Transitional Worlds: Household, Temple and Change in a Rural Japanese Town

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy

October 2014

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Rural Japan is generally regarded as behind, and peripheral to, a constantly changing urban centre and excluded from discourses of globalisation and change. However, this anthropological study argues that the rural area is already engaged with global flows, and negotiates micro-currents particular to local society. In order to illustrate this, the contemporary contexts of lay and clerical households – connected through historical policies to a neighbourhood temple – are explored through participant observation, interviews and oral narratives.

This research is the first ethnographic example of a transnational Buddhist temple in a 'Shinto' area significant in history and mythological narratives. Furthermore, it addresses unstable factors or 'outside' elements within society, exploring the experience of single mothers returning from the urban sphere to their natal households in the countryside, and the narrative of non-heterosexual clerics, neglected by academic inquiry to date.

Through ethnographic examples it argues that despite secularism, and a negative perception of the temple in national public discourse, Buddhist (ancestral) ritual remains a key technique in the local area, which reproduces, protects and perpetuates the temple and associated households. Although both household and temple appear to remain unchanged on the surface, underneath, a myriad of transitions are taking place that create uncertainty in a world of flux; and ritual is a tool that engenders control and autonomy for local people, creating and producing the temple and its priests in the process.

Thus, the ways in which people are negotiating the dichotomy between continuity and change is the focus of the thesis. Accordingly, its aim is to transcend the dominant narrative of secularism and modernity, which predicts that societies

evolve in a linear direction. Instead, it argues that there is a shared, concurrent co-existence between binaries of rural/urban, traditional/modern, sacred/secular, and local/global in the contemporary context: as an outcome of our transitional world.

The word count for this thesis is 87,829 excluding footnotes and references.

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Chapter One: Situating the periphery

This case study is the first ethnographic exploration of *danka*[1] [檀家 Buddhist households] connected to a neighbourhood temple in Takachiho, a small town in the mountainous interior of Kyushu, Miyazaki prefecture, Japan. It focuses upon concurrent dynamics of social change and continuity in order to illustrate the contemporary realities of daily life experienced by local people,[2] in a rural area that is significant in history and mythological narratives. The thesis rejects discourses of modernity that assume societies inevitably evolve in a linear direction by moving from one stage to the next. Instead it argues that structuralist binaries of rural/urban, traditional/modern, sacred/secular, local/global – that shaped, framed and contextualised modernity – do not have to be perceived necessarily as opposing dualisms, but can in fact co-exist concurrently and without paradox, as this case study will demonstrate. This introductory chapter will summarise the overall argument and aims of the thesis and explore its dominant themes with the corresponding theoretical and ethnographic literature.

It has been noted in the wider scholarship, that while global flows shape contemporary (urban) Japan: 'some have flooded the landscapes in certain parts of Japan while others have been reduced to a trickle, leaving local areas high, dry and brittle, not far from the feudal landscape of much of Japanese history' (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008, 312). However, despite this assertion, this thesis will illustrate the opposite, and demonstrate how even the most territorialised households

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[1] *Danka* refers to a household connected as a ritual unit to a temple of a Buddhist sect that is a legacy of the feudal Tokugawa system (Marcure, 1985). The overwhelming majority of households in Takachiho are tied to a local temple as a legacy of this system, reflecting the dominant case in Japan nationwide.

[2] In the thesis 'local people' refers to people who live in the area or those who remain closely connected to the area through extended family members who remain in the area. Takachiho society is shifting and its members cannot be regarded as homogeneous in ethnicity, culture, class, or status.

in a local area are connected to wider national and global spheres, principally through their members. Furthermore, it will detail the experience of a non-Japanese religious actor and member of a clerical family household embedded in the local sphere. This example in particular is counterintuitive to centrally derived models, where the majority of (Western) non-Japanese are characterised as living together and apart from the rest of Japanese society in 'Dejima enclaves.'[3]

Therefore, the thesis illustrates that a peripheral Japanese area can add nuances to dominant assumptions at the national level, and demonstrate through ethnographic data that: 'there is nothing mere about the local' (Appadurai, 1996, 18). In doing so, this study principally contributes to the scholarship that is beginning to challenge the dominant discourse of the 'backward' periphery as subordinate to the advanced centre: in which rural areas are regarded as geographically, economically, temporally and spatially lagging behind. Previously, rural areas and those with a smaller land mass compared to mainland Japan (in which Tokyo and Osaka are situated) were seen as limited through their geography; and this culminates in lower socio-economic and cultural capital. Such places are characterised accordingly:

> Islands having limited land capacity and isolated from the mainland are often included in a 'vicious circle of smallness'. With low levels of economic potentiality, these islands face increased economic and social gaps with the mainland and various socio-economic problems such as depopulation.
> (Oshiro, 2000, 27)

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[3] Willis and Murphy-Shigemastu (2008) document an increasingly transcultural Japan in an increasingly fluid and border-less world. They ascertain that with the inclusion of non-Japanese, transnational families, ethnic Koreans and Chinese with citizenship rights: 'The dividing lines between Japanese and Others, including conceptions of 'pure' and 'impure' are no longer so clear as they were once assumed to be' (2008, 5). However they also identify the 'Dejima mentality' of (Western) foreigners in Japan who live near each other in social enclaves, often centred around an international school as a dominant model, which can be compared to the island of Dejima in Nagasaki bay, where non-Japanese lived in isolated enclaves historically (2008, 15).

However, this previous characterisation, and association with 'lack' and 'outsider' status in terms of global networks, is now being deconstructed, challenged and reframed according to empirical realities which show that the periphery is very much engaged with flows and that cross regional borders (Kuawahra, Ozaki and Nishimura 2007, 1-13). In a similar vein, the intention of this research is to illustrate how the South-West periphery is also already engaged with activities and behaviours that subvert dominant ideas of the countryside as temporally and spatially lagging behind, as scholars such as Thompson and Traphagan (2007), Hansen (2010), and Mock (2014) are demonstrating in illustrative cases at the northern tip of Japan.[4] This emerging scholarship is crucial in order to: 'transcend the binary opposition centre-periphery/city-region paradigms and policies of modern Japan that (literally) marginalise non-central areas' (Kuwahara et al, 2007, 11).

Subsequently, it is important to begin with the assertion that within public discourse there has been an inherent distinction between urban and rural Japan, whereby rural Japan is regarded as 'traditional', religious, conservative, unchanging and technologically primitive, as opposed to a modern, secular, innovative, ever-changing urban centre. As Mock (2014) notes: "It is difficult to live in Japan and not notice the constant denigration of "country bumpkins" even as the countryside's natural beauty is extolled."[5] Through this perspective, the rural acts as a reflection of the previous culture, tradition, religiosity and structures that urban Japan has inherited – and yet progressed beyond.[6] This is compounded by the problem that

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[4] These scholars are investigating Tohoku, North Easterly Japan, and the northernmost island of Japan's four main islands, Hokkaido from an anthropological perspective and framework.

[5] Web article available at http://japanfocus.org/site/make_pdf/4095 accessed August 2nd 2014.

[6] This is concurrent with the secularist and evolutionary view of society that began with Marx (1818-1883) followed by Durkheim (1958-1917) and Weber (1864-1920), with the thesis that increasing modernisation would mean a decline of religiosity, predicting that science would replace 'superstition'.

academic frameworks still tend to rely upon a model of social change that presupposes societies are unilineal: progressing from 'traditional' to 'modern', underscored by continuing economic growth, in an advancing neoliberal paradigm (Moon, 1989, 1) in which secularism (at least at the state-level), is an important feature.

While recognising that rural and urban Japan is experiencing decline as a very real issue that crucially affects local people (Feldhoff, 2002; Waswo, 2003; Knight, 2003; Traphagan, 2004; Coulmas, 2007; Matanle, 2008; Matanle and Sato 2011)[7], this thesis rejects rural decline as an inevitability in the increasing progress of Japan as a whole and in the advancement of the centre. Alternatively, in this thesis, modernity will be regarded as a political and economic project that is consciously constructed, rather than as a historical epoch in which we have found ourselves (Asad, 2003). Accordingly, this research rejects the single linear narrative, from rural decline to urban increase; from religion to secularism; from 'traditional' to modern values; from local to national/global worldviews as a given. Instead, this thesis illustrates that a movement from one clearly delineated stage to the next is misleading, principally because (as the ethnography will show) remote rural spaces are *already* deeply engaged with social change; and that local places display hybridity, flux and syncretism that characterises daily life. In fact, this case study shows that social changes occur in parallel with an enduring dynamic of continuity, thereby demonstrating that change and continuity can co-exist concurrently and without

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These dominant modes of thought have shaped twentieth century Western thought, and were extended by religious studies scholars such as Cox, H. (the Secular City, 1965) and Berger (1979) who predicted worldwide secularisation. Yet in publishing, 'The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics' (1999), concluded that the secularist thesis was a false assumption.

