Law no. 145, August 10, 1960, which is the legal basis of the prohibition of the contraceptive pill. Since many women do not wish to have their abortions in their neighborhood, they go to a private clinic in another place. This explains the many ads at railway stations and other public places ending in “*Yūsei hogo hō shitei-i*” ([Dr. X.Y.,] “gynecologist licensed under the Eugenic Protection Law”). This euphemism means that Dr. X.Y. has a private clinic and can perform non-illegal abortions. Readers of the Classified Ad columns in newspapers have undoubtedly noticed advertisements such as “Obstetrician/Gynecologist” followed by the name of the doctor plus the name, address, and telephone number of his maternity clinic. Incidentally, the date of the *Yūsei hogo hō* also suggests a slight racist component. Besides the fear of overpopulation, there was also the fact that at the time many Japanese women were with child by soldiers (white as well as black) of the Occupation Forces.

Before turning to what should be our real theme, to wit, the Buddhist attitude to, and involvement with, *mizuko kuyō*, let us briefly sum up the most relevant demographic data (bearing in mind the Marx-Engels dictum that at a certain point quantity turns into quality). The *Kōsei tōkei yōran* [Social welfare statistics survey]<sup>22</sup> annual has a useful breakdown:

<sup>22</sup> I rely on the Ministry’s statistics in spite of the Audit Board’s fiscal 1989 report, censuring the Health and Welfare Ministry for being the most wasteful and most sloppily managed of all government agencies.

abortion for genetic reasons, leprosy (*sic*), health of mother, rape, “reason unknown.” (For the benefit of non-Japanese students, there also exists an English edition of this annual, “Health and Welfare Statistics in Japan,” published by the Health and Welfare Statistics Association.) The 1985 edition, which gives the data for 1984, shows a dramatic decline of reported abortions from ca. 732,000 (1970) to 569,000 (1984). The only subgroup with a dramatic increase – practically a doubling – of reported abortions (from ca. 14,000 to 28,000) are girls under 20. There was a slight falling off in 1987 (27,542), but in 1988 the number rose again to 28,598. The phenomenon appears to be puzzling at first sight, especially in view of the general decline in the number of abortions (which suggests increasing use of contraceptive methods). But contraceptive techniques are apparently used by mature women only. And although one would expect high school girls to be the first to resort to such methods, the reality seems to be that sexual activity is completely unrelated to sexual instruction or, in other words, that increasing “modernity” expresses itself in increasing sexual freedom, whilst the taboo on talking about sex, including sexual instruction, is as powerful as ever. This also casts grave doubts on the chances of success of the manual on sexual instruction recently published by the Ministry of Education. At any rate, teenage abortions seem to be on the way to respectability. I know of at least one case where a girl appeared in a temple for *kuyō* wearing her high school uniform!

The same statistical yearbook (1988 ed.) gives the numbers for 1987. The declining tendency continues. The total is 497,756 (as compared to 598,084 in 1980). Needless to point out that the official annual only gives the “reported” number of abortions, which means that these statistics reflect merely a quarter or fifth of the real numbers (at a low estimate). The unreported numbers will always remain sheer guesswork. When I asked some medical and social science colleagues whether taking the reported numbers as being about 20% of the real ones was a fair guess, they gave me a queer look and said, “You better make it 10%.” We shall have to return to this problem. At present it must suffice, in order to see things in perspective, to view the (unreliable) number of reported abortions together with the (reliable) number of live births: 33,878 reported abortions in 1987 as compared to 51,000 in 1970; 1,314,006 live births in 1988 and about 1.22 million in 1990 (almost two thousand less than in 1989, and thus the lowest ever). The number of miscarriages and stillbirths was 30,000 in 1987 as compared to 95,000 (!) in 1965.

Further statistical data can be gleaned from the *Yūsei hogo tōkei hōkoku* [Eugenic statistics report] for 1988. Chart 2 on page 16 compares the numbers of natural births and those of (reported) abortions. The number of the latter is still shockingly high, but the curve from 1955 to 1988

shows a steady decline. An amusing detail is the sudden and sharp drop in natural births in 1966 – demographically insignificant but culturally fascinating because the dramatic drop was due to that year being *hinoe-uma*, believed to be a bad year for giving birth to a female child.<sup>23</sup> This detail is mentioned here because of its important implication. In 1965 there were about two million live births. In 1966 (*hinoe-uma*) the number of births dropped to about one and a half million. In 1967 the number was up again to two million. Almost 70,000 abortions were reported in 1965, but there was no jump in the number of abortions in 1966: the statistical curve continued its steady decline. Since there is no indication that a wave of sexual continence swept over Japan, we must assume that Japanese can and do practice contraception if they really want to.

Table 5 in the same report gives a breakdown of abortions by pregnancy period, from 1955 to 1988. There is an unmistakable shift to earlier abortions, with only one significant exception to this general tendency. Chart 3, which shows the annual rate of abortions per 1000 women by age groups, confirms the general downward trend except for the teenage group. All this is in keeping with the data already adduced from the *Kōsei tōkei yōran*. But a striking detail is the one exception to the general trend (shift towards early abortions) already alluded to: the teenage group has a relatively high rate of late abortions (table 4). Another example of the woeful inadequacy of sexual instruction.

There are several opinion polls regarding the use of the low-dose pill, conducted among young girls as well as among married and unmarried women. The brainwashing seems to have been extremely effective, since those in favor of this almost universal contraceptive are not the overwhelming majority one would expect. Those in favor of the pill justify their preference in terms of effectiveness, avoidance of abortion (almost 60% of the women polled), keeping the woman in control of pregnancy (almost 50%). Those opposed to the pill argued the difficulty of permanent use, the difficulty of obtaining the required medical prescription, the fear of negative side effects (true enough! Japanese doctors do not prescribe the dosage that, according to Western medical practice, should be prescribed!), the preference for condoms (over 70% of the women polled; see below), and the fear of increasing promiscuity among young girls. The latter argument is a stunning illustration of successful brainwashing, bearing in mind the dramatic increase (doubling) in (reported!) teenage abortions.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> This explanation was suggested to me by Abe Yoshiya, and I subsequently found it expounded at length, for the sake of non-Japanese demographers, in the English version of the "Health and Welfare Statistics," p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> It should be mentioned here in passing that Japanese physicians tend to indignantly

There remains the interesting question of how to account for the dramatic decline of both live births and abortions. All experts I have consulted agree that the reason is the increased use of condoms (i.e., a shift towards contraception). Japanese men obviously do not feel bound by the decree of the Holy Office (19 April 1853), the inimitable Latin of which I shall be forgiven for quoting verbatim: the *usus imperfectus matrimonii, sive onanistice sive condomistice (seu adhibito nefario instrumento vulgo condom)* is prohibited because *intrinsece malus*. Of course, condoms are not foolproof, but the problem is a purely technical one: it is not the condom that is at issue but (as recent research, especially in Canada, has shown) its design. Improved design will eliminate the risk factor. Of immediate interest to us is that Japan, having one of the lowest birthrates in the world (Japan is not Pakistan, the 110 million population of which is growing at more than 3% per annum, and which is likely to top 150 million by the end of this decade), has currently thrown its authorities into a state of absolute panic. The problem is aggravated by two additional factors. The low birthrate is coupled with one of the highest longevity rates. (In fact, I have seen temples where instead of child-protecting Jizōs you have rows and rows of busts of old *oji* and *oba*, with the very moving inscription saying: "We have lived our life honestly and as best we could; now that we are approaching death, please protect us.") Before long a small number of young wage earners will have to support a "graying" Japan.

The second factor is the slow but inevitable emancipation of women. More and more career-oriented women find it difficult to combine their aspirations with their equally strong desire for motherhood. It is doubtful whether governmental initiatives (so far mere talk) regarding far-reaching reforms in the system of assistance (especially child care) to working mothers, will significantly influence the situation. Unless there is a major contraceptive breakthrough, a new stimulus to *mizuko* looms

reject the "libelous" statement that Japan has the highest abortion rate, and gleefully point to India, Soviet Russia, etc. It is difficult to believe that academically trained medical practitioners should be capable of such blatant dishonesty and seriously put forward this kind of mind-bogglingly specious argument. After all, nobody in his right mind would ever dream of comparing technologically advanced Japan with India, Russia, Romania, or Third World countries. A propos Romania it should be mentioned, by way of illustration, that under the Ceaucescu regime abortions were strictly forbidden. The regime, which wanted a population increase, even required women to present themselves regularly for medical examination in order to make sure that, if they were pregnant, they did not subsequently terminate their pregnancies. In 1990 (i.e., since the anti-Communist revolution) about one million abortions have been reported, many of them performed by the women themselves with the attendant fatal or near-fatal hemorrhages. An interesting subject for research is now being presented by Germany, the unification of which raises problems regarding the adaptation of East Germany's high abortion rate to the West German pattern. But to return to Japan: if comparisons have to be made, then with the U.S., Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, etc.

on the horizon. Needless to say, Japan, too, has its Nazi-type ideologists who preach that women need no careers but exist exclusively for *Küche und Kinder*.

The relevance of the above for *mizuko kuyō* will soon become evident. The spectacular decrease in the number of both live births and abortions clearly signifies that contraception, after a long delay, is making some headway and is becoming a recognized and preferred alternative. The fact that, for the time being, condoms are the preferred method amounts, in my eyes, to a major social revolution, although the magnitude of the "revolution" should not be exaggerated. The information available to me leaves no doubt that it is the women wishing to avoid pregnancy who buy the condoms. As a matter of fact, many women, at least of the older generation, do not even know about the existence of the pill or of any other contraceptive method except condoms. Nevertheless, the increasing use of condoms suggests that at long last the men, too, are actively sharing responsibility instead of leaving everything (whether pill or abortion) to the women. In the circumstances it may not be impossible that sooner or later families will bring pressure to bear on the authorities to permit the use of the male hormone (not influencing male sex-life but the fertility of the sperm) so strongly recommended by the W.H.O. It is characteristic that no gynecologist questioned by me even attempted to advance reasonable arguments (e.g., the W.H.O. had been too hasty in its recommendation, the hormone had not been sufficiently tested, etc.); the subject was simply "unknown," i.e., ignored.

One more culturo-medical question must briefly be touched on, as it may serve as a convenient bridge to the subject of *mizuko kuyō*. Much important and useful work has been done (though without making sufficient public impact) by the Nihon Kazoku Keikaku Kyōkai [Japanese Family Planning Association]. In fact, some of the statistics adduced in the foregoing were taken from their publications. But my discussions with the Association brought to light a very definite and disturbing preference for abortions rather than contraception. A favorite argument (rather shocking to old-fashioned minds like the present writer's, and reminiscent of the strident sloganeering of certain Western feminists many years ago, on the rebound from the "womanly" role imposed on them by a dominant male culture) was that the embryo was part of the woman's body and that she was therefore the sole arbiter entitled to decide what to do with it. The present writer, in his narrow-mindedness unable to equate abortion with a haircut or the extraction of a tooth, though he advocates its necessity in certain circumstances, nevertheless gladly risks the accusation of being a male chauvinist pig and/or antediluvian dinosaur. I very carefully refrained, in my discussions, from raising ideological issues and stuck to medical "objectivity," respectfully inquiring whether gynecologists considered themselves doctors or ana-

tomical technicians. If the former, one could not help wondering about their lack of awareness of the mental/psychological implications of certain medical procedures. If a fetus was simply part of the woman's body like an appendix or an ulcer, how did they account for the tens of thousands of women thronging the Mizuko Kannon and Mizuko Jizō temples and requesting *kuyō*? Obviously there must be something traumatizing about the experience, and since doctors (like practically everybody nowadays) should not be suspected of possessing a classical education, I made a point of adding that *trauma* was simply the Greek word for "wound" (*kizu* in Japanese). Contraceptive techniques may have their metabolic and other problems, but they are surely not traumatizing. Do mental traumas not fall within the doctor's province? Or perhaps he should merely shrug his shoulders and leave this "non-medical" aspect of the matter to his partner in business, the Buddhist priest? I never received a reply to my somewhat inquisitorial questions.

The abortion *versus* contraception controversy receives an additional unpleasant flavor by the argument openly flaunted by pro-abortion groups to the effect that they are the "true pacifists." The anti-abortionists are clandestine militarists advocating a population increase in order to provide cannon-fodder for the next imperialist adventure (*sic*)! That a pacifist might want to limit the number of births by means of contraception rather than abortion was completely outside the horizon of this peace-loving discussion.

### *Buddhist Doctrine*

With the last paragraphs we have entered the realm of Buddhist doctrine. Unlike Catholic teaching as vulgarly represented (and sometimes encouraged by statements emanating from Rome), there is nothing intrinsically wrong about licit sex that does not intend to produce children.<sup>25</sup> For Buddhists there is no duty whatever to create/procreate life, and there is nothing "sinful" (to borrow a somewhat misleading Western term) about sex, unless you have taken vows. But destroying life is about the worst "sin," and it creates the worst possible karma in every sense. Hence even if you believe in the existence of *mizuko* souls, there will always be a profound difference between the *mizuko* souls resulting from *shizan* and *ryūzan* (which happen without, or even against, your will),

<sup>25</sup> Although this article is not concerned with Catholic doctrine, a parenthesis on the subject should be added here in order to leave no doubt that even Catholicism makes a distinction that, unfortunately, is not generally known, between contraception and abortion. Contraception is a moral sin — the giving way to one's desires and lust — whereas abortion, as the taking of life, is a crime of a different category. In other words, it is the difference between a sin of immoderation and a sin against life.

and abortions that require initiative on your part. In other words, as long as there are stillbirths and miscarriages, there will be *mizuko kuyō*. The question of abortion is more complex in view of the diverse health, economic, and other factors involved, but before we address it a word must be said about belief in souls. (I only wish to add here that I know Buddhist priests who have advised pregnant mothers not to abort in spite of medical warnings about the health of the child: “If you have enough faith in *hotoke*, you will be able to give happiness to the child in spite of its impaired health.”)

This is not the place to discuss the Buddhist doctrine of soul or “self,” and the age-old problem of how Buddhism accounts for rebirth, let alone for the remembrance of previous existences, in terms of the Buddha’s central and revolutionary doctrine of *anatta*. Here it must suffice to note that even in Theravāda countries there is hardly a distinction between an orthodox, atman-believing Hindu and the alleged followers of the *anattavādi*, whose teaching on the most central of all issues is practically ignored in actual behavior. We acquire merit for our “selves” (even if we then transfer it selflessly, i.e., unegoistically, to other “selves”); we speak of the transferal of merit to “us” after the end of our present karmic state; we behave as if it is our “self” that performs good deeds, is reborn (to suffer in hell or to enjoy the bliss of the Pure Land), and walks in the Noble Eightfold Path. As regards the average Buddhist, the lines in the *Visuddhimagga*,

Suffering exists, but no sufferer is found.  
 The Deed is, but no doer of the deed is there.  
 Nirvāṇa is, but not the man who enters it.  
 The Path is, but no traveler on it.

need never have been written.

But let us return to the East Asian situation and to the profound insight to which my eyes were opened by Anna Seidel, concerning the inner conflict between ancestor- and family-consciousness (i.e., the ineradicable ancestor cult) on the one hand, and karma-responsibility on the other – a conflict underlying these cultures since the penetration of Buddhist ideas (see below). The unbelieving historian, who knows nothing about souls but only what believers of diverse kinds tell him about them, and who takes his explanations from Freud, will consider *mizuko* beliefs as projections of painful traumas, in the case of abortions also of bad conscience, and above all of fears, the implication being that psychotherapeutic counselling rather than *sūtra*-chanting and *kuyō* is required. (It is surely superfluous to point out that the latter can have obvious psychotherapeutic effects). In fact, many Buddhist priests increasingly emphasize counselling (next to *kuyō*). One abbot of a Zen temple actually encourages his wife to study clinical psychology “because counselling is

more important, and it has to be done not by priests but by women." For the same reason he takes a dim view of the Ministry of Education's manual on sex instruction: "In view of the traditional taboos, it is useless. Teachers will not be able to speak freely. The job must be done by women trained as counselors and teachers."

*Religion and "This World"*

An interesting difference between Eastern Buddhism and Western Christianity immediately springs to mind. Chinese and Japanese religions, no matter what power struggles and intrigues they were engaged in, always took it for granted that they were not merely supervised but actually policed by the state. Even though they were well aware that one of their tasks was to confer legitimation on the state, the latter was actually policing them, and hence they knew their place. The Western split between *imperium* and *sacerdotium*, and the consequent history of the conflict between church and empire, had as one of its significant by-products the capacity of the church(es) or church-related groups to organize themselves for concerted action — cultural, social, or political. But whenever I pressed the reluctant Buddhist priests with the question why they did not team up among themselves and create a common pressure-group (or "lobby"), possibly together with feminist groups, non-Catholic Christians, and others, to fight the abortion racket and propagate *hinin* (contraception), the evasive answer was that "this-worldly activity is not our task; we must take care of the departed souls." Politeness prevented me from inquiring whether the flourishing sale of amulets and talismans (*omamori*) for good health and for success in examinations, business, and love affairs, as well as for traffic safety, not to speak of the doctrine of *genze-riyaku* (this-worldly benefits of religious faith) in general, did not come under the heading of "this-worldly." Some high-ranking priests told me that when consulted by women before pregnancy, they privately counselled contraception. "But the Buddhist church must not agitate publicly against State Law."

Our passing reference to *genze-riyaku* provides a welcome occasion to remind the reader that the New Religions (not unlike *mizuko kuyō* propaganda to this day) made rather extreme claims, at least in their early days, in their promises of immediate benefits and relief from misfortune. They were not in the least impressed by the supercilious criticism of their materialism by the spokesmen of more "spiritual" religions (Christian missionaries in particular). On the contrary, they were rather proud of "sticking out their neck" and risking being put to the test, unlike the "spiritual" religions that moved their promises of salvation to a sphere where they were safely beyond verification. Needless to say, they piped



down a little as time went on and the pressures of “cognitive dissonance” (see below) increased.

*Traumas, Religious Charity, and Religious Blackmail*

As already noted, every Buddhist agrees that abortion is a heinous “sin” and creates the worst possible karma as well as misfortune. The incipient seed of life, deprived of the fullness of life in a body, becomes a disincarnate demon, a vindictive *gaki*, visiting misfortune on others and especially on the “selfish parents” and family who deprived it of birth. At best the *mizuko* soul wanders unhappily between the various realms, unable to be reborn. The mere thought of it cannot but cause anguish and pain to the mother. Eloquent testimony is provided by the inscriptions on the reverse side of the thousands of *ema*: “Please forgive us”; “We shall not do it again” (though many women, interviewed after *kuyō*, confessed to having had two or more abortions); “We shall make good with the next baby where we failed towards you, please protect it” and the like. Some inscriptions are so cynical (in Western eyes) that the only explanation seems to be the psychological inability to cope with the trauma and the pain, e.g., (*ema* in the Zōjō-ji): “Sorry, you two babies. Get along well with each other in heaven<sup>26</sup> and have a good time there” (signed by a 29-year old mother), or “Baby, we’re really sorry. Please come back into my womb in five years’ time” (signed by young couple, father 24, mother 23).

The latter inscription associates well with earlier remarks regarding the increasing use of condoms: men take a greater share in what was hitherto exclusively the woman’s affair. I find more and more young couples, rather than women alone, attending *kuyō* (at least on Sundays and holidays; on weekdays the men are at work), and more and more *ema* signed by both parents rather than by the mother alone. Even if expressed in an almost insipidly sentimental manner, the genuine grief is evident and moving enough. How much of this grief is natural and spontaneous, and how much due to the “osmotic pressure” or even manipulation of the *mizuko kuyō* industry, is difficult to say. I quote from a *mizuko* “pop” song (obtainable on cassette):

This evening a lone shooting star,  
 what a wretched transient life;  
 The look-alike faces of the Mizuko Jizō;  
 what are the pinwheels beside them saying,  
 in this bitterly cold night wind?

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that the mother refers to the *mizuko* as being in heaven; no hint of *Sai-no-kawara*.

Such fate comes from being a woman,  
 how could I forget that?  
 The *mizuko* scattered by a spring storm,  
 though I am its parent, even if I called  
 its name two or three times,  
 It is now somewhere far beyond the  
 distant sky out of reach.

The blessing of the child I had expected  
 vanished like a dream.  
 How bitter not to be able to cuddle my child.  
 As I secretly visit the *mizuko* resting-place  
 I offer this lotus flower from the last *kuyō*.  
 May it be a penitential proof of my love.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, when discussing *mizuko kuyō* we must distinguish between several aspects. There is, first of all, the aforementioned traditional notion of vindictive spirits, strengthened by Buddhist “input.” The key words here are, as we have seen, *osore*, *onryō*, *gaki*, *tatari*, *sawari*, *shizume*. This aspect is the dominant one in all the printed material I have seen, and it has been skillfully exploited by unscrupulous, business-oriented, as well as by more well-meaning authors, priests, and temple establishments. So far the best summary of, and contribution to, the unedifying subject of the commercialization of religion in Japan is Mary PICONE’s excellent and stimulating paper (1986).<sup>28</sup> Obviously,

<sup>27</sup> I am making grateful use of the translation as given by Richard YOUNG (1989, p. 31).

<sup>28</sup> The theme of Picone’s article is the contemporary commercialization of religion in Japan. The subject invites a brief note on the connection between commercialization and modernizing mechanization. Of course the two are not identical, though sometimes related. Thus you need not always go to the temple office or sales stand to buy your amulets and talismans. Some temples have *jidō hanbai* (vending machines) with a dozen or more different slots and, as with cigarettes or cold drinks, you insert your coin and get the *omamori* you want. The most impressive array of machines can be found at the Zenkō-ji in Nagano.

Vending machines are, of course, not the only example of mechanization in temples. There is a well-known Benten shrine that pious pilgrims reached by climbing several hundred steps. Today a moving staircase provides a less ascetic alternative. More genuinely humanitarian is an arrangement I found in the main sanctuary of the Reiyūkai, the Shakaden. There the corridors between the blocks of seats have an electronic network under the floor so as to enable the handicapped in wheelchairs, or the blind suitably equipped with electronic canes, to find their seats without difficulty by themselves.

But to return to the Zenkō-ji: as it is one of the very few “non-sectarian” temples in Japan (the Nittai-ji in Nagoya is another), it evidently must be jointly administered by priests from different sects; otherwise the temple would be just one more separate *shū*. It is, in fact, administered jointly by the abbess of the (Jōdo) Dai-Hongan nunnery and the abbot of the (Tendai) Dai Kanjin, who is always a senior Hiei-zan ecclesiastic. Also, the 39 subtemples are divided between the two sects. Of these, two (a Tendai subtemple and the Dai-Hongan Jōdo nunnery) specialize in *mizuko kuyō*. I did not attend any *kuyō* there, but the Tendai priests assured me that their *mizuko kuyō* liturgy was similar to that of the Jōdo nuns.

though not explicitly mentioned in her title, *mizuko* are an important element in Picone's article. Her references to Japanese authors and profiteers like Sugiura Kōshō are especially valuable. Her article, incidentally, also invites further deepening of the crucial distinction pointed out by Anna Seidel concerning the conflict underlying Chinese and Japanese cultures with their indestructible "cult of ancestors," to wit, the conflict between responsibility to the ancestors, and family-consciousness in general (essentially a collective cult), on the one hand, and karma-reincarnation responsibility (essentially an individual responsibility) on the other.

At this juncture we should summarize the main concerns of mothers, families, temples, profiteers, and researchers regarding *mizuko* souls. The traditional *Sai-no-kawara*<sup>29</sup> mythology is practically unknown, as a lived reality or even as a myth, to most young Japanese. We only find it as an iconographic motif in paintings in *mizuko kuyō* temples, usually as background to the Mizuko Jizō figure. There seem to be two main concerns: the one, and incidentally the most traditional, is the fear (*osore*) of all kinds of misfortune visited upon the family by the vindictive *mizuko* soul. This fear, although played up by the printed Buddhist literature (books, pamphlets, propaganda leaflets, advertisements) and by various profiteers, seems to me to be of lesser importance than it is made to appear.<sup>30</sup> More important in the emotional lives of mothers is compassion with the unhappy souls, concern for their well-being, and sadness. Mothers do not think so much of *Sai-no-kawara* as of the unhappy errant souls (*segaki*), floating between the realms of existence and unable to be reborn since they were deprived of their normal and natural existence. They must, and can, be helped by *kuyō*. The subjective feeling of sadness and unhappiness (and, psychologists would add, bad conscience) is poignantly expressed in the *mizuko* song quoted above. It is the parents, and especially the mothers, who need *shizume* ("pacification") for their emotional lives. The Nakayama-dera actually provides instruction sheets telling the mothers what exactly to do (e.g., offering flowers, but especially sweets) if they want to catch a glimpse of their *mizuko*! The liturgy sheets of some temples also have an abbreviated version of the *kuyō* prayer (surrounded by a frame for easier recognition) "for busy people."

We should, however, never forget that motivations are diffuse and overlapping. A propaganda leaflet of Nakayama-dera lists ten reasons

<sup>29</sup> "The River Beach of Sai," also known as the *Sanzu-no-kawa* [The river of the three crossings], is the place where the souls of little children suffer. They have to build pagodas with little stones, but every time they have finished their forced labor, wicked demons destroy their pagodas. This Sisyphus-suffering is terminated only by the appearance of Jizō, who saves the baby souls.

<sup>30</sup> See also Mother Teresa's reference to this subject.

why *kuyō* are necessary. But the strict divisions and classifications so dear to academic as well as ecclesiastical minds often remove us from the realities studied instead of throwing light on them. Buddhist priests have their own sets of beliefs and motivations. Fortunately, some scholars (e.g., Ōmura Eishō of Osaka University, Sasaki Shōten of Nishi Hongan-ji Dendō-in, and Kaneko Keiji of Osaka City University) are currently engaged in examining the gap between the consciousness of priests and that of ordinary believers. Popular beliefs are not scholastic theology. Hence *mizuko* souls can be thought of sometimes as demons, sometimes as *gaki*, sometimes as unhappy errant spirits.



*gaki*



*demons*

Some temples, evidently moved by Buddhist *metta-karuna* ideals, seem to have gone rather far in their charitable activities. By the latter term I refer not only to *kuyō* services and their paraphernalia (candles, incense sticks, *tōba*, *sūtra*-chanting, etc.) but also the placing of Jizō statues in the temple or on its grounds. Prices range from ¥50,000 to ¥2 million. The factories of these statues regularly send their updated catalogues to the temples concerned, and in every temple you find order sheets on which you mark what you want. Posters along highways, and ads even in railway carriages, make *kuyō* propaganda, often in the most blatant form. Small wonder then that the media and newspapers, always eager for sensational news, have picked up the subject and given it additional publicity. The media are also fond of quoting the amounts of (tax-free!) income temples derive from the *mizuko kuyō* industry. Reliable numbers are, of course, difficult to come by, though one would dearly like to know which temples make how much money. And which temples call a spade

a spade, and which prefer euphemisms like Kosodate Jizō, originally one of the functions and names of the “child-rearing and upbringing” Jizō as protector of children. I hasten to add that there are temples where “*kosodate*” is still used in its original, non-euphemistic sense. The priests of these temples positively assert that they hold no *mizuko kuyō*, and thorough searches by me in some of these temples have failed to discover any *mizuko tōba*. And which temples do not hesitate to resort to what the newspapers call the “Booming Business of Terror,” threatening dire curses on those who neglect their *mizuko*? One advertisement, picked at random (from the *Mainichi Shinbun*, 28 June 1988), should suffice here:

Prevent evil destiny and misfortune to you and your family caused by the grudge of the spirit of that life disposed of at the parents’ personal convenience. A shortcut to starting a happy life, avoiding the retribution of the *mizuko*, and changing ill-fortune into good, is to offer immediately a *kuyō* to ask the *mizuko*’s forgiveness for the misdeed, and pray to the Mizuko Kannon [who is invoked almost as often as Jizō] for the peaceful entrance of the *mizuko* into Buddhahood.

This particular temple charges ¥20,000 per *kuyō*. The ad well illustrates our earlier remarks concerning *tatari* and *sawari*, and the need of protection against *onryō*. But the need to pacify potentially dangerous souls/spirits, and its underlying beliefs, should not be seen in isolation. Precisely because this paper restricts itself to the subject of *mizuko kuyō*, it is imperative to bear in mind the wider context of the “modern” revival of spirit beliefs and exorcistic rituals (boosted by the media, including NHK, who go in for the occult, UFOs, exorcisms and the like in a rather big way). Early in November 1990, NHK Television broadcast an interview with the shaman-type foundress of yet another New Religion, in Gifu Prefecture, who not only heals cancer but also performs *kuyō* for aborted *mizuko*. She even read to the mother a letter she had received from the *mizuko*! Every student of the New Religions has his/her files bulging with material on the subject.<sup>31</sup>

Other temples, while fully committed to belief in the need to help *mizuko* souls and their families, do not resort to strident terror tactics, though the implicit threat is patent and manifest enough. A popular women’s magazine (admittedly for better-class ladies) of the kind one finds in certain hairdresser salons, carried a full-page ad of a *mizuko* temple in Hamamatsu, giving the prices of the various services and adorning the page with letters of thanks from grateful clients. All kinds of pains, headaches, etc., had immediately disappeared after performing *kuyō*.

<sup>31</sup> For a recent, brief but excellent, discussion see YOUNG 1990. Although ostensibly dealing with the Mahikari sect, the implications of Young’s article are much wider.

*The Sociological View*

Before formulating what should by now be the obvious conclusion, I should like to summarize briefly what I consider to be the consensus of my Japanese colleagues (referring, of course, to the social scientists and not to the Buddhist priests). Having repeatedly asserted that there was no convincing evidence of individual *kuyō* for *mabiki* and abortions in earlier periods, I wish to recall our earlier reference to the ancient and well-established custom of *eitai-kuyō*, or *eitai-kyō*, in which a sūtra-chanting memorial service was held on the anniversary of an infant's death. Considering the very high rate of infant mortality, the fee for the *kuyō* must have constituted an important part of the temple's income. But now to my condensed version of current Japanese social science consensus:

The association of *mizuko* and *mizuko kuyō* with artificial abortion and the consolation of the spirits of the aborted, appears to be a phenomenon after the 1960s. It is related to the changing structure of families and the related structure of temple finance. The large number of births and of premature deaths of children had brought into temples substantial amounts of income in the form of *eitai kuyō ryō*. Urbanization and the increasing prevalence of nuclear families that had become the norm since the mid-1950s resulted in the shrinkage of such income, and led the priests to an alternative device. Noting that this decline in the number of children per family had a direct relation with artificial abortion (which about one-third of married women are reported to undergo), Buddhist priests invented *mizuko kuyō*, changed the signification of *mizuko* from the entire category of the prematurely dead to the floating spirits of the artificially aborted, and introduced the rituals of *mizuko kuyō* as a means to support temple economy. The popular practice of *mizuko kuyō* may thus be said to be a post-1970 phenomenon.

To this I would add several additional economic circumstances, including the separation of state and religion after World War II (1945), which deprived religious personnel of secure salaries and income. To make things worse, the farmland reform of 1946 expropriated all land except the minimum required to cultivate enough rice for offerings to *hotoke* (or, in the case of Shinto shrines, to *kami*). The Sōtō branch of Zen alone is said to have lost 20,000 *chō* (about 49,000 acres) of paddies and farms in addition to 3,400 acres of forests and fields. The Myōshin-ji sub-branch of Rinzai was reported to have lost over 4,000 acres of rice fields and about 2,500 acres of vegetable fields, equivalent to a loss of annual income (by 1946 standards) of \$1 million. Statistics for Buddhist temples

are anything but clear; those for Shinto shrines are much better as the Shrine Association conducted a detailed survey in 1955.

Genuinely religious persons can be severe and merciless, even savage, when criticizing the failings of their own churches. Thus it is not surprising that in 1947 the chief abbot of the Zōjō-ji, when interviewed by Kishimoto Hideo about Buddhist activities for the promotion of faith and religion (*kyōka katsudō*), bluntly replied that there were no such activities since Buddhist sects “were not religious bodies” at all, and temples were “private property held by persons [i.e., priests]. . . living by means of this property” (*Shūkyō tsūshin*, 21 January 1948).

All this is undoubtedly true enough, although my Japanese colleagues may be exaggerating a little the purely economic and moneymaking manipulativeness of the Buddhist priesthood. Their account is somewhat reminiscent of that given of the “crafty priests” by European Enlightenment anti-clericalists. But it is at best a half-truth, and, as an eminent British philosopher once said, only the whole truth is wholly true. The law of demand and supply is valid in religious matters as well, and though demand can sometimes be artificially created, it is difficult to imagine tens of thousands of women thronging to *mizuko* temples merely as a result of the clever manipulation of Buddhist priests. Clearly several chronologically overlapping factors have to be seen in conjunction: the sudden explosion in the abortion rate due to the infamous “Abortion Law” (or, to be more exact, the infamous way in which it is used as a substitute for contraception); the transition from the *ie* and traditional extended family to the modern nuclear household; and the far-reaching effects of these developments on the traumas associated with abortion and on the psychological pressures making for *kuyō*. Decisions are no longer taken by the “family in council” with all the elder brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts being present and thus sharing responsibility, but by lonely young couples (or mothers) living in a tiny apartment in huge housing blocks (breeding grounds for suicides). Perhaps they seek advice from a friend or a couple that have gone through a similar experience, but our statistical data are insufficient. My own guess is that in many cases the decision is dictatorially taken by the mother-in-law, but this awesome subject comes under the heading “Japanese mothers-in-law” and is not part of our present concern.

Even more decisive may be the increasing middle-classness of Japanese society, i.e., of job-seeking boys and girls. Since much depends on what a given society considers a “good education” — from elementary, to junior and senior high, to pre-university entrance “cram school,” to status-conferring and ranking university, parents feel that they cannot provide more than two children with the necessary means of successfully competing in the career “rat race,” though the declining birthrate may change the pattern before long. Fifteen years ago university grad-

uates were still frantically looking for a *kaisha* (company/business firm) that would give them a job. Today, even before graduation, students already have two or three offers to choose from.

The hypothesis that the dramatic increase and spread of *mizuko kuyō* is a modern phenomenon, receives support from the prevalence of *petto kuyō*. I doubt whether in the premodern situation (including premodern housing conditions) anybody had a pet cat or poodle, or thought of holding *kuyō* for his farm animals.<sup>32</sup> I doubt even more that there were temples that had special *petto* corners in their cemeteries. The phenomenon is, of course, not surprising to those who have noted the increasing number of Japanese ladies (or their housemaids) walking their poodles, of “cat-and-dog hospitals” or clinics, and of the concomitant advertising in the press. On the other hand, mention has been made in these pages of a significant shift in the relationship between the sexes: the fact that more young couples go to *kuyō* together, and that *ema* are signed by both parents. This too cannot be due exclusively to the machinations of crafty priests.

In view of the preceding discussion, a justification of the subtitle of this paper should be unnecessary. *Mizuko kuyō* as a mass phenomenon is a postwar—in fact, even more recent—development. We need not investigate, let alone compute in percentages, the relative role played by the separation of state and religion (1945), the farmland reform (1946), the Abortion Law (1948), demographic trends, and other factors. Suffice it to state that by all accounts the *mizuko kuyō* phenomenon is recent, and that temples performing it (and even making fortunes out of it) also agree that the practice, at least on the present scale, is post-1970, and was unknown before that date.

### *Buddhist and Christian Kuyō*

At this juncture a brief excursus from Japanese Buddhism to Western Christianity suggests itself. The manner in which Westerners fall in love with all kinds of exotic (especially religious or “spiritual”) phenomena is a trite and often amusing commonplace. The case of *mizuko kuyō*, however, is not devoid of special irony, for here a custom thoroughly de-

<sup>32</sup> Dogs and horses may be an exception. DE VISSER's reference (1914, p. 132) to a *kuyō* for a horse may not be quite as exceptional as the author seems to suggest. The special place held by horses in the *kuyō* complex should, perhaps, be investigated also in connection with the horse-headed Kannon (Batō [also pronounced *mezu*] Kannon or Hayagrīva). Before the age of motor cars, horses were associated with wheeled traffic and *ipso facto* with traffic accidents. Hence the Horse Kannon not only symbolizes Kannon in his/her fearful aspect but, at least in the Edo period, also served as a traffic talisman (*kōtsū mamori*). On *kuyō* for animals, and *petto kuyō* as a modern phenomenon, see also HOSHINO & TAKEDA 1987, p. 310.



spised by one half of Japan, is enthusiastically embraced by a certain type of "progressive" Christian (or neo-Christian).

Of course nobody doubts that abortions (as also miscarriages and stillbirths) require sympathetic, competent, and professional counselling. But there is all the difference in the world between clinical psychology and therapeutic counselling on the one hand, and religious rites on the other, especially when the latter presuppose a belief in souls, especially in the prenatal souls of fetuses. There is, in addition, the significant difference between Japan (where abortion is the standard method of birth control) and the West (where abortion is a relatively marginal phenomenon, since contraception is standard procedure). There is, of course, also the difference between Japanese and Western (especially Christian) conceptions of the soul. Hence the perplexities left after reading statements such as those by Elizabeth HARRISON (1983) praising the "wonderful memorial services for *mizuko*," the underlying assumption being that *mizuko kuyō* are a unique means of emotional healing.

Christianity does not countenance abortion (just as Buddhism does not). Nevertheless, as everybody knows, the practice exists, but religion can offer no comfort or psychological healing to the mother who has to depend on her own resources or the emotional support of friends. Harrison claims that there is a movement in the U.S. that is learning from Japan and trying to fill the lacuna (or rather heal the wounds) left open by Christianity. A survey of recent titles<sup>33</sup> seems to confirm Harrison's claims, though they also increase the reader's puzzlement. The Japanese key terms (*osore*, *onryō*, *gaki*, *tatari*, *sawari*, etc.) have miraculously disappeared and instead we find Christian love, charity, and pastoral theology having their field day: grief, anguish, healing, "encountering grief and healing brokenness," etc. provide the main terminology. These are good and laudable intentions. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*. But they could well be dealt with without reference to Japan. The fact that Japanese *mizuko kuyō* are dragged into Christian pastoral concerns evinces an almost irresponsible selectivity as regards the Japanese material, and only if the authors explicitly state the following major thesis, arrived at on the basis of thorough fieldwork, might I have been tempted to agree up to a point: the *tatari-sawari* complex, so much stressed in Buddhist *mizuko kuyō* manuals, is in reality much less dominant in the actual experience of many women than the feelings of sadness, perhaps also of guilt, and concern for the well-being of the *mizuko* soul.

<sup>33</sup> LINN, LINN, & FABRICANT 1985 (excerpts appeared under the title "Healing Relationships with Miscarried, Aborted, and Stillborn Babies"); REARDON 1987; YOUNG 1989; BEYLER 1990.

Of course, unsuccessful contraception as well as other reasons will always render abortions unavoidable, but the fact that at the end of the 20th century certain advocates of abortion (including “disobedient” [former] members of Catholic religious orders) receive newspaper headlines leaves the reader nonplussed and dumbfounded. Lo and behold, mighty miracles are happening: as we approach the year 2000 some medieval minds seem to become “modern,” reminding us of C. G. Jung’s observation that archaic, medieval, modern, etc. were not chronological but typological designations. “Aborted women silent no longer” says the title of a recent publication by a Catholic press (REARDON 1987), the inevitable reaction being, “How come they were silent until now?” It is a rather sad comment on Western civilization that obvious human rights are suddenly proclaimed with much fanfare as major new achievements.

Even more depressing is the fact that one of the most backward countries as far as women’s rights are concerned, i.e., Japan, is held up as a shining theological example by certain “progressive” Christians. One would like to ask the authors (and their customers) whether in addition to their belief in souls they also believe (in good Japanese fashion) in family-trees of souls, in which the souls even of unborn children remain closely related to the ancestors, and what benefits the unbaptized soul derives from Masses, post-abortion baptisms, or alternative prayer liturgies. Or is the whole exercise meant to heal the anguish of the mother via the projection screen of doing something for the benefit of the souls of the *mizuko*?

The present writer would have been happier if the advocates of Christian equivalents to the wonderfully healing and salvific Japanese *mizuko kuyō* had taken note of less primitive (from a Christian point of view) and more discerning examples of genuine Christian spirituality, such as is exhibited, e.g., in Mother Teresa’s open “Letter to Japanese Mothers,” which says, among other things:

... it is true, some of you have done the wrong thing. ... but turn to God and say “My God, I am very sorry for killing my unborn child, please forgive. I will never do it again” – and God, being our loving Father, will forgive you. Never do it again and, believe me, God will forgive you. Also remember that your action did not harm the child. Your little one is with God for all eternity. There is no such thing as a child punishing you or your family. The child is with God. Your child loves you, has forgiven you, and is praying for you. Because he is with God he cannot do any harm but only love you.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> I owe my knowledge of Mother Teresa’s letter as well as a photocopy of her autograph to my friend His Excellency Archbishop William Aquin Carew, Apostolic Pro-nuncio in Tokyo.

The above *excursus* was in every sense a derailment—mainly because a historian of religion is not supposed to give free rein to his sarcasms, to ridicule belief in souls or the offering of prayers “for the quick and the dead” (including *mizuko*), to preach secularism, or to present one religious attitude as superior to another. On the contrary, he is professionally committed to an understanding of, and sympathy for, all that moves human beings at the deepest level of their experience. But sometimes derailments have their uses. As regards *kuyō*, Masses, or other devotions, even the unbelieving historian will admit their efficacy. After all, he has seen cures in Lourdes and Fatima, and even if he is no medical practitioner he knows that often placebos are no less effective than the pharmacologically “real” medicine. His medical friends, too, are so unsure that they keep inventing ever more sophisticated methods of “double blind” experiments — not to speak of psychosomatic medicine.

Nevertheless, and although analogies are always misleading (“all comparisons are limping” says a well-known German proverb), the enthusiasm of some Westerners for the wonderfully healing qualities of *mizuko kuyō* or their Christianized equivalents, cannot but remind the reader of the similar words of praise lavished by many non-Catholics and secularists on the profound human understanding and the wonderfully pacifying practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Non-Catholics are supposed to be breaking down under the burden of their sinfulness and bad conscience because they lack the ministrations and comforts (confession, absolution, indulgences) provided by the Roman Church. Since no offense is meant, none, I hope, will be taken. But in an age of alienation, what is a healing ritual to the goose is not necessarily so to the gander.

Although Jizō temples (and hence, by definition, *mizuko kuyō* centers) are ubiquitous, one more temple should be mentioned here, as it has achieved nationwide fame because of its Jizō picture scroll (exhibitions in all major cities, reproductions in art books, TV). I am referring to the Yatadera (thus the *sangō*; its *jūgō* is Kongōsan-ji) near Nara. There is an affiliated Yatadera in Kyoto. The story of Yatajizō, of Manbei (who toured hell at the invitation of Emma-ō, and after his return to earth sculpted a Jizō statue for the salvation of sinners), and of Yasunari (who was brought back to life after experiencing the salvation granted by Jizō), need not detain us here. An interesting feature of the temple is its famous bell, the *Yatajizō-sōshō* (cast 1368), which consoles the souls of the departed. Of immediate relevance to our theme is the temple’s calendar of principal Jizō celebrations, and its advertising of the different types of services conducted for *mizuko* (including the *kane kuyō*, i.e., pealing of the bell to comfort the *mizuko*). Here is what the Yatadera has to say to recommend its *mizuko kuyō*:

We conduct the following services. . . . Those who are born into the world ask to be able to bloom into life, but the *mizuko* are helpless and go away empty. We are filled with thoughts of them, our own flesh and blood. To mourn them is the way the righteous should walk. It is the way to unite ourselves with those who are trying to bloom into life in the other world. . . .

At the risk of repeating ourselves, let us recall that the attitude of Japanese Buddhists to *mizuko kuyō* is an equivocal affair. There is no doubt that any form of taking life (and life begins at the moment of conception) is a grave matter and generates the worst possible karma. But Buddhism has no theory or practice of concerted social action. Hence a violently anti-abortionist pamphlet like that by Bhikkhu NYANASOBHANO (1989) can state the correct Buddhist view, but falls short of advocating an anti-abortionist crusade, among other things by calling on Buddhist organizations to propagate alternative methods of birth control, since sex is not linked to the duty to procreate life.

Having distinguished, within the wider genus of *mizuko*, between abortion (*datai*) on the one hand, and stillbirths and miscarriages (*shizan* and *ryūzan*) on the other, it may be expedient at this juncture to draw attention to a difference that may well deserve further examination, although at present I cannot definitely prove it. There may be a difference between the huge (and also some smaller) temples, catering to a clientele of thousands of “anonymous” (married and unmarried) *mizuko* mothers on the one hand, and smaller temples, almost like family- or parish-temples, patronized by families attending two or three generations at a time. These seem to be less concerned with *tatari* and *sawari*, or abortions in general, but rather with miscarriages and stillbirths. The purpose of these *kuyō* is to keep the *mizuko* souls integrated in the life of the family. There is something very moving about seeing gray-haired grandparents, the younger parents, and their children (from elementary to high school age) participating at these *kuyō*. The subject seems to deserve profounder and more systematic study.

The sociological interest of the phenomenon resides in the combination of a *de facto* norm (in the sense of both normal and normative)—to wit, abortion—with the belief that this act is a terrible thing requiring ever so many expiation and pacification rites. I have advisedly used the word “combination” rather than “contradiction,” because the popular concept of “cognitive dissonance” (especially popular since Festinger’s—by now classical—publication) seems to me highly misleading. Cultural anthropology is not Aristotelian logic: what is perceived as contradictory or “cognitively dissonant” in one context may be perfectly compatible in another. Contradictions that cause cognitive indigestion or even acute choking in one culture do not necessarily do so in another. It is precisely

because of this symbiotic combination of Japanese medical ethics,<sup>35</sup> the emphatic Buddhist prohibition against taking life, and the “cashing in” on this transgression by this same Buddhist establishment, that the subject is worthy of study beyond the special case of *mizuko kuyō*. (Students of medieval Christianity can tell their own version of the story.)

*Japanese (Zen, Shingon) and Chinese Buddhists*

But let us return to *mizuko kuyō*. Statistical surveys have recently been undertaken by Zen organizations, examining the involvement of their temples with *mizuko kuyō*. There were good reasons for conducting these surveys. The avenue leading to one Zen temple belonging to the Myōshin-ji sub-branch of Rinzai, in Shiga Prefecture, is lined with huge red banners proclaiming that you are on your way to a *mizuko kuyō* temple. When I asked the priest (early in 1991) when the temple had begun to perform these *kuyō*, he candidly replied “about ten years ago.” In other words, the *mizuko kuyō* boom had already long peaked when this particular Zen temple decided to jump on the profitable bandwagon. It appears that about 33% perform *kuyō*, 56% do not, a small percentage has no views on the subject, whilst another small percentage is opposed to it. This does not mean that they deny the efficacy of *mizuko kuyō*. A Zen

<sup>35</sup> On Public Health in Japan as well as attitudes to health and illness, see OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1984. This excellent study is a treasure trove of descriptive information and analytical insight, also as regards *mizuko kuyō*. It was followed by NORBECK & LOCK 1987, and more recently by IGLEHART 1988. To these should be added, though not listed in the bibliography, the numerous publications of William E. Steslicke. His forthcoming article on “Public Health in Japan” and forthcoming book on “Health Care Protection in Japan” will undoubtedly list the relevant bibliography as well as his own publications.

“The Cultures of Medicine” (to use the title of an article in NEWSWEEK magazine, 26 September 1988) seem to be an inexhaustible subject. Outside Japan there appears to be little awareness of the fact that Japanese medical practice hesitates to recognize brain death. The results of this attitude as regards organ transplants are obvious. Japanese with enough money go abroad for transplant operations, thus depriving patients of those countries. It should be added in all fairness that this situation is due to a somewhat traumatic event. Over twenty years ago, in a celebrated case, a Japanese doctor was accused of murder (but never convicted) after declaring a teenage boy who had drowned brain dead, and transplanting his heart into another youth. This incident seems to have had an inhibiting effect.

Quite apart from brain death, there is much to be said for the negative (or cautious?) attitude to transplants in general, especially in view of the present status of women. As long as the status of women is not radically changed and improved, the odds are that irresistible pressure will be brought to bear on them (and not on the male members of the family) to act as live donors and to donate half a liver, or a kidney, or other part of the body, to a child or next of kin. Transplants should be placed on the agenda of medical practice only after the full emancipation of women. Meanwhile the abortion racket in Japan is flourishing, which goes to show that health, illness, and medical care are not the only cultural variables – the very fundamentals of medical ethics are included as well.

priest who conducts no *mizuko kuyō* in his temple confided to me: "When a woman comes and asks for *kuyō* or the chanting of a sūtra, I simply cannot refuse her." A particularly touching case was that of an elderly lady suffering from insomnia and other ailments coming with age. Since no doctor could help her, she ascribed her troubles to an abortion she had had decades ago. The priest performed *kuyō* to pacify the *mizuko*, but advised psychological counselling rather than more visits to doctors.

What may appear to foreigners as a double standard is well illustrated by the pamphlets and leaflets issued by a small Shingon temple affiliated to Kōya-san. The author waxes pathetic about the cruel taking of life (of fetuses) and the anguished cries of *mizuko* floating in this "triple world" (*sangai*) but unable to enter on a new existence, and hence developing a deep grudge against their "selfish parents," disturbing their peace of mind and causing misfortunes, illness, and other calamities. Fortunately, Jizō-sama is at hand to help the souls to be reborn in the Pure Land. But the parents must pray to *hotoke*, especially to the *sanpei* triad and to Kōbō Daishi (see p. 308 above), and perform *kuyō* that are both prayer and confession. Nakao Kanchō, president of the Kūkai Daishi Association (whose religious earnestness greatly impressed me), does not mince his words. Because of its Abortion Law, Japan is rightly stigmatized as the "land of abortions." He also asserts (perhaps in an exaggerating figure of speech) that since the adoption of the *Yūsei hogo hō* (the law is dated 13 July 1948; see Appendix A) over 100 million "unborn children were consigned to oblivion." Whatever the correct number, it is undoubtedly shockingly high. The message, however, is clear: abortion is sinful, and *mizuko kuyō* are therefore a sad necessity both for the unfortunate *mizuko* souls and for the sinful parents threatened otherwise with dire disaster. But the author does not propose a pan-Buddhist crusade (possibly in conjunction with other groups) against abortion. In the hierarchy of social responsibilities as conceived by Buddhist priests, the duties of compassion in performing *kuyō* take precedence.<sup>36</sup>

At this point it may be useful to divert our attention for a moment and take a look at Chinese *mizuko kuyō*. Folk religion, as everyone knows, is alive and well and flourishing in Taiwan, which lacks the rigidity of Japanese traditions of temple organization. With increasing "modernity," the number of abortions is not merely increasing but, according to Taiwanese sources, "skyrocketing." But unlike Japan, Buddhist voices are loudly protesting against the financial exploitation of anguish and guilt-

<sup>36</sup> Incidentally, Nakao Kanchō doubts the efficacy of *mizuko kuyō* performed by most priests since they have not undergone the necessary *gyō*. He himself has undergone all the unbelievably harsh ascetic exercises (*gyō*) of Kōya-san Shingon and is convinced that they are a necessary condition for effective *kuyō* (*ex opere operantis* as it were).

feelings. Abortion was legalized in Taiwan in 1985. The Taipei Family Planning Centre reports 110,000 registered abortions for 1989 in a population of 20 million. I leave the real numbers to the reader's imagination. The souls of the aborted embryos harass the living, in good *preta/gaki/onryō* fashion, in ever so many ways: ruining business, souring love affairs, causing suicides, etc. This is *tatari* and *sawari* with a vengeance.

The "Mercy Temple" in Taipei is one of the most successful in cashing in on this pious business. But the priest (who shall remain unnamed here) was publicly attacked not by sensation-seeking media but by Buddhist scholars and nuns. (Where are their Japanese counterparts? Certainly not the Jōdo nuns of the Dai-Hongan subtemple of the Zenkō-ji in Nagano!) A *kuyō* to pacify the *mizuko* souls and prevent them from becoming vengeful spirits costs the equivalent of ca. ¥16,500. The controversy even reached the courts, because a Taiwanese writer called the priest a swindler and publicly accused him of exploiting and cheating the population.<sup>37</sup> He was fined in court for defamation of character, but as a result of the uproar the temple found it more prudent to discontinue its brazen advertising (unlike Japan). Meanwhile, Buddhist nuns and scholars continue to protest against what they claim is a perversion and distortion of true Buddhist teaching. Will Japanese Buddhists ever do the same?

There is an even more depressing "sick joke" side to this Taiwanese affair. Japanese newspapers reported on it under somewhat supercilious headlines such as "Buddhist beliefs and modernity collide in a haunting Taiwan abortion debate" or "Reports of haunting by infant ghosts have become more common as abortion rate rises." I am not aware of a Japanese newspaper editorializing (or asking a competent sociologist / anthropologist to editorialize) why *onryō* haunting and "modernity" do not collide in Japan. And apparently it is neither Japanese Buddhists nor newspapers that are "haunted" by these collisions, but only foreign researchers.

Not everybody is a Buddhist and not everybody is as outraged as Nakao Kanchō. In November 1989 a woman gynecologist, Dr. Negishi Etsuko, won a court case against *Time* magazine that had been dragging on since 1983. *Time* had reported the doctor as saying that "two out of

<sup>37</sup> Sinologists will probably accuse the Taiwanese critic of having fallen into the Confucian trap known to every student of Chinese culture: popular religious practices exist because the uneducated and benighted masses are being deceived, cheated, and led astray. Japan, on the other hand, had no comparable "caste" of literati officials inhibiting popular religious practices and *matsuri* fun. But this incontrovertible sinological truth does not invalidate our main argument to the effect that the opposition in Taiwan to *mizuko kuyō* comes from Buddhist circles, both lay and monastic.

three Japanese women have an abortion. . . . It is like having a tooth pulled out." Dr. Negishi claimed that she had not made this statement, which was damaging to her reputation. But she did not, according to the newspaper reports available to me, use the occasion to condemn the practice or express outrage. Her lawyers merely argued the technical point that she had been misquoted in a way that was damaging to her social reputation. She was awarded ¥300,000 in damages, an amount equivalent to more than one abortion (abortions being rather cheap in Japan).

### Iconography



The increasing "institutionalization" of *mizuko kuyō* also has interesting effects on Buddhist iconography.<sup>38</sup> The standard iconographic forms of Jizō have been conveniently and expertly summarized by Patricia Yamada.<sup>39</sup> But there is an interesting modern iconographic development: the jewel/pearl/*hōju* (*cintamani*) that Jizō holds in his left hand becomes a bubble, i.e., a uterus with an embryo inside! Examples can be found in the Adashino Nenbutsuji, both in the main temple hall (in the form of a huge painting), and in the *mizuko* side-temple (sculpted in stone). The priest assured me that both painting and sculpture were from 1970 at the earliest. The Kōya-san

<sup>38</sup> It would be helpful to have a history of Jizō iconography with special reference to *mizuko*. Popular mandarins and picture scrolls (as used by itinerant storytellers) showing the realms of existence with Jizō at the center, exist in great numbers, especially from the Edo period. Next to Jizō we often see a *mizuko* (in the old sense, i.e., an infant that died in its early years; it is not an abortion *mizuko* in the modern sense) against a *Sai-no-kawara* background.

<sup>39</sup> Unpublished ms., based on a lecture given in Kyoto in September 1987.



*sanpei* statues represent the three Jizōs, each holding in his left hand, instead of the usual *hōju*, a bubble/uterus with a fetus inside. Nakao Kanchō assured me that this motif was his invention, subsequently imitated by others. He was rather taken aback when I produced from my pocket photographs showing that this motif might perhaps be traced not to temple iconography but to art. Kano Hōgai (d. 1889) painted a Kannon (1888: thus one of his last works) with an embryo-like child at his/her feet inside a ball or bubble.<sup>40</sup> Two preliminary drafts of this painting show the same motif.<sup>41</sup>



Temple painting of Mizuko Jizō

### *Prospects*

Students of the New Religions spend much time on the favorite guessing game of whether the movement they study has “peaked” or not. Very often a certain movement has peaked or even begun to decline when — out of the blue — a new movement arises and within a very short time attracts tens of thousands of followers. What about the new *mizuko kuyō* religion?

The historian of religion's proper attire is the academic gown and not

<sup>40</sup> This statement needs severe qualification. It is a deliberate “retrojection” on Kano Hōgai in the light of contemporary Jizō iconography, but factually incorrect. On this Hibo Kannon see Doris CROISSANT's fascinating article (1990). I doubt whether any of the artists responsible for the recent Jizō statues and paintings mentioned here knew the Kano Hōgai picture, let alone Fenollosa's interpretation of it as the “Creation of Man,” and for aught I know Nakao Kanchō's claim may be correct. But today the association with the embryo *in utero* (which Kano Hōgai probably never had in mind) is inevitable in retrospect.

<sup>41</sup> The paintings were shown in 1989 at the Kano centenary exhibition in Kyoto and are reproduced in the Exhibition Catalogue, pp. 174, 176.

the prophet's mantle. Nevertheless, being human, he too is tempted, on the basis of the few data at his disposal, to indulge in guessing. He will note 1) the dramatic downward curve of abortions (presumably also the unreported ones); 2) the equally dramatic decline of the general birth-rate. Since there is no reason to assume an equally dramatic decline in sexual activity, he must assume a significant and probably ongoing increase in the use of contraceptives. All this suggests that the abortion boom will be declining and so will the *mizuko kuyō* boom. Of course abortions will continue (since the necessity of so-called termination of pregnancy will always arise), as well as *mizuko kuyō* (since stillbirths and miscarriages will always occur). But the mass phenomenon will probably die out. And in due course Jizō-sama, in his infinite compassion, will also save the gynecologists and Buddhist priests from the *muken jigoku* where by rights they belong.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Acknowledgements: In addition to the knowledge gained from the publications, as well as from the written and oral communications, of the colleagues mentioned in the text, in preparing this paper I have benefited from the unstinting help and advice of many more friends, extended to me in conversations, as verbal suggestions and as references to work previously unknown to me. I am particularly indebted to Rev. Matsushita Sōyō, *oshō-san* of a Zen temple in Shizuoka Prefecture, for information and instruction on the Buddhist background; to Ueda Kenji of the Institute of Japanese Classics and Culture of Kokugakuin University (for the Shinto side of the subject); to Jan Van Bragt and Jan Swyngedouw of Nanzan University, and to Kaneko Erika of Kamakura. Only those who know the maddening difficulty of translating the terminology of a Shinto *norito* will appreciate what I owe to Norman Havens. Without the advice and bibliographical help of Richard F. Young of Meiji Gakuin this article would have been even poorer. Last but not least, it is a pleasant duty to thank Abe Yoshiya (Sociology of Religion) and Mrs. Abe, M.D. No researcher on this particular subject can wish for better luck than to count among his friends a married couple, one of whom is a sociologist and the other a medical doctor. I also wish to thank Dr. Kitamura Kunio, the medical director of the Nihon Kazoku Keikaku Kyōkai, for the time he so kindly put at my disposal. For the medical material in Appendix C, I am indebted to Dr. S. Constantini of the Hadassah/Hebrew University Hospital, and to Dr. Avi Ben-Shitreet of the Gynecology Dept. of the same hospital.

Even in the best of circumstances, academic research requires logistical and technical backing. Without the tireless assistance of my friend Honma Shonozuke, president and chief editor of the *Chūgū Nippō*, and his ever helpful staff, I could not have carried out my work. His contacts in the religious world, including the highest-ranking ecclesiastics, enabled me to have meetings and conduct interviews that would normally have been beyond my reach. Laboring under the double disadvantage of being a foreigner and male, it would have been impossible for an academic stranger to accost women and interview them on such intimate subjects as pregnancies and abortions. It was the Head Office of the Sūkyō Mahikari sect, for whom friendship means helpfulness, who sought and found for me the female assistants without whose help I could never have conducted my interviews. Last but not least I must record my thanks to The International Institute of Buddhist Studies in Tokyo, to its president, Dr. T. Kubo, and its director, Yūyama Akira, who placed at my disposal a comfortable office with all the amenities that go with such an arrangement. Dr. Yūyama, his ever helpful staff, and the research fellows at the Institute, especially M. Mejor of Warsaw University, spared no efforts to be of assistance, which means that all the shortcomings of this article are my own.

## APPENDIX A

Extracts from the translation of the *Yūsei hogo-hō* (the “Abortion Law”) published in the *EHS* (Eibun Hōreisha) Law Bulletin Series #8885

## EUGENIC PROTECTION LAW

Law No. 156, July 13, 1948

## Chapter I

## General Provisions

(Object of this Law)

Article 1. The objects of this Law are to prevent birth of inferior descendants from the eugenic point of view, and to protect life and health of mother, as well.

(Definitions)

Article 2. The “eugenic operation” used in this Law shall mean the surgical operation which incapacitate a person to reproduce without removing reproduction glands, as prescribed by Order.

2. The “artificial interruption of pregnancy” used in this Law shall mean the artificial discharge of a fetus and its appendages from the body of mother at the period when a fetus is unable to keep its life outside the body of mother.

## Chapter II

## Eugenic Operation

(Eugenic operation by discretion of physician)

Article 3. A physician may exercise the eugenic operation at his discretion, on a person falling under any of the following respective items, in obtaining the consent of the person in question and the spouse thereof (including a person under actually (*sic*) matrimonial relation, though not being legally married; hereinafter the same) if any; provided that this shall not apply to minors, mental patients and feeble-minded persons:

- (1) The person in question or the spouse thereof has hereditary psychopathia, hereditary bodily disease or hereditary malformation, or the spouse thereof has mental disease or feeble-mindedness;
- (2) A relative in blood within fourth degree of kinship of the person in question or the spouse thereof, who has hereditary mental disease, hereditary feeble-mindedness, hereditary psychopathia, hereditary bodily disease or hereditary malformation;
- (3) The person in question or the spouse thereof who is suffering from leprosy, which is liable to carry infection to the descendants;
- (4) The mother whose life is endangered by conception or by delivery;

(5) The mother actually having several children whose health condition is feared to be seriously affected by each occasion of delivery.

2. In the cases mentioned in item (4) and item (5) of the preceding paragraph, the eugenic operation under said paragraph may also be executed on the spouse thereof.

3. With respect to the consent under paragraph 1, the sole consent of the person in question shall suffice, if the spouse thereof is unknown or can not express his or her intention.

(Application for eugenic operation for which examination is required)

Article 4. A physician must, if, in the case where he has confirmed that the result of his examination evidently shows that a person is suffering from the disease mentioned in The Annexed List, he has found that the eugenic operation is necessary for the public interests (*sic*) in order to prevent hereditary transmission of the disease, apply to the To, Do, Fu or Prefectural Eugenic Protection Commission for examination as to the propriety of performing the eugenic operation.

(Examination for eugenic operation)

Article 5. The Metropolitan, Hokkaido or Prefectural Eugenic Protection Commission shall, on receiving the application under the provision of the preceding Article, notify the person who shall undergo the eugenic operation to that effect, and further shall, on examining whether or not the case meets the requirements provided for in said Article, decide the propriety for performing the eugenic operation, and notify the applicant and the person who shall undergo the eugenic operation of the result.

2. If the Metropolitan, Hokkaido or Prefectural Eugenic Protection Commission has decided that the performance of eugenic operation is appropriate, said Commission shall, on hearing the opinions of the applicant and the concerned persons, designate the physician who shall perform the operation, and notify the applicant, person who shall undergo the eugenic operation and said physician thereof.

(Application for reviewal)

Article 6. If the person who has been decided to undergo the eugenic operation in accordance with the provision of paragraph 1 of the preceding Article may, if he has objection to such decision, apply for the reviewal (*sic*) thereof to the Central Eugenic Protection Commission within two weeks from the day on which he received the notification under said paragraph of said Article.

2. The spouse, person having parental power, guardian or the curator of the person for whom the decision was made to undergo the eugenic operation of the preceding paragraph may also apply for reviewal thereof. . . .

Article 13. The Metropolitan, Hokkaido, [or] Prefectural Eugenic Protection Commission shall, if the application under the provision of the preceding Article has been made, investigate whether or not said person is suffering from the psychosis or mental deficiency under said Article and whether or not the performance of eugenic operation is necessary for protecting said person, and thus decide the reasonableness of performing the eugenic operation, and inform the applicant and the consenter under the preceding Article of the decision.

2. The physician shall, if there has been made the decision to the effect that the performance of the eugenic operation is reasonable in accordance with the provision of the preceding paragraph, be authorized to perform the eugenic operation.

### Chapter III

#### Protection of Mother's Life and Health

(Artificial interruption of pregnancy at physician's discretion)

Article 14. A physician designated by the Medical Association being a shadan-hojin (incorporated association) incorporated in the Metropolis (*sic*), Hokkaido, Fu or Prefectural district as a unit (hereinafter referred to as a "designated physician") shall be authorized to perform artificial interruption of pregnancy to a person falling under any of the following respective items, in obtaining the consents of a person in question and the spouse thereof:

- (1) A person in question or the spouse thereof having psychosis, mental deficiency, psychopathias, hereditary bodily disease, or hereditary malformation;
- (2) A relative in blood within the 4th degree of consanguinity of a person in question or the spouse thereof having hereditary psychosis, hereditary mental deficiency, hereditary psychopathias, hereditary bodily disease, or hereditary malformation;
- (3) A person in question or the spouse thereof suffering from leprosy;
- (4) A mother whose health may be affected seriously by continuation of pregnancy or by delivery due to physical or economical viewpoint;
- (5) A person in question having been conceived due to being fornicated by violence or threat or while incapacitated to resist or refuse.

2. With reference to the consents under the preceding paragraph, the sole consent of the person in question shall suffice if the spouse is unascertainable, or if the spouse fails to declare the intention, or if no spouse remains after conception.

3. If the person in question who undergoes the operation for artificial

interruption of pregnancy is insane or feeble-minded, the consent under obligation to protect another under the provisions of Article 20 of the Mental Hygiene Law (the cases where the guardian, spouse, person having parental power, or the person under obligation to sustain another becomes the person under obligation to protect another) or of Article 21 of said Law (the cases where the mayor of city, town, or village becomes the person under obligation to protect another) may be deemed to be the consent of the person in question.

(Practical guidance in contraception)

Article 15. Practical guidance in contraception by means of contraceptive instruments designated by the Minister of Health and Welfare for the use of women shall not be given as vocation by a person other than a physician, unless he is designated by the Metropolitan, Hokkaido, Fu or Prefectural Governor. Provided that, the act of inserting a contraceptive instrument in the cavity of uterus shall not be performed by any person other than a physician.

2. A person who may obtain the designation of the Metropolitan, Hokkaido, Fu or Prefectural Governor under the preceding paragraph shall be a midwife, public health nurse or a nurse, who has completed the course sanctioned by the Metropolitan, Hokkaido, Fu or Prefectural Governor in accordance with the standards prescribed by the Minister of Health and Welfare. . . .

## Chapter VI

### Notification, Prohibition, and others

(Notification)

Article 25. A physician or a designated physician shall, if he has carried out the eugenic operation or artificial interruption of pregnancy in accordance with the provisions of Article 3 paragraph 1, Article 10, Article 13 paragraph 2, or Article 14 paragraph 1, notify the Metropolitan, Hokkaido, Fu or Prefectural Governor of the duly arranged records of such operations for the month stating the reasons therefor (*sic*) by the 10th of the next month.

(Notice)

Article 26. A person who has undergone the eugenic operation must, if intended to get married, notice (*sic*) the other party to the effect of having undergone the eugenic operation.

(Keeping secrets)

Article 27. Any member or any extraordinary member of the Eugenic Protection Commission, or any person who engaged in examination or actual business of eugenic operation or actual business of artificial interruption of pregnancy, or any personnel of the Eugenic Protection Con-

sultation Office shall not divulge another's secrets having been known in the performance of duties thereof. The same shall also apply in the case after retirement from office.

(Prohibition)

Article 28. The operation or the Röntgen ray radiation in order to incapacitate a person for reproduction shall not be conducted without appropriate reason, except in the cases falling under the provisions of this Law.

#### APPENDIX B

A Shinto *norito* for *mizuko kuyō*  
(as used at Ishikiri Jinja)

Translated by Norman Havens

#### *Monthly Prayer for the Unborn Departed*

We offer this prayer in the Ishikiri Chapel  
of the Spirits of Departed Infants  
at the foot of Mt. Ikoma of the catalpa bow,  
Illumined by the brilliant beams  
from the seven-color stained-glass windows.  
With utmost reverence we raise our voices before the  
Most divine Amenominakanushi no Ōkami, and Ishikiri  
Tsurugiya no Ōkami, whose sacred wands now stand enshrined  
in this seat of the divine, as we offer our prayer before  
the spirits of the unborn infants of Ishikiri.  
In this world of form are myriad beings,  
from the birds that  
ply the vault of heaven,  
To the beasts and insects that  
creep along the ground,  
The fish that swim,  
both great and small,  
The trees and grass  
of field and hill;  
And if these, then still more,  
The humans standing,  
spiritual head over all things.  
To such as these,  
nothing can be more precious

than life itself,  
As even spoke the men of old,

What value gold,  
be it white or yellow,  
and what be of jewels,  
When a child is treasure  
more precious still.

(*Man'yōshū*, No. 803)

From that ancient age  
of the Nara,  
To the present world of form,  
This remains through countless ages  
Unchanged—

The love of a parent for its child.

But life is short and never certain,  
And even though a woman be  
Blessed by the spirits of heaven,

Exalted by the gods of becoming,  
and thus vouchsafed precious life in the womb,

Some cannot preserve that life, while in the houses of others are conditions that permit no choice but to lamentably cut off that most precious life, life which has not yet set face on this world. And with such unhappy, heart-rending tragedy, that lone spirit must then wend its sad journey along the eighty roads of the other world.

From the moment that spirit  
Enters the gate of the god  
of the other world,  
Not a day goes by  
on which it is forgotten,  
Not an hour passes  
when it is not remembered,  
And as its mother sees its fellows  
going in and out at the gate,  
She grieves and laments without cease.

And time passes,  
like the water flowing  
out without cease,  
never to return,  
Months change to years,  
years turning in their never-ceasing round,  
And truly, how sad it is,  
The distant spirit bodies  
now past seeing with human eyes,



Our grief alone remains,  
no matter how we lament the past.

Even so, we offer up this prayer  
that these spirits may be comforted,  
on this day now dedicated  
as a day of blessing and life.

Praying for all new spirits  
of the month of \_\_\_\_\_,  
Their parents now assembled  
here in your presence,  
Offering sundry foods and  
flowers of the season.  
Offering the dewy sacred branch  
with reverence, may you  
Partake with heart so comforted,  
so happy and full of joy,  
You dart through the sky,  
Rising to join the ranks  
of the divine,  
Enfolded in the love  
of the heavenly gods.  
There work your divine works  
in the unseen realm,  
And flying throughout the land,  
Bless each of these homes,  
Stand and protect their gates,  
Gently and mercifully give them rest,  
And through endless time,  
Bless these homes,  
Setting their gates broad and high,  
Blessing a future eighty generations  
with true blessing,  
Making them flourish  
like the flourishing sandalwood  
and the branching mulberry,  
And may we continue  
To raise this prayer,  
With all soberness and beauty,  
Never failing from month to month,  
Imploring you to oversee  
the way of the world  
from your land of shade.

As we raise our worship,  
     oh wondrous guardian spirits,  
 May you glow with ever increasing glory,  
 And as we praise you marvelous spirits,  
     May you shine with ever increasing light.  
 For ages eternal, to time without end,  
 Grow and prosper,  
     grow and prosper.  
 Purify us now,  
 You spirits both gentle and rough,  
 Protect us now, and be at rest,  
 Blessed spirits, guardian spirits,  
 Protect us and be happy.

#### APPENDIX C

##### Some Comments on the Socio-Medical Side of Abortion in Japan

Although the foregoing essay is intended as a contribution to religious studies and not to medical science (and for this reason this short appendix also dispenses with a detailed bibliography of all the dozens of medical research reports consulted and abstracted), a few words about the medical side of abortion may not be out of place.

The Japanese health authorities prohibited the free use of the most widely used contraceptive, the pill, which is available in Japan only on specific medical prescription. Some relaxation of the regulations is expected during 1991, but whether it will make any real difference only the future will show. The main argument was the health risk involved. Appeals to comparative evidence from Western countries were dismissed with the assertion that there were (or might be) differences in the metabolism of Japanese and Caucasians respectively. Whether this argument was made in good faith, or as a specious cover for self-serving interests, is not at issue here. At any rate, the touching solicitude of the Japanese medical establishment for the hormonal health of its female population is illustrated by the fact that the ban on the pill as a health-protection measure was completely unrelated to the question of whether steroidal preparations can be manufactured and sold. The prohibition covered only its sale as a contraceptive. "Over-the-counter sale of preparations containing female hormones is not included in the prohibition; one patent medicine that is sold . . . contains diethylstilbestrol, a synthetic estrogen that has been strongly linked to cancer. . . ." (COLEMAN 1983, pp. 38ff.) Before dealing more specifically with contraceptive

pills it is, therefore, necessary to say a word or two about the possibility of genetic and/or metabolic differences between Japanese and Caucasians.

Fortunately, there exists an immense amount of research literature on the subject (hormones, the presence or absence of certain enzymes, etc.) both in Japanese and in English (the latter, in the nature of things, dealing mainly with acculturated or acculturating *nisei* and *sansei* Japanese in the continental U.S. and in Hawaii). Some of this literature is written in the normal style of medical research reports, some in a form that cannot but cause hilarity, e.g., the sumptuously luxurious publication on differences between Japanese and Caucasians in the matter of the secretion of earwax and of perspiration under the armpits (see ADACHI 1981). Unfortunately, this "scientific" *magnum opus* has itself a somewhat unpleasant racist odor; the Preface, signed by Professor Terada, was in fact written (under moral duress) by another anthropologist who, however, much to the surprise of her colleagues, adamantly refused to have her name associated with the volume. Even more odd is the fact that this sample of scholarship was published not in Japanese but in German only!

The scientifically interesting thing about many of these research reports is their inconclusiveness as regards the relative roles of genetic *versus* environmental factors. E.g., the higher incidence of linoleic acid metabolism in postmenopausal Caucasians as compared to Japanese (of relevance to breast cancer, which is frequent in Japan as well), elicits the advice (to Caucasians) "to adopt dietary modifications." Compared to Caucasians, the incidence of stomach ulcers among Japanese is very high, that of the duodenum rather low. The possible absence of common polymorphisms in coagulation factor IX gene in Japanese subjects (in connection with studies of hemophilia and atherosclerotic diseases) would seem to be genetic. Of special interest are comparative studies of Oriental populations (e.g., Japan, Taiwan, Philippines). Thus it has been found that the absence of the isozyme responsible for the metabolism of alcohol, aldehyde dehydrogenase-I (ALDH-I), is particularly high among Orientals. The Japanese top the list with the significantly high rate of their genetic lack of the isozyme. This would evidently be a determining factor in the sensitivity to alcohol (including flushing, palpitation, etc.) and in the formation of drinking habits. Japanese and European blood donors have been compared for selective IgA deficiency (SIGAD). Results suggested that the incidence of this genetic deficiency of an immunoglobulin was much lower among Japanese. The Japanese with their lesser incidence of SIGAD "may occupy a unique position in the ethnical peculiarities."

The relative role of genetic and metabolic *versus* purely environmental and socio-cultural factors often remains uncertain; sometimes it can be definitely identified. Thus, the low mortality from coronary heart

disease in Japan (as compared to the U.S.) is generally attributed to food habits (*in casu* fish, or, in more precise words, serum omega-3 fatty acid levels). Even more interesting is the investigation of cultural and physiological factors in alcohol consumption. (Most of the English-language research was done on subjects of Japanese descent in the U.S.) Thus, contrary to current stereotypes, heavy drinking was found also among Orientals (Chinese, Koreans, Japanese) in Los Angeles, with the Japanese topping the list—which can only mean that the Japanese acculturated more “successfully” to American drinking patterns. A bilirubin production study of Japanese babies and Caucasian controls showed that the mean HbCO (i.e., metabolization of hemoglobin) as well as the serum total bilirubin in normal-term Japanese babies (2–3 days old) was significantly higher. But even here the study ends with a non-committal “attributable to environmental and/or genetic factors.” Similarly, a study of coronary heart disease mortality rates and hemorrhagic stroke rates (the former lower among Japanese, the latter higher) concluded that the different levels of coagulation factors across the samples “were probably attributable to differences in environmental factors, especially diet, as well as genetic differences” (!).

After this general survey we may turn to the specific issue under consideration. Of course “the pill” has a long history since the early sixties. Possible negative effects have since then been practically eliminated by a reduction of the estrogen dosage (beneath 50 micrograms) in the daily pill. (Dosage problems are, of course, subject to constant change as they are also connected with the size and weight of the subject and not exclusively with metabolic and genetic constitution.) The present combination of estrogen minidose and progesterone actually has been found to have positive (!) effects, although, of course, a variety of factors (age, smoking habits, etc.) have to be taken into account, especially as regards no.1 below.

The main danger areas are, in brief:

1. cardio-vascular condition (here the progesterone intake is of relevance), and blood pressure. According to many Japanese medical informants, this (and not oncogenic risk) was the main consideration.
2. thromboembolism;
3. oncogenic potential; and
4. disturbance of the hormonal balance. This remains a serious problem even with the “minidose” pill.

No dangers (in minidoses) but, on the contrary, positive, protective effects have been shown regarding nos. 1 and 2. No. 3 has to be examined in detail with regard to several danger areas. As regards the ovaries,

recent research has shown that the pill actually provides 40% protection. As regards the endometrium, recent research suggests a lowering of risk by as much as 50%! As regards the cervix, there is no conclusive evidence one way or another. There does not appear to be any correlation with breast cancer.

The non-medical layman is puzzled by the justification of abortions by means of terror propaganda invoking the spectre of health risks. Some anthropologists prefer a cultural explanation, to wit, the alleged Japanese aversion to “aggressive alterations of the body and its functions” (cf. the aversion to surgery). The difficulty with this argument is that it considers the oral ingestion of pills as an “aggressive alteration of the body” whereas operative abortion apparently does not come under this heading. As regards the alleged aversion to aggressive alterations of the body, I would advise my fellow anthropologists to consult a directory of clinics for plastic and cosmetic (also called “aesthetic”) surgery, as well as the plethora of advertisements in newspapers and everywhere. To this should be added the curious fact that the Japanese top the list of pill swallows in all pharmaceutical and medical statistics (see IGLEHART 1988). But whilst medical risks are played up, strangely enough no statistics are available on the evident and well-known danger factors of surgical intervention (mortality rate 0.6 per 100,000), especially cervical incompetence (because of destruction of the elastic cervix tissue), perforation, laceration of the cervix, hemorrhage as a result of curettage, remaining bits of placenta material, infection (sepsis is especially frequent after the 16th week) and—often as a result of the latter—Asherman’s syndrome. I do not bother to mention in detail the evident dangers attendant on any anaesthetic procedure, operative infections, and damage to the womb or cervix that may have negative effects on subsequent pregnancies. Apologists for the *Yūsei hogo hō* have very little to say on the aforementioned medical risk factors, and I have not been able to collect statistics on these negative effects.

The latest major breakthrough seems to be the oral ingestion of Mifepristone (RU 486) with a Prostaglandin Analogue (see the most up-to-date account in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 8 March 1990: 645–48). This oral procedure proved successful in over 95% of cases under seven weeks, and it may well do away in the near future with operative procedures for interrupting/voluntarily terminating pregnancies in the early stages. Mifepristone is never discussed in Japanese medical circles; the subject simply does not exist. I do not know whether to ascribe this strange silence to a normal time-lag due to conservative mentality or to deliberate sabotage. (It is rumored that the French laboratory that has developed at very great cost the method reported here is on the brink of bankruptcy because of the ban on their product by the Roman Catholic Church. Perhaps the American market will bail them

out. It is extremely unlikely that the Japanese medical establishment will do so.)

Although a matter of course, it should be mentioned in passing that RU 486, whilst representing a major breakthrough in voluntary termination of early pregnancy, is utterly irrelevant to *mizuko kuyō*. In Buddhist belief, the life of the embryo soul begins when the sperm has penetrated and fertilized the ovum, i.e., with the onset of the *maki-notoki*. Whether the aborted life is five seconds or five months old does not make any difference. Precisely for this reason the Buddhist alternative is starkly uncompromising: contraception *versus* abortion.

Let us conclude this brief medical summary on a sociocultural note. The origins of contraception as a planned social policy in post-Enlightenment Europe have been discussed in an instructive article by D. STOVE, "The Dark Secret: Contraception and Society" (thus on the cover; the title at the head of the article reads "The Diabolical Place: A Secret of the Enlightenment"; 1990). The big surprise for the reader is Stove's disturbing and melancholic evidence that after a long "underground" existence, the taboo subject (Jeremy Bentham recommended contraception as early as the end of the 18th century) surfaced only toward the end of the 19th century, not for social reasons but as a result of the eugenics movement (Galton and others). Darwin, incidentally, opposed contraception because it might interfere with the natural selection mechanism of the survival of the fittest. If Stove had been a Japanologist he would no doubt have spoken of the new *Yūsei hogo undō*!

#### APPENDIX D

##### A Comparative Note

It is always useful, when dealing with any subject, to take note, for comparative purposes, of at least one other case. Classical antiquity knew the concept of *bioithanatoi* or *biothanati*, the souls of those who had met a violent death and, having died prematurely, had not reached their proper and duly appointed end of life. Hence they were *ahoroi* (before their hour). In the hellenistic period it was believed that these *ahoroi* were not admitted into the underworld and were roaming therefore as vengeful spirits upon earth. The *bioithanatoi* were, as a rule, suicides (especially love suicides), warriors fallen in battle, or others who had met a violent death. (Criminals? The death of Jesus on the cross gave rise to polemical exchanges between pagan writers and Christian apologists whether he was a *biothanatos* or not; see NOCK 1972, pp. 712–19).

Aeneas, when passing through the underworld (*Aen.vi:426ff.*), heard

the cries of children torn from their mothers' breasts (*ab ubere raptos*), which clearly means a premature death rather than abortion. Infanticide as well as abortion (especially children of unmarried mothers) were not uncommon in the ancient world. Neither Plato (see *Theaetetus* 149) nor Aristotle (with certain qualifications) objected to abortion, and the practice was not illegal in the Roman Empire either. But there also was an opposite tendency, connected with the Orphic (and possibly Pythagorean) tradition—the pagan predecessor of the subsequent strict Christian prohibition. The Hippocratic Oath, as is well known, contains a clause enjoining abstention from any medical act that would lead to termination of pregnancy. Since, at the time, there was no legal prohibition of abortion, the oath was clearly inspired by a spiritual and moral tradition. It also shows that *ekbolia* (“abortives”) were widely known and used. The child victims of abortion take their revenge on their mothers who are condemned to a pool of mud and blood (inviting comparison with the Chinese-Buddhist “bloody pond”). The unfortunate baby souls remain wandering homelessly for a hundred years, but are protected by a guardian angel (a kind of classical Sai-no-kawara Jizō), until they are finally admitted to the realm of the blessed. On the subject see *Reallexikon f. Antike u. Christentum*, vol. ii (1954) s.v. Biothanati, and especially S. Reinach's article in *Archiv f. Religionswissenschaft* ix, 1906: 312–22.

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