Religious and Faiths in Japan
- From the Scenery of “Commemorating the Dead” -

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Profile

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Religious and Faiths in Japan – But how?

→From the view of the “Death” and its Commemorating...

- Human beings is the only animal which can recollect people who already died. The WILL which is going to try a dialog with the deceased through the RITUAL is the origin of all kinds of communications.

- In this meaning, the viewpoint which realizes "the way of communication with the deceased" in a certain society can lead to the framework which realizes "religion" of its society.
Reference 1

Scenery of the Death in the Asian societies

Sky burial (Tibet)

Bury in the ground (China)

Cremation (Japan)
Reference 2: Enquete result of university students in Hiroshima

- If people die, What will happen to the next?
  1) 27 persons: Be born again in this world ("Samsara" type of rebirth)
  2) 36 persons: Go to the next world (Heaven or hell)
  3) 42 persons: It’s just the final end. Nothing will happen. This world is the only truth.
  4) 6 persons: Not know since I have never died.
Biological Death and Social Death

- Robert Hertz (1882-1915), "A contribution to the study of the collective representation of death"

- He thought that "death" in the human society was divided into three continuous stages; 1) Immediately after the physical death → 2) Middle time → 3) Last ceremony.

- The RELIGIONS tend to give a meaning intently between the "life" (this world) and "death" (next world) as shown in the both sides of the coin.
Two phases of Death

- There are two opposite characters regarding the deceased, one is “danger/harmful character in transitional phase” and another is “safe/amicable character in stabilized phase”.

Three aspects of human being

- Physicality
- Individuality
- Sociality

Transitional Phase
- Processing of the dead body
- Departure to the next stage
- Mourning
- Corpse management
- Pacified
- Ritual practice
- Bone / Ash
- Spirit
- Social reintegration
Ambivalence of Death

Moreover, as Maurice Bloch (1939-) raised:

- The deceased can be a source of "productivity" and "prosperity" in many societies after going through the fixed ritual duration.
- "The death" is not admitted in order for society's subsistence as principle.
- By the IDEOLOGICAL EFFECT of death ritual, the dangerous "death" must be domesticated and must serve as a source of the stable life.
Japanese View of Life and Death

Where does Japanese soul come from and where does it go?

"Although died, it does not go so far away."

The spirit of ancestors makes round trip between the "mountain" and the "village".

→ The PARALLEL VIEW to the other world.
The “Obon” festival - Japanese folk custom

- The day when the deceased come back to the home.

- A series of events performed in Japan centering on July 15 of old luni-solar calendar (Aug 23 ± 15 days in solar calendar. After the rationalization movement of civil life, it was fixed on Aug 15th) in which the ancestral spirit is worshipped.

- The context of Buddhist-service-to-pacify-hungry-dead-souls memorial service (Segaki kuyou).

→ Prototype of Obon festival is an agricultural ritual.
Peace ceremony and other collective rituals

- synchronized coincidence

→ Because the end of the war was enacted August 15.

- "Massive death" and its memories: Japan of this time is full of dense “atmosphere of death.”

→ Till now, the collective images of “home coming” are not declined totally.
The sense of Japanese religion

- The concept of the spirit of the dead who remains in living sphere.

- Traditionally, Japanese have a sense of thinking that the spirit of the deceased is watching the life of living people.

- And if the deceased is troubled with a grudge and anger, the living people also suffer from misfortune and trouble.

- In this context, “TATARI” (Curse) is in the root of Japanese religious phenomenon.
TATARI and KUYYOU

- The issue of “commemorate”
- To weaken the evil force of TATARI
- If the deceased is pacified to be peaceful being, BOTH THE DECEASED AND THE LIVING will be saved.
- At this time, the effective way of removing “TATARI” (Curse) of these deceased is “KUYYOU” (Buddhist Memorial service).
TATARI=KUYOU system = Popularization mechanism of the Buddhism in Japan

Nirvana stage (perfect liberation)

Samsara stage (cyclical rebirth)
Rokujuyouno Miyasudokororo (in “Tale of Genji”)

- Prototype of female ghost in Japan
Yotsuya Kaidan: Oiwa

- Famous female ghost in Edo era.
Sugawarano Michizane (845-903)

- Typical fierce divine in Heian period.
Tairano Masakado (903-944)

- A legend of famous samurai warlord’s curse.

Masakado’s Mound for his lost head (Tokyo, Ōtemachi)
Emperor Sutoku (1119-1164)

- The legend of ill luck emperor who cursed the whole Japanese nation and died.
Abeno Seimei (921-1005)

- The legend of a magician who could employ demons as his servants.
Japanese Horror Movie Queen SADAKO ("The Ring" 1998)
One Missed Call (2004)
The Princess of Mononoke (1997)
“Noroi.net”

20 years reliance and achievement
Colonel Sanders and Hanshin Tigers (2009, March. Osaka Doutonbori)
Comparison:
Curse in the none-Asian countries

2010 World-Cup
South Africa convention
Exorcist (1973)
Jason (1980)

Freddy (1984)
Three features of Japanese Ghost:

Vulnerable groups and those who were oppressed by injustice.

Spirit type
Possession type
Infection type (Modernized)

Transitional Phase
Stabilized Phase

Dangerous
TATARI
KUYOU
Safe
Introduction of Buddhism to Japan

B.C. 600

India

Tibet

China

Korea

Japan

6 century

Vietnam

Khmer

Srivijaya
Japanese Syncretism

- Nakamura Hajime (1912-1999)

- Japanese people did not think that the belief to the divine from ancient times had to be abandoned, in order to become the devotee of the Buddha. Then, one idea of “Shin-butsu” (Shinto and Buddhist deities) was realized.

- Also in present day, most eager believers in Buddhism are pious Shintoist simultaneously. Most Japanese worship also at a temple while worshipping at a shrine. Any contradiction is not felt there, either.
Compatibility of Shintoism and Buddhism: in the case of Miyajima

- Mt. Misen
- Itsukushima Shrine
- Buddha Vairocana
- Bodhisattva
- Dai-sho-yin
- Kuukai (774-835)
- Kannon Bosatu
- Gongen
- Shinto divines
Shinto-and-Buddhist-deities segregation of Meiji Era

- Buddhism’s "foreignness" was impeached.
- “Nation-Shinto” which comes at the head of the National Religion.
- Buddhism = None-Japanese tradition
- Shintoism = Genuine Japanese tradition
Historical deployment of Buddhism

India
- Indian Buddhism
- Tantric Buddhism

Tibet
- Lineage Buddhism
- Sakya sect
- Kagyu sect

China
- 吐蕃 BOD
- 唐 TANG
- 宋 SONG
- 元 YUAN
- 明 MING
- 清 QING

Japan
- 奈良仏教 Nara Buddhism
- 平安仏教 Heian Buddhism
- 鎌倉新仏教 Kamakura Buddhism
- 浄土信仰 Belief of Jōdo
- 神仏習合 Syncretism

Historical periods:
- 7-9c.
- 10-13c.
- 13-14c.
- 14-17c.
- 17-19c.
After all, So many bad things happened...

- The association of Empire historical view and Nation-Shinto

Nation-Shinto Shrine in Korea
The new subjects of commemorating and repose of souls: Post 3.11

- Revival of cremation

The reality and diversity of the new massive "death"
Conclusion: “Commemorating” in modern state - social order and the deceased’s personality -

- Ikegami Yoshimasa [2003]

- In commemorating / mourning facilities in the latest Japan, abstraction and ideation have the remarkable character to the shrine or enshrined deities, and the issue is politicizing too much.

- We cannot see the personality of the concerned person who approached death there in the individual story. We need to resist the loss of dead person's reality and homogenization.
Reference

Ikegami Yoshimasa. 2003, Sisya no Kyusaishi – Kyou to Hyoui no Syuukyougaku, Kadokawasensyo 354.