[7] Scholarship has explored the issue of decline in the rural sphere in the postwar period from historical, sociological and anthropological perspectives.

paradox. This conception challenges the legacy of modernist binaries by transcending the divide between the 'traditional' rural sphere as the *past* and the expanse of the modern urban as the inevitable *future*.[8]

In order to transcend previous assumptions about the periphery, the research focuses upon two significant institutions in the rural sphere: the *ie* [家 extended family household] in its ritual guise as a religious unit, and the neighbourhood temple (also a household, and managed by the extended clerical family). Through exploring the connections between these institutions – intertwined historically and politically since the Tokugawa period – a more nuanced view of local reality emerges. In order to explore how this impacts ordinary people in their everyday lives, the data for this research is generated through ethnographic fieldwork and brings together three areas of theoretical and ethnographic scholarship: rural (peripheral) Japan; the household in its guise as a ritual unit; and Temple Buddhism[9] (i.e. the 'living Buddhism' that takes place outside sect research centres, and the mostly monastic Buddhist heartland of Kyoto).[10] These themes have overlapping and connective dynamics; yet have not been considered together in the contemporary context until now. Previous research that has explored these areas are found variously within Japanese area studies, Social

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[8] Indeed, it is possible to conceive of a time when urban Japan will look towards the rural periphery in order to pursue a economically stable and ecologically sustainable direction in the future if rural spaces are able to revitalise as models of independent, postmodern communities (Matanle, 2008, 52).

[9] Temple Buddhism is a term coined by Covell (2005) that indicates the type of research that seeks to interpret Buddhism as it is practiced by lay and clerical members of the 'Esablished' or 'Traditional' sects (which were founded before the 1600's) in the contemporary context. This Buddhism-as-it-is-lived approach is opposed to the Buddhist Studies-based research that favours the study of medieval texts while emphasising monasticism, precepts, and historical doctrinal debates. Despite the need for more contemporary ethnographic research, these concerns have dominated both the academic scholarship and the agendas of sect-sponsored research centres until very recently (Covell, 2005, 4; Rowe, 2011, 7-10).

[10] For an exploration of monastic life experienced in a Zen Buddhist temple from a first-person perspective, see: Nonomura, 1996.

anthropology, Religious studies, Sociology, History, and Buddhist studies, and relevant sources will be applied throughout this thesis. Yet primarily, the research is grounded within, and guided by, an anthropological framework that seeks to understand how local people shape and experience the various worlds of which they are part; attempting to represent their contemporary lived reality in context through ethnographic data, interviews and oral narratives. In doing so, this research contributes to scholarship on a changing rural Japan, Temple Buddhism, and Japanese religion, as well as bringing an important geographical area into the scholarship that has been overlooked.

The origins of this study began when I lived in a village with a population of two thousand adjacent to the Takachiho area from 2000-2002.[11] Beginning academic study in 2007, it appeared that the anthropological literature on rural Japan and 'Japanese Religion' did not reflect the contemporary experience that I had recently witnessed. The scholarship was unable to chart changes that were happening because fieldwork was often over thirty years old.[12] Most notably, the literature on Japanese religion as a property of belonging – or 'Japaneseness' – did not reflect the empirical reality that non-Japanese actors were also embedded within the social and ritual landscape, performing roles as religious and social actors in the community, and thus problematising categories. Furthermore, the literature on rural areas did not identify the large numbers of single mothers returning to natal households after living in nuclear families in the urban sphere. Additionally, the literature on Temple Buddhism has not yet explored narratives of non-heterosexual priests (and eldest sons) expected

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[11] This village (Kitago son, Higashisukigun, Miyazaki ken) no longer 'exists' on the map having been amalgamated into surrounding villages and given a new name in a process called '*gappei*' (see: Ikegami, 2002).

[12] Anthropological literature that prioritises thick ethnographic depictions of rural/Village Japan and its rituals is informed by data generated by fieldwork that was undertaken thirty years ago (Bernstein, 1983; Moeran, 1984; Moon, 1989; Smith and Wiswell, 1982, Martinez, 2004).

to inherit and reproduce the temple as a household business. Therefore, this thesis looks at changing or unstable factors that affect social life, chiefly in the local area, but also in spheres connected to it; and explores the impact these dynamics have upon religious institutions and ritual life as a whole – which has not yet been the sole focus of a research topic.

An ideological perspective – whereby the views of local people are treated as central, not peripheral to the broader discussion of temple, households and social change – guides this research, and adds to the anthropological scholarship on how local spaces are connected to spheres beyond their borders (Kuwahara et al. 2007; Faier, 2009; Hansen, 2010). Therefore, this study is an attempt to illustrate local contemporary realities at the level of the everyday, explored through connection to ritual, in an area that – despite significance in myth and history – has not been considered.

With the connection of secularism to modernity (embodied in the secularist thesis) in mind, the main research question asks: Why do 'Buddhist' household rituals continue despite social changes? In order to answer this question, the ethnographic chapters will explore both the ritual worlds and inner spheres of local households connected as *danka/monto*[13] (parishioners) to their neighbourhood temple. These will be considered alongside the 'outer face' and 'inner guise' of the temple as a household business managed by a clerical family. In so doing, it will observe how outer discourses do not match inner realities[14] and observe how situations both change,

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[13] The term *danka* is conventionally used in the academic literature on Buddhism and the term *monto* is a sect-specific word that indicates the neighbourhoods, households and individuals who make up the membership affiliated to the temple. Both can be used interchangeably with the English word 'parishioner' found in the Christian context.

[14] Giddens (2002) argues that in the contemporary period, the inner and outer core of institutions, such as the family and religion, do not correspond and calls them 'shell institutions', arguing that: 'They are

yet perplexingly, stay the same. It is undeniable that changes are now taking place, as the area is increasingly affected by changing demographics and wider national and global flows. Yet it will also show, despite the overwhelming decline in population, with subsequently assumed decline in socio-ritual life as a result, that there is surprising continuity demonstrated in the Takachiho area case study, and suggest reasons why this should be the case.

In order to understand the meaning of Buddhist rituals connected to and provided by the temple for local people, it is important to place them within their wider backdrop of syncretic religiosity that informs life in Takachiho. The thesis will explore the ways in which 'Buddhist' rituals are appropriated into a dominant household ancestor consciousness, as the wider syncretic religiosity continues to remain crucial, despite – and indeed because of – social change and increasing modernity. The thesis will argue that household and ancestor consciousness engenders reproduction, protection, and continuity of local households in a wider transitional world that is in a state of flux; and conceptualise ritual as an associated technique of autonomous control and power: a critical factor in its continuance. This argument is influenced by the scholarship of Thompson and Traphagan (2007), in the Japanese context, and Vásquez and Marquardt (2003, 2008), in the Pan-American context. It will regard household ancestor rituals[15] under the guise of 'Buddhist' ritual as a key technique in this wider aim, and investigate how rituals officiated by Buddhist priests are performed in tandem with a wider, syncretic religiosity; thereby illustrating the discrepancies between Buddhist doctrine, and the ways in which Buddhist rituals are appropriated by the *danka* households. It will be argued that the

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institutions that have become inadequate to the tasks they are called upon to perform' (Giddens, 2002, 18).

[15] Ancestor rites are considered 'folk' practices in the Religious studies framework.

priests are utilised as tools for personal, family, ancestral household rites, while they attempt to preach Buddhist orthodoxy in a highly syncretic area in which local people hold a worldview that is often antithetical to Buddhist sect doctrine; and note the tensions that are inherent as a result.

These differences, between local syncretic cosmology, and a national, sectarian-led doctrine, will illustrate the gap between local people and their priests at an ideological level, while reflecting that the clerical family also remain close to their neighbours as part of the community. Covell (2005), and Rowe (2011), have argued for more studies of Buddhism as it is practiced, over the dominant current academic focus on Buddhist history, medieval texts and scripture, in order to fulfil, 'a crucial lack of scholarship on contemporary Japanese Buddhism' (Covell and Rowe, 2004, 245). As they argue:

> There remains an implicit assumption among scholars and the general public that late twentieth century Buddhism represents a moribund tradition, bereft of spiritual potency, whose only purpose is to offer formalized, over-priced mortuary services for an increasingly dissatisfied public in order to ensure the continuity of sects and to secure the lifestyle of temple priests.
> (Covell and Rowe, 2004, 246)

This research contributes to a more nuanced interpretation of Buddhism as it is practiced. However, instead of focusing upon Buddhism in the contemporary national arena, it will explore how Buddhism is contextualised in its locality, where it plays a supporting part – not the leading role – in the socio-ritual life and deep religiosity evident in the area. Accordingly, it will view Buddhism from its local position as an 'outsider'; and a liminal category within a broader temple backdrop that has been co-created by the priests and their neighbouring households through their relationships. Therefore Buddhism will not be seen not as a source of independent religious power that is wielded over the local inhabitants as directed

from the central sect hierarchy above, but reflect more nuanced, complex truths, generated by the local, grounded context.

Furthermore, although the research is focused upon the changing dynamics of life in the local sphere, and its key institutions of household ritual units connected to the neighbourhood temple, it also contributes to the understanding of Japanese society as a whole. It does this by addressing issues relevant nationwide, especially in terms of increasing transnational families; experiences of single parenthood; non-heterosexual voices; and the continued engagement with 'tradition', religiosity and ritual techniques in a modern, 'secularised' world in which 'Japan' at the governing state-level is situated. In doing so it challenges the dominant discourses of 'Japanese Religion', in the Durkheimian sense: as a commonly shared 'cultural property' that is by and large congenial, not necessarily about belief, and used for the purposes of bolstering community spirit – lending itself to a sense of 'Japanese' identity as a consequence, (Bestor, 1984; Ashkenzaki, 1993; Averbuch, 1995, Reader and Tanabe 1998; Nelson, 2000).[16]

Instead, it reveals the power dynamics and conflicts between actors in the household and temple sphere, while exploring how the Buddhist temple as a ritual institution needs continual maintenance in order to remain. Therefore, the thesis argues that religion is far from a 'given' or a cultural property (as Smyers 1999 in the Japanese context, and Moore 2011 in the African context, also argue). This perspective is influenced by the deconstructionist position that throughout Japan religiosity is determined by, and a feature of, its locality; and that generalisations

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[16] This dominant Durkheimian perspective in the religious studies and anthropological literature continues to influence research frameworks and theories in more contemporary scholarship. However as Martinez has noted: 'what all current anthropological approaches to ritual in Japan convey is that ritual's structure and purpose, both in Shinto and in Buddhist rites, is always a Durkheimian one: ritual both expresses and upholds the structure of the community… Yet I believe such an approach only skims the surface of the meaning and importance of ritual for the Japanese' (Martinez, 1995, 186).

made at the level of the nation-state are often misleading (Isomae, 2005).

Additionally, the research attempts to understand the Takachiho area beyond the 'discourse of the vanishing', which focuses mainly upon how the urban perceives the rural as a soon-to-be-lost phenomenon (Ivy, 1995)[17]. Alternatively, this thesis begins with the bottom-up premise that all discussions of rural Japan should begin with the attempt to understand reality from the grounded, local perspective (Furukawa, 2007); and additionally that the category of Temple Buddhism should not solely be perceived from the perspective of the ritual specialists (priests) – or the elite level of sect hierarchy – but primarily from the people who make up the majority of its membership: local *danka* households.

When the meaning and interpretations of the temple and household ritual is approached from a contextualised, local point of view, a different pattern emerges that is contrastive to the dominant discourse of inevitable decline in socio-ritual life, households and religious institutions. In turn, this is able to contradict broader national discourses that assume rural demise as inevitable, and nationally based assumptions that characterise the contemporary reality for Japan as a homogenous whole; as predictions for Japan's future based predominantly upon activities and behaviour found at the centre continue to dominate.

Therefore, to summarise, this thesis will interpret both continuity and change in Takachiho that is characteristic of the locality, and that is in a continual process of being shaped and re-shaped in the contemporary context. The thesis will argue that while engaged with, and affected by, significant social changes, there remains surprising continuity in the *danka* (and clerical household), its associated ritual

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[17] Ivy documents how urbanites look back on a 'traditional' life that is fast disappearing and conjures feelings of nostalgia. In the national arena there is a perception that traditions are being 'lost', and yet as they are still evident in rural Japan they need preservation for the nation. In this discourse rural Japan becomes a museum for the lost heart of Japanese culture (Ivy, 1995).

practices, and affiliations to the neighbourhood Buddhist temple. This thesis will demonstrate that the household, its associated ritual practices and the wider syncretic religiosity of the area do not necessarily decline with increasing modernity; instead they accommodate, amalgamate and transform. In the research, ritual will be understood as facilitating continuity in a territorialised local world whose borders are increasingly porous, as households connect to wider national and global worlds of which they are also part. This contemporary situation also reflects the broader reality that wherever, and whoever we are, the world is in a state of flux and transition, and it becomes increasingly difficult to predict the future direction it will take. Having provided a summary of the research goals, the rest of this introductory chapter will explore the previous literature that deals with the themes found in this thesis. Firstly however, it will situate Takachiho in a broader historical and mythical narrative that has captured the imagination of current media attention.

Figure 1. Map of Japan, Miyazaki prefecture highlighted

Figure 1.1 Takakchiho's position in Kyushu Island

1.1 What is special about Takachiho?

The Takachiho area is significant in history and mythology, and is currently in vogue as the focus of a media-driven New Age spiritual discourse. Origin myths of the Japanese islands narrated in the *Kojiki* [古事記 Records of Ancient Matters, 712 CE], and the *Nihonshoki* [日本書紀 Chronicles of Japan, 720 CE] feature Takachiho connected to the main deity of the Japanese pantheon *Amaterasu ōmikami* [天照大神 the sun goddess].[18] According to legend, the landscape at Ama-no-iwato [天岩戸 heavenly rock door] a few kilometres outside the centre of town, is setting for the

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[18] According to Inoue, N. (1998) these chronicles were written in order to legitimise the Yamato dynasty in a collection of mythological and historical documents.

scene where Amaterasu hid; and without her light, the world was plunged into darkness. According to local legend, the other gods and goddesses assembled at the cave in Ama-no-iwato for a meeting, and decided to try and lure her out with music and bawdy dancing. As she peeked out intrigued, she was enticed out of the darkness, and at that moment, a powerful god of strength threw open the door to the cave – and her light was restored to the world.

Due to this legacy, local people consider Takachiho as *'kami no guni'* [神の国 land of the gods] which also situates the town in a wider context within the national mythological, historical and political texts of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*.[19] This heritage shapes the identity of the town and its local inhabitants.[20] The stories are still crucial to the locality and are recreated in the *kagura* [神楽] performances that re-enact the myths and local legends in ritualised shamanic-style dance. *Kagura* is central to community life in Takachiho, where all night festivals that carry on until dawn are held throughout the winter months, rotating from hamlet to hamlet, hosted by family households and community centres. The legends are retold in performances that narrate the stories in a sequence, and engage entire neighbourhoods in transmitting myths to local, and increasingly, wider audiences.

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[19] Including foundation myths and the creation of the Imperial family, in which Amaterasu is the direct ancestor of the first emperor, *Jimmu*.

[20] Markers of this identity are found everywhere: local businesses, shops and schools, even the offices of the town hall have *shimenawa* (sacred ropes) hanging outside. Inside, collages, paintings and *kagura* masks can be found. In the hot springs at Amanoiwato *noren* (half curtains) depict the gods and goddesses of the area. Tourist posters advertising the famous gorge and *kagura* performances are found in the pubs and restaurants, and masks and depictions of the gods are ubiquitous. Such iconography is a constant reminder of their mythological heritage and status for local people.

Figure 1.2 Young men performing *kagura*

Recent analysis of the mythological context reveals that historically, the island of Kyushu – close to the continent – adopted religious ideas, deities, practices and new techniques that originated in China and Korea. Como (2009), argues that technologies (such as weaving, sericulture, medicine, shamanism) and traditions from the continent travelled upwards through coastal regions of Kyushu, and were only later appropriated by the court and centre of power.[21] The transmission of new techniques transformed the political and religious culture of the Japanese islands at the time; and Como's analysis serves as an alternative model to the dominant view that the court was the first to adopt ideas from China and Korea and later transmit them throughout Japan (Como, 2009, xvii).

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[21] This is supported by the analysis that in the records, Amaterasu is depicted as a silkworm goddess, a weaving maiden and a shaman, practices that are thought to originate from the continent and first arrived in Kyushu (Como, 2009). Matsumae (1978, 2) observes that the legacy of ancient solar worship remains embedded in postwar folk beliefs and that prior to the figure of Amaterasu becoming popularised in the *Kojiki* there were many centres of sun cults throughout the Japanese islands, with similar narratives found in Taiwanese, Chinese and Korean mythology.

From this perspective, Takachiho, at the centre of significant myths surrounding Amaterasu as a continental shaman-figure,[22] had a role to play in shaping what would eventually become periphery-derived court practices.[23] However, in the contemporary context, 'folk' practices[24] (that remain into the present day) retain a legacy and connection with local mythological legends – and are an antithesis of the politically controlled State Shinto, enforced in the prewar period, that aimed to construct a common, national identity and shared Japanese ancestor in the figure of Amaterasu.[25] Indeed, local mythic narratives have suffered the legacy of association with State Shintoism; yet in the Takachiho area, Amaterasu has remained contextualised as a local deity and throughout the area oral narratives, legends and embodied practices are emphasised over the mythological-state-sponsored texts that

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[22] Brown (2000, 103) argues that the figure of Amaterasu as a shaman reveals the importance of shamanism in the narratives surrounding the unification of Japan. Although the *Nihonshoki* reports that the later rulers were men, they also recount how Empress Suiko (554-626) was enthroned. Five among the eleven sovereigns were women over the next 125 years; responsible for both religious and social affairs (Brown, 2000, 104). Imperial daughters were also linked with shamanism when performing rituals for Amaterasu at Ise shrine, and their worship was on behalf of the emperor. According to Brown (2000. 105): "This strong female-shaman tradition helps one to understand why the emperor's ancestral kami has long been a goddess and why female shamans continue to figure prominently in rituals at the Ise Grand Shrine." According to this interpretation, it is possible to see how female shamans in local communities, alongside shamanic queens and daughters in the court were influential in spreading technologies (such as weaving and medicine) from the continent, ruling as sovereigns and performing court rites linking the mythological origins of the emperor to Amaterasu, the central figure of the Sun cult. Such findings emphasise the influence of local and courtly female-centred shamanism alongside the construction of 'Shinto' and Buddhist ideology introduced from the continent at the time.

[23] These origins that began in Kyushu were later obscured and appropriated into a single discourse of Amaterasu, who acted as the nation's common deity for the purposes of political control during World War Two: binding the Japanese people to shared ancestral origins and a common goal. In the mythological texts, Amaterasu is the direct ancestor of the first emperor who was said to descend from the heavens to Takachiho, later departing from the present-day Hyuga area towards the capital.

[24] 'Folk' practices can be defined as a legacy of Taoism, Confucianism, shamanism and other techniques that are practiced by 'ordinary' people – not ritual specialists – and are independent of a religious institution. These techniques embody a cultivated local knowledge of the seasons, weather and conditions that local people are dependent upon, engaging in a multitude of ritualised actions that ensure protection, fortune and abundance, in a territory that local people strive to cultivate, maintain and reproduce.

[25] In State Shinto, deities were appropriated as common ancestors by the government for political ends; yet 'folk Shinto' was considered a personal system that was discredited as superstitious and suppressed by the state (Isomae, 2005, 240).

have been utilised for political control throughout history, most notably prior to World War Two.

Figure 1.3 Ama-no-iwato Cave, where the gods gathered to lure Amaterasu from hiding

In more recent years, Takachiho has found itself at the centre of resurgent nationwide interest in 'new spirituality' movements (Shimazono, 2000, 3-23). These have been driven by celebrity media-savvy 'spiritualists' such as Ehara Hiroyuki and are connected to New Age beliefs in the United States (see: Gaitanidis, 2010, 1-60; 2012, 353-385). Subsequently, Takachiho has been identified as a key area in a 'New Age, new spirituality' discourse; and several natural areas – including the cave in the Amaterasu legend – trees, shrines, waterfalls and so on, have been categorised as 'power spots' [パワースポット] which can be defined as sacred areas (spots) that are imbued with abundant spiritual energy (power) that can be harnessed by the visitor. These areas are often already considered sacred (Mount Fuji is also a power spot) and

have been re-packaged for urban consumption.[26]

The nationwide explosion of interest in this new type of spiritual pilgrimage is referred to in the Japanese media as the 'power spot boom'. Consequently, during the last few years Takachiho, as a key site in the trend, has been the subject of a plethora of travel and documentary programmes that focus predominantly on its 'power spots' in the national press.[27] The town has been slow to profit from the sudden frenzy of interest and increased national and international tourism.[28] However, willing or not, it has also become a heavily visited area[29] by tourist groups, religious groups, TV crews, families, photographers and tourist-pilgrims. Also becoming a 'date spot' for young couples, a place to be visited by the sick, and also for young women seeking 'spiritual help' to find marriage partners (to name a few purposes). The 'power spot boom', has spilled into other areas and local *kagura* performances are increasingly attended by tourists from far afield and often recorded by various television companies for national consumption.[30] Indeed, it is difficult to live in Japan or engage with its national media and not be assailed by the 'new spiritual movement' that has saturated

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[26] See Hughes, 2010 for further information in English on the *Japan Times* web page, accessed August 2nd 2014:   http://blog.japantimes.co.jp/japan-pulse/power-spots-japan%E2%80%99s-latest-spiritual-craze/

[27] As Gaitanidis (2010; 2012) has explored, there is an explosion of the spiritual in the contemporary national sphere driven by the media, and connected to New Age movements worldwide, encouraging a growth of spiritual therapists and a plethora of techniques linked to commercialism.

[28] The most frequent visitors to the town are Chinese, Korean and Russian tourists and national tourism has increased due to the 'power spot' discourse, particularly with younger generations.

[29] The prefectural city of Miyazaki is trying to capitalize of the surging interest by promoting the area, however, Takachiho prefers to maintain links with Aso town in Kumamoto prefecture that is a prosperous tourist area and closer to Takachiho in comparison with Miyazaki city, a three to four hour drive south-east.

[30] In addition to this activity a comedian turned politician, Higashikokubaru Hideo, has also put his home prefecture of Miyazaki on the map in recent years in terms of trade and the promotion of local products and tourism. Members of the local government regard the tourist interest positively, as rejuvenating the town.

popular culture (Shimazono, 2000, 2004; Gaitinidis, 2010, 2012) in which Takachiho has recently been prescribed a specific and prominent role.

Conversely, local residents are not consumers of the 'power spot boom', because they have no need for an outsourced media-constructed discourse of spiritualism when they are already involved with a complex, nuanced, syncretic religiosity through embodied ritual practices – particularly in the performance of *kagura* and continuing relationships with the ancestors (through the local legends surrounding the gods and 'Buddhist' household rituals). Indeed, ancestors remain important in Takachiho, from the town's original ancestor, the sun goddess Amaterasu (linked to local shrines and at specific areas in the landscape) to personal, family, household ancestors.[31]

Figure 1.4 A carving of a Takachiho god made by a local craftsman

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[31] Ancestors are connected to the extended family household, land, graves, memorial practices and represented at Buddhist altars kept inside family households called *butsudan* [仏壇] or alternatively, interred at the mausoleum of the neighbourhood temple.

In exploring ancestor rituals in the Takachiho area, the aim of this thesis is to connect an important historical and mythological location to broader discourses of change, in which examples at the local level can contradict assumptions made by findings generated from the national centre. Although the periphery is often ignored in order to focus on dominant mainland Japan (as Kuwahara et al. 2007 and Mock, 2014 have noted) this thesis aims to connect Takachiho to a broader discourse of national/global flows and social change. It will demonstrate that a place significant in mythology and symbolism (and a focus of contemporary media and national public attention) is currently engaged with other worlds beyond its borders, just as it always has been, when viewed in a wider historical and mythological context.

Figure 1.5 Audience and performers assembled in a household for *kagura*

1.2 'Many Japans'

On a broader national scale since the recession of the1990s, there has been change in Japan's large corporations and state bureaucracy, with a corresponding shifting social order (Yoda and Harootunian 2006, 13). This can be understood to coincide with broader historical trends of globalisation and post-modernisation that followed on from postwar economic modernism (Yoda and Harootunian 2006, 16). Although considered a 'lost decade' by most but not everyone[32], as Coulmas notes, the majority of observers agree that the 1990s also brought transformations in Japanese society (Coulmas, 2007, 105). These transformations can be viewed as part of a broader global context, where social change is particularly rapid in a period characterised by 'globalisation'. Without entering into a debate about what globalisation is[33], or could be interpreted to mean, it has been argued that the current period of history is shaped by flows[34], hybridity and transnational global connections than any other previous point in time (Garcia Canclini 1995; Lewellen 2002; Rosaldo, 2007; Appadurai 2012.)

Giddens (2002) notes more broadly that: 'there are good, objective reasons to believe that we are living through a major period of historical transition. Moreover,

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[32] A high life expectancy, increasing lifestyle affluence despite the stock market crash of the 1990's, a low unemployment rate, and account surplus can all be seen as contributory factors to the fact that the idea that Japan is a demoralized country is a myth.

(Fingleton, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/08/opinion/sunday/the-true-story-of-japans-economic-success.html?pagewanted=1&_r=0&ref=opinion) accessed August 6th 2014.

[33] The best antidote to hegemonic readings is to see globalisation as a complex, historically contingent cluster of processes involving multiple actors, scales and realms of human activity. These processes have contradictory effects for local life and for religious organisations, discourses, and practices. Globalisation is not just about domination and homogenisation. It also involves resistance, heterogeneity, and the active negotiation of space, time, and identity at the grassroots, even if these negoations occur under the powerful constraints of neoliberal markets and all-pervading culture industries. (Vásquez and Marquadt, 2003). This has been termed "Globalisation from below" or "grassroots globalisation" (Appadurai, 2000).

[34] However, the anthropological concept of 'global flows' (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz 1997) now in wider academic use, has been criticised as failing to observe that not all flows are even or equal and could be replaced by 'anchored' or 'grounded' globalisation concepts.

the changes affecting us aren't confined to any one area of the global but stretch almost everywhere' (Giddens, 2002, 1). Furthermore, these effects are not applicable to a specific geographical area, generation, or elite Cosmopolitan (Appiah, 2006) but have the ability to encompass anyone, including the Cosmopolitanism of the migrant poor (Appadurai 2012). As Giddens has asserted: 'we live in a world of transformations, affecting almost every aspect of what we do. For better or worse, we are being propelled into a global order that no one fully understands, but which is making its effects felt upon all of us' (2002, 6). The uncertainty of these transformations and the ways in which people negotiate these larger transitions – experienced in a local context – will be explored in this thesis.

Scholars are now beginning to discuss the effects that globalisation is having upon Japan in terms of transnational economic flows, particularly between Japan and the United States, in Bestor's (2001) analysis of the global tuna trade; Grinshpun's (2012) analysis of consumption culture in Japan via global commodity chains such as *Starbucks;* and non-economic flows, migration, identity and popular culture (Eades, Gill and Befu, eds. 2000). Furthermore, scholarship is re-addressing the place of non-Japanese Others who live within its borders, (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993; Lie, 2009) as the myth of mono-ethnicity is increasingly compromised by mixed marriages and a blending of identities (Raz, 1992; Clammer, 2001; Davis, 2001; Douglass and Roberts, 2003; Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008).

Despite this, an analysis of the 'creolisation' of Japanese culture[35] (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008) – while connecting the urban sphere to hybrid flows and multiculturalism – tends to leave rural spaces outside of the discussion, as this introduction noted. Instead, discussing global flows and Japan it has been argued that:

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[35] The creolisation of Japan includes the concept of non-ethnic Others included in its borders, mixed marriages, heritages and a blending of identities.

'some have flooded the landscapes in certain parts of Japan while others have been reduced to a trickle, leaving local areas high, dry and brittle, not far from the feudal landscape of much of Japanese history' (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008, 312). However, this idea is compromised by an analysis that is rooted in the ethnography of rural areas. Hansen's ethnographic exploration of a dairy farm in Hokkaido analyses the situations experienced by migrant workers (from Outer Mongolia and China), and Faier (2009, 2011) explores the relationships between Filippina and Japanese husbands living in extended family households in rural Nagano. Research on small islands in Japan demonstrates that most of Japan's islands are part of larger networks connected to a range of spaces in the national and global arena which often bypass urban centres) Kuwahara et al (2007). Subsequently, an exploration of bullfighting (typically understood as 'backwards' and 'traditional') can thus be understood as part of broader transperipheral networks that offers an alternative model in which connectivity rather than separateness is emphasised (Kuwahara et al. 2007).

Therefore, instead of viewing the rural as 'lagging behind' the urban in the social evolutionary spectrum, the thesis is influenced by the theoretical viewpoint that the contemporary context can embody multiple temporalities of pre-modern, modern and postmodern within one space as 'mixed temporalities', suggested by the anthropologist Garcia Canclini (1995). It is now important to acknowledge and regard rural Japan as *already engaged* within a wider network of flows, and not as a single bounded entity that can be viewed in isolation. Lines between rural and urban Japan are actually blurred (Wood, 2012), and this can be seen in a network of broadcasting and consumption patterns that disseminate knowledge and products (Daniels, 2001, 32). As Thompson and Traphagan (2006) argue, the rural-urban dichotomy in postwar ethnography can be considered obsolete due to the overlap between

traditional, modern and global influences nationwide. However, on the other hand, rural Japan could also be included in a discussion of 'minority cultures' within Japan, and this category could include: 'women, labourers, homosexuals and the disabled if the vision of the mainstream is unchallenged as white collar and male' (Goodman, 2008, 328). Therefore, it is important to anchor the local as both specific and general, as part of broader trends and micro flows.

As the single parent whose narrative features in chapter four of this thesis noted: "When I first came back to Takachiho after a decade away, I couldn't believe it but nothing had changed. It was the same people, the same shops, the same conversations. Nothing ever changes here." The juxtaposition between the changes that a young single mother brings to the context and the continuity found within the locale could be explained in terms of terms of salient generational differences in the rural sphere between the young and the old, (Knight, 2003; Coulmas, 2007). Research indicates the resistance towards the rigidness found in social institutions by the young, as they change Japan on the ground– challenging the social order through new ways of thinking about identity, social relationships and parenting (Mathews and Bruce, 2004). This thesis will try to understand these embedded issues utilising oral narratives and for a person-centred analysis. In this way, the narratives in the ethnographic chapters will cross gender, generation and sexual divides that culminate in the concurrent empirical realities of change and continuity that characterise local life in its social and ritual guise.

Therefore, this thesis attempts to look beyond the dominant decline twinned with the discourse of nostalgia model that has dominated the anthropological literature on rural Japan until fairly recently: by detailing the very real impacts that social change in the rural sphere have on the neighbourhood and temple environment,

following on from recent scholarship of contemporary rural spaces in the ethnographic literature. Key factors that are now shaping rural environments – such as single parents and transnational actors in the rural sphere – have not yet been considered in the current literature and these dynamics alongside major factors such as decline will be considered in relation to *danka* households, and the neighbourhood temple. Therefore, this case study is able to illuminate the experiences of transnational actors in the local context alongside the experiences of local people who also live national and global lives, informed by media information networks which have helped engender a dynamic where the local world overlaps with both national and global worlds on a daily basis; yet at the same time remains firmly territorialised and connected to a single tangible and localised space.

1.3 Changing *danka* households

The neighbourhood temple relies on a membership base called the *danka seido* [檀家制度 temple parishioner system] and for over four hundred years, neighbourhood households as *danka* [檀家 Buddhist households] have been affiliated to a local Buddhist temple (Marcure, 1985, 41-43). The *danka* system was loosely founded in the Heian period and was galvanised during the Tokugawa period when political control over the country was established by enforcing religious control in the form of Buddhism. [36] Accordingly, the temple and its monks had various responsibilities in recording births and deaths, serving an important administrative function for the

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[36] This measure was induced to combat the threat of Christianity – a system with a religious hierarchy above and beyond the Shogunate – demonstrating concerns over maintaining territory and political rule. In order to achieve religious dominance, in 1638, households were forced to register with a temple in order to receive a certificate that proved their affiliation to a temple, showing their status as *danka* (members) of a temple and thereby proving that they were not Christians whose allegiance would be to a power above and beyond the Shogunate. If particular *danka* households did not attend certain rites, the temple certificate was revoked and the death penalty could ensue.

purposes of wielding political control on behalf of the Tokugawa Shogunate (Marcure, 1985, 40-47). Households in Takachiho still inherit the legacy of the *danka* system today, and membership of a particular Buddhist sect is succeeded by the next generation of *chōnan* [長男 eldest son]. Being born into a temple affiliation means being tied into a series of relationships that rely on a patrilineal system, and involves help with financial upkeep and support of the priest and his family (Rowe, 2011, 140). This affiliation and responsibility is passed on to one's descendants and considered interminable (Marcure, 1985, 41-43; Covell, 2005, 7; Rowe, 2011, 76). Therefore, the institution of the temple is firmly embedded within the rural area, and the priests have a close relationship to their *danka* households due to tightly woven social relationships that underpin rural life, and are informed by historical and political legacies.

Although the extended family household of the *ie* on which *danka* records are based, has been in gradual decline postwar in the national context, one fifth of families continue to live in extended household of three generations (Daniels 2012, 152) and the household has been shown to be adaptive to economic, industrial and social changes (Hendry, 1985; Kurosu 1992; Moon 1989). The concentration of *ie* is particularly high in rural areas because of a strong household consciousness and availability of land, and increasing modernity does not necessarily equate to a nuclear family pattern in the Japanese case (Nonoyama, 2000; Ochiai 1994). In the ethnographic chapters of this thesis, the household remains an ideal value, if not always an applicable reality, as young members move to the urban area for work and education, and this is concurrent with earlier scholarship (Moeran, 1984; Moon 1989, Martinez, 2004). However, despite the high value placed on the extended family, the dynamics of the household are in a state of flux: as the ethnographic data will show.

Historically, the Meiji Civil Code (1898), established the *ie* as a legal category to which every subject should belong. A male head of household was responsible for the behaviour of other family members and in this way the *ie* could be used to control every citizen, informing a family-based state in which the emperor was the symbolic father (Smith, 1974; Rowe, 2011, 24-5). Patrilineal descent and household ancestor rituals (tied to Buddhist temples and practices) ensured succession and lack of change (Tsuji, 2006, 424) and aimed at creating a 'unique Japanese culture' that could homogenise family patterns and withstand modernisation (Rowe, 2011, 24). Although the *ie* was abolished in the postwar United States-led constitution of 1948, it retains significance and influence in social, cultural, ritual and economic terms.[37]

The household *ie* has been analysed thoroughly: as a kinship unit and extended family (by birth, adoption or marriage) of consecutive generations (Ariga, 1954; Befu 1963) and thus a child and elderly care provider (Hendry, 1981; Traphagan, 2003); an economic and artisanal model or system known as the *ie moto* (Moeran, 1984; Guth, 1993; Smith 1998); a model for teaching and learning traditional Japanese arts (Havens, 1982, 22; Cox, 2002, 149); a corporate structure based on the 'firm-as-a-family' (Nakane 1970; Rohlen, 1973); a ritual unit (Plath 1964; Ooms 1967; Smith, 1974) and last, but not least, the structural model upon which the rest of Japanese groups and wider society (including the nation state) is based (Smith, 1985, 31). However, Japanese studies scholars have also stressed that this system is not unique to Japan; Dukheim also argued that Ancient Roman society

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[37] The household has also played a role in the discourse of Japanese uniqueness (*Nihonjinron*) which has argued that the *ie* is the building block on which the rest of Japanese society is based, particularly in large business corporations, explaining the hierarchicial structure of Japanese society and its kinship-like relations found in society (Nakane, 1970). However, (Befu 1980, 1989; Dale, 1986) critique *Nihonjinron* as a tool for creating political and social conformity. Later scholarship on the family demonstrates that there is no such thing as the 'perfect Japanese family', which is instead a useful concept constructed by the media and political sphere and although based on a Tokugawa model was unusual for most Japanese people (White, M. 2002).

was based on the domestic system (Smith, 1985, 4). [38] Furthermore, the family has undergone change in the postwar period whereby the *ie* has moved from law into 'custom' (Rowe, 2011, 24-5).

Influenced by the early studies of Village Japan and Japanese society (Embree, 1939; Dore, 1958; Nakane, 1970) that sought to understand Japanese society comparatively, the *ie* has become a metaphor for the supposed homogeneity and uniqueness of Japanese culture within discourses of Japaneseness *(Nihonjinron)* which places the household as the central building block on which the rest of society is based (Nakane, 1970, 7). In this way, Japanese social structures are understood in terms of the harmonious group; vertical hierarchies; and fulfillment of expected role according to status and gender, all of which stemmed from the 'traditional' family pattern and could supposedly be found in the largest corporate structures. Highly critiqued by subsequent scholarship (Krauss, Rohlen and Steinhoff 1985; Dale, 1986; Befu, 1989; van Wolferen, 1989, Eisenstadt and Ben-Ari 1990; Burgess, 2004) discourses of Japaneseness have prioritised harmony in society while ignoring agency, conflict, and individual desires; and implying uniqueness in areas such as hierarchy that can be found anywhere where social life takes place (Smith, 1985, 42).[39]

According to Ochiai (1994), in the postwar period the household *ie* can be characterised as a unit that comprises a multi-generational family tied by birth, marriage, or adoption. The *ie* is ideally succeeded by the *chōnan* (eldest son), and younger brothers leave to form their own subsidiary households connected to the

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[38] The anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (1969) argued that society and social life began with the family, not internally, but in the exchange found between households in order to broker marriages between groups; this engendered the necessity of subsequent social interaction and shaped society. This is extended in the contemporary context with the family as a concept, which anthropologists do not regard as an inherent structure of society in any region of the globe, but instead is a concept that needs careful and sustained production, as ethnographic research consistently demonstrates (Moore, 2014).

[39] As Smith has noted: 'Of course Japanese society features hierarchies. All societies do whether they be capitalist or socialist, feudal or fascist, militaristic or communal' (1985, 42).

main stem household. Daughters leave the natal household in order to enter their husband's household as a *yome* [嫁 wife] and become members of a new *ie*. However the stem *ie* can be inherited by daughters, and adopted son-in-laws, and this is considered a flexible feature of the Japanese *ie* (Ochiai 1994, 59; Moon, 1989, 101).[40] This differs to the Korean case of a highly developed patrilineal society where even after marriage a woman cannot change her patrilineal group and her status remains marginal (Ch'oe, 1984, 227-8).

Historically the *ie* has been an economic unit with members co-operating as part of the household farm or business, often connected to the space in which the family lives.[41] Although based on a patriarchal model enshrined in the previous legal code, and underscored by a Confucian pattern of patrilineal philosophy that originated in the continent (between 475-221 B.C.E; Ikezawa, 1994) women have always participated in the economic life of the *ie* and it has been argued that they may wield more power than men in the domestic sphere due to the fact that they make the household's financial decisions (Martinez, 2004).

In the contemporary context, the *ie* is dependent upon regional area and shows important variations (Kurosu, 1992, 74), whereby urban areas are generally considered nuclear (Ochiai, 1991; Rindufss et al. 2004) while rural areas continue to depend upon the extended household for farming and a livelihood that is often independent of urban infrastructure (Moon, 1989). Ariga noted in 1954 that there was

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[40] Moon (1989) notes that in succession issues: 'the emphasis of is always on continuity of the household as a corporate group rather than any particular individual within the group' and argues that this is why the household structure cannot be seen as patrilineal, and notes that the preferred category of *chōnan* (eldest son) is often reversed for the benefit of the household, if the *chōnan* is not the best contender. Moon also notes that other types of succession (such as the youngest son, or first-born, regardless of gender) were apparent until the early Meiji era. The successor must manage the household, take care of the dead and living members and ensure its survival (Moon, 1989, 101).

[41] Hendry (2013, 24) notes that the *ie* signifies a building and continuity and thus is similar to the English translation of House (as in House of Windsor).

a 'stubborn persistence of family' despite postwar reforms and increasing choices in marriage patterns, arguing that the family lagged behind other changes in society (1954, 358). Sociologists have tended to predict the evolution of the household from extended to nuclear postwar and from nuclear to increasing individual units in the future (Ochiai, 1994; Rindfuss, Choe, Bumpass and Tsuya 2004). Increasingly, the family is also being understood as a 'lifestyle choice' that can include people living alone in individual units (Nonoyama 2000).

Despite this, marriage remains important in quantitative studies where being married, and satisfied with marriage, is regarded as being the most important dynamic for a high quality of life in Japan (Inoguchi and Fuji 2009). This qualitative analysis also shows that more broadly, Japan can be regarded as a marriage society (Hendry 1981; Lebra 1984). Interestingly, this can also be extended to people who may not hold a heterosexual identity, as marriage remains an important factor for gay men who often choose to marry and raise a family (McLelland, 2000). This is because sexuality and marriage are approached separately; the latter considered important in establishing a household (that can be compared as the antithesis of the romantic notion of a 'family' in the Western case) and valued as an institution by a number of men who hold a gay identity: showing a flexibility towards sexuality and relationships with women not often found in the Western case. This also illuminates how differently marriage is understood in Japan (McLelland, 2000, 465).

This thesis contributes to the understanding of the household as a moving entity that is both constructed and shaped by historical and political factors in tandem with media discourses (White, M. 2002) now being impacted by wider changes and global flows. The research starts with the premise that there is nothing inherent about the extended family household; instead it is an institution that has been shaped by

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historical, political and social forces over time and continues to need careful production and reproduction by its members and constantly negotiated – rather than being an inherent 'cultural' value in *any* society (Moore, 2014)[42]. However, it is a persistent one. As Ochiai (1994), has shown, the extended family did not decline with the nuclear family as first thought. In fact second sons and daughters were the ones who moved to urban areas and formed nuclear families, while the eldest sons stayed at home and continued to run the extended family farm. In the contemporary context it is often considered that household rituals persist due to obligation (*giri*) and the cultural hegemony of belonging to Japanese society.

In this thesis, duty and resistance will be considered as two sides of the same coin. Where the household and its rituals are concerned, adaptation, amalgamation and accommodation will be explored as key techniques in order for the household to remain and sustain itself into the future. The household has typically been seen as an important value for the elderly (although Traphagan, 2004, has shown they also suffer in its confines); however this thesis will articulate the experiences of single women who are moving back to their natal households in a countercurrent of human motion that contradicts the movement from the rural to the national as the dominant model – and shows how household consciousness remains crucial as an active strategy, not a passive value, at times of transition and flux.

The household is not only an important theme for local people but for the Buddhist temple itself. A temple is a household business for the clerical family who manages the complex (Covell, 2005; Rowe, 2011). Therefore, I will consider the temple first and foremost as a household and livelihood for the clerical family, which posits it within its empirical reality rather than how it is usually considered: as an

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[42] Moore, H. speaking on *Thinking Allowed*, BBC Radio 4, accessed August 5th 2014.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0460j01

institution affiliated to and shaped by sect hierarchy in the historical and Buddhist-based scholarship (Covell and Rowe, 2004, 246). The clerical family household is connected to the majority of neighbouring households in the vicinity through its position as a ritual provider. Therefore, this research will look at transitions both in the inner sphere of the *danka* and clerical household and demonstrate how these changes are played out, resisted, adapted and subsumed into broader discourses in the locality. Furthermore, it will explore the discrepancies between sect based doctrine and lived Buddhism in the area, and demonstrate how the priests and local people have very different motivations for, and views about, the purposes of household ritual in which they engage.

1.4 Buddhist ancestor rites

Although household rituals have been termed 'Buddhist' in the scholarship since the household was identified as a religious unit (Plath 1964; Smith 1974), this categorisation obscures the fact that local people utilise the Buddhist temple as a resource for facilitating rituals that are used ultimately for personal ancestral rites. These rites are an ancestral underpinning (or consciousness) on which the future of the household depends, and are an important part of a wider syncretic religiosity that informs spiritual life in the Takachiho area. Local households still remain affiliated to the temple through a legacy of historical and political processes that over time has become habitus for people in Takachiho, alongside the majority in the national sphere.[43] However, this does not indicate that households in the locality follow

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[43] Postwar research looked closely at the ritual underpinnings of the household, and sociologists argued that if socio-religious phenomena were to be understood comparatively to Christianity in the secularist thesis, it was not to be found in the commonly studied religious institutions of 'Buddhism' or 'Shinto', as religiosity occurred primarily in the home via household ancestor worship that was often studied at times of social change by Japanese scholars (Yanagawa and Abe, 1978 24). The household and ritual have been intertwined historically, and as Rowe has noted, household graves were part of the Meiji

Buddhist orthodoxy, and in fact local people are often at odds with the Jōdo Shinshū doctrine that the priests teach at the neighbourhood temple, which this research aims to illuminate.

Conducting fieldwork in 1967, Ooms analysed 'ancestor worship' as the dominant religion of the household. Smith (1974) argued that caring for the ancestors had an important role in safeguarding its members, as the ancestors are involved in the well-being of the family and have the power to protect its members. As Yanagawa and Abe (1978) noted, as soon as Buddhism was introduced to Japan its universalist tenets were lost and it became a vehicle for ancestor worship. 'Hence in Japanese Buddhism the principle of renouncing this worldly order, represented by the household, has given way to an alternative cultural form based on the household system' (Yanagawa and Abe, 1978. 13). However, care should be taken over the translated term 'ancestor worship' which does not suggest who the ancestors are, the multitude of practices, or what 'worship' constitutes in a Japanese setting (Nelson, 2008, 307).[44] Nelson has suggested 'veneration' should replace worship; however this research will use '*butsudan*[45] rites' or ancestor/ancestral rites: which indicates the central material object of the altar, alongside the embodied practice to which the phrase alludes.

Continuing the theme of Buddhist affiliated 'ancestor rites' more recently, Traphagan has argued that household religiosity is an example of a life-cycle care system with a gendered dimension (2004, 79). As children in the family grow up, the

government's policy of constructing households as part of the idea of a national family branching out from the emperor (Rowe, 2011, 71) in this way social change and religious change often occur in tandem.

[44] As Nelson (2008) notes, in the West, Buddhism is associated with philosophy and meditation, yet in the Asian context, Buddhism is associated the practice of with venerating one's ancestors and petitioning spirits (Nelson, 2008, 307).

[45] Buddhist altar.

role ascribed to women in Japanese society moves from caring for her children towards caring for the ancestors, and this activity continues to protect the well-being of the family. Hendry's (1981) ethnography observes that before a wedding, a bride prays at her own *butsudan* of household ancestors that she is leaving, before joining the new *ie* she is marrying into, where she will evetually take care of her husband's ancestors. Hendry's informants explained that the bride wore white to symbolise that like a corpse, or a baby, she will die to her own *ie* and be reborn again into the household of her husband, thus transferring ritual alliances from natal to adopted household. This (ritual) elasticity can be seen as a key, flexible feature of broader household dynamics that are able to incorporate outside elements: as a technique in a broader ancestor consciousness that involves the production, reproduction, and amalgamation and accommodation of new elements into the household system, allowing it to be robust and ensure its survival into the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, unlike the bride who enters a household (*yome*) there is no fixed point in which ancestor consciousness begins and ends. Children not yet born into the household are already part of the ritual cycle, and everyone ends up being a deity sooner or later. Protection can be secured from one's own family ancestors or the distantly dead, such as village ancestors with whom local people share a common ancestry.[46] The idea that the dead protect the living and continue a relationship with relatives is a feature in Japanese religiosity and attests to the importance of memorial rites for the dead in the contemporary context. According to Ohnuki-Tierney (1984), there is no single moment of death in Japanese cultural thought. Deceased people continue to be part of the household as ancestors, and death is both a biological and

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[46] As already noted, in the case of Takachiho, the major common ancestor is Amaterasu, the sun goddess.

social process.[47]

With sustained criticism over the expense of funerary and memorial practices, mainly associated with Buddhist temples in the contemporary public arena,[48] the continuation of elaborate and expensive funeral services[49] on the part of Japanese people – who complain while following these practices – has been explained in terms of cultural hegemony and obligation (*giri*: as observed by Tsuji, 2006). [50]Although there is a growing scholarship which illustrates how funerary rituals and Buddhist objects (such as the *butsudan* altar) are moving from the 'traditional' to secular commercial expressions – reflecting changes in society such as a move away from the extended family pattern (Rowe, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2011; Suzuki, 2000; Tsuji 2006; Nelson, 2008) – these tend to reflect more general, national trends and are not always contextualised in the locality.

Scholarship that has looked at funerary rituals in the rural sphere shows contrarily that there is *little* change in the perceptions of death or ritual taking place in local areas (Kim, 2012), and that even in the small island context of Yoron (with a population of 5,400), there are significant differences found in household practices between families (Machi, 2013b). This scholarship lends itself to a more

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[47] Continuing importance of ancestor rites has also been seen as the underpinning on which the household is based and defined by: "the fact that the *ie* remains an important institution despite recent economic changes is reflected in the numerous rituals centering on the houses and household members" (Moon, 1989, 107). In the 1980s despite expense, memorial rites increased for both the rich and poorer members of society and expensive tombstones and memorial tablets reflected the status of the deceased in the village as a display of wealth (Moon, 1989, 130).

[48] Criticism of funerals is now critiqued by scholars such as Covell (2005), and Rowe (2011).

[49] At their peak, funerals cost $30,000 dollars on average in 1997 (Tsuji, 2006) yet practices are changing and more simple, less expensive and secular funerals are being opted for many today (Rowe, 2011).

[50] 'Funerary Buddhism' (characterised by 'profiteering monks') has been connected with the long-term discourse of decline in the Buddhist studies scholarship that has stressed schools, founders, texts and patriarchs and has kept contemporary Buddhist practice outside the scholarship on Japanese religion (Covell and Rowe, 2004, 246): this will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

contextualised view over dominant mainstream, mainland generalisations. Furthermore, even with broad changes from 'traditional' to secular funerals taking place at the centre, there is still an emphasis upon the need for continual funerary/memorial ritual in new forms and a discussion of a post-*danka* Buddhism at the national level (Rowe, 2011). Additionally, there is also a discussion underway (in the media, and at sect-level) about the possibility of a style of Buddhism in Japan that could address social as well as spiritual needs in the community (Engaged Buddhism: see Mukhopadhyaya, 2005). These wider, national trends suggest that although there are changes in ritual form, funerary providers, and a broader discussion over the role of the temple in the twenty-first century, there is also continuity – as rituals, practices and ideas transform, rather than decline. However, the trend for secular funerals, memorials and graves that are not tied to the neighbourhood temple, is not yet prevalent in Takachiho and the local priests still hold a monopoly on funerals and memorials for the deceased as a core ritual service provider.

Recent scholarship has moved away from the postwar analysis of household practices of ancestor rites, and has now moved onto dynamics in social change and the effects on funerary practices, with a focus on nuclear families or those with no descendants to care for the grave or hold memorial services for deceased relatives, resulting in new ventures such as the scattering of ashes and 'eternal memorial graves' where the priests, rather than descendants, take on the burden of care (Rowe, 2011).[51] The focus on the individual consumer, in regard to ritual objects is also reflected by

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[51] Rowe (2011) has argued that while graves, funerals, memorials which signify interpersonal relationships *en* (bonds) with the dead remain crucial in modern Japanese society, there is increasing diversification in funerary and memorial practices which speeds up and downplays liminality; increasing separation between the corpse and the family with the medicalisation of the body (Rowe, 2000); and emphasis upon the consumer over ritual orthodoxy. The pacification and purification of the deceased spirit which was thought to be polluted by death is now no longer being performed in the same way as the ritual authority of the funeral industry increases and begins to affect public funerrary practices (Rowe, 2000).

Nelson (2008), who demonstrates that ancestral altars (*butsudan*) are undergoing rapid change: thus secular companies are marketing new images and design, allowing for an accommodation of modern sensibilities and spirituality in a highly competitive market that no longer depends on sect denomination, but allows for personal preferences. However, recent regional scholarship also shows that in the current rural sphere, the process of separating the spirit from the body is still performed with attention to ritual detail which enables the deceased to reach the position of ancestorhood by 'pacifying the soul of the dead', which is considered polluted in folk beliefs (Kim, 2012). This contradicts the idea that such liminal practices and beliefs surrounding the dead have declined with increasing modernity (Rowe, 2011), at least at the local level.

Fifty years ago, Ooms noted the demise of larger Shinto-based festivals that required the participation of the community and argued that: 'Sociologically speaking ancestor worship in the strict sense does not happen on a social scale larger than the *ie* and is thus more immune to the change of time' (1967, 226). However, with the *ie* in transition, this research will investigate the impact that social change has upon household religiosity, as the temple remains the core provider for household ritual needs. As Covell has noted, 'The *danka* temple in Japan is almost completely reliant on *danka* member families. Any change in family structure will almost certainly affect the *danka* temple' (Covell, 2005, 33). As changes at the household level are felt profoundly, and as secular service providers step in to replace the services formerly associated with Buddhist temples, the 'ancestor worship' that Ooms (1967) documented, is now no longer immune to the change of time but is changing with the times. While larger Shinto based festivals that attract tourists and require no formal connection to the shrine or locality in which they are performed can attract large

numbers of participants, often with the view to rejuvenating declining rural areas, it is now the turn of the temple (through its connections to ancestor worship within a closed parishioner system) that is experiencing the considerable effects of wider social, and specifically, family change. Therefore, this study seeks to understand the way in which the neighbourhood and temple are linked. It will also show how changing households as ritual units are creating anxieties for the temple managed as a household business by a clerical family.

1.5 Deconstructing 'Japanese Religion'

There is a vast literature on the various syncretic practices and sect-based traditions found in Japan by religious studies scholars, folklorists, as well as sectarian Buddhist and Shinto research centres that would be impossible to cover in any depth in this review. Instead I will focus on contemporary anthropological and religious studies research which uses ethnographic data, and which has stressed the communal aspect of religiosity in Japan and argued that Japanese people are neither Shinto, nor Buddhist but members of a common Japanese religiosity that is 'practically religious' and centred on 'this worldly benefits' (Reader and Tanabe 1998). The anthropological or religious studies framework, underscored by ethnography, reflects that in daily life religion is informed by the amalgamation of many practices that are also often social expressions with a religious element (such as participation in festivals). Indeed, most Japanese people do not describe themselves as 'religious'[52] or identify with the specific sect that they have inherited through the household. This has puzzled researchers, as it is clear that there are also very high levels of ritual practice reported in contemporary Japan. A figure of sixty to seventy percent of

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[52] In a similar vein to the majority of people who class themselves as 'English' who would be reluctant, on the whole (unless they are practicing members of the Church) to categorise themselves as 'religious', although they may visit a church occasionally, at Christmas for example.

people who claim to 'practice' religion (by virtue of visiting a shrine or temple) also report they do not 'believe'. Furthermore, sixty one percent of households have a *butsudan* (a sect-affiliated Buddhist altar) and sixty percent have a *kamidana* [神棚 a Shinto-oriented god shelf]. This has led to the evaluation that there are high levels of practice and low levels of belief in Japan[53] (Reader and Tanabe 1998).

In order to deconstruct this dynamic, firstly, it is important to note that there are problems in defining the concept of a 'belief'. Generally, anthropological studies surrounding 'belief' have been less concerned with the inner states of individuals but instead emphasise: 'the collective representation and social order of a particular society' (Needham, 1972, 6). As Needham has shown, the concept of belief is framed by a Christian tradition, and there are also problems in translation, often without a direct correlation to the specific notion of 'belief' that is being cross-culturally referenced and translated. Even within the English language, *belief* and *believe* are historical products that have assumed a character of their own (1972, 43).[54] Also, belief in Western traditions has tended to suggest belief in a god or an idol; yet in the Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist doctrine, Western ideas of belief are replaced by the quality that has been translated into English as 'faith' but which more specifically suggests a reliance upon, and gratitude towards, an intangible Other-power (that is not regarded as a creator of the universe that individuals are responsible towards, but instead considered a representation of interconnection and Oneness: Tanaka, 1997).

Furthermore, it is now acknowledged that Western systems of knowledge have prioritised text and the visual, over sensory modes and practices that embody

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[53] However, a survey in 2003 by Kokugakuin University shows that although only eleven percent of college students 'believe in a particular religion', sixty percent believe in gods or buddhas and only twenty percent deny their existence.

[54] Needham also cautions against generalised theories of what a certain group believes, as people do not believe what their culture has trained them to say (1972, 5).

bodily modes of knowing and awareness (Hume, 2007, 1- 5). Alongside this, there has been a conceptual assumption of the distance between human and divine in the Judaeo-Christian context, which does not find a counterpart in the Japanese case (Ozawa-de Silva, 2002). As Kuwayama observes: 'for the Japanese at large do not know, or even care about the separation of human and divine in the Occident. Even if they do, such knowledge is irrelevant to understanding their own belief' (2004, 91). Indeed, syncretic practices and the lack of separateness between human and divine can be seen as the hallmark of Japanese religiosity (Kitagawa, 1987).[55]

Syncretism is a key model in societies informed by Buddhism, as Spiro (1967); Terwiel, (1979); Tambiah, (1975); Kitiarsa (2005), have explored in the South-East Asian case. In the Japanese context, Buddhist scholars and priests have attempted to unravel the binaries of what is often considered 'problems' at the interface between Buddhist doctrine and folk custom (as Rowe, 2011 has noted). This reality is reflected in the ethnographic literature that has noted the high degree of integration of various practices. In the home, Nakamaki (2003) argues that there is a division of labour between the gods and buddhas where they are segregated according to time, place and occasion (2003, 18). Religious institutions also have a dual division of labor: Shinto shrines are concerned with purity and pollution and therefore oversee

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[55] Kitagawa (1987) argues that the Japanese worldview conceptualises life as a series of concentric circles and harmony of contrasts, which do not separate sacred and profane; and the binary oppositions of man and god do not feature in Japanese ontology. Earhart (1997) notes that *kami* can also be an aspect of personhood and the Emperor was worshipped until renouncing his divinity after World War Two. In many of the 'new religions', the founder believes themselves to be *kami* (Hori, 1968). This idea contrasts sharply with Judeo-Christian traditions, which tend to emphasize the distance between God and man and the hierarchical relations of nature to man or nature as an entity that should be protected by man. Sered, (1999, 172) argues that for Westerners, the conceptual universe is normally ordered by dichotomies of natural and supernatural, god and mortal, human and divine. However, this is not the case in Okinawa where all women are considered spiritual guardians imbued with sacred power to protect their menfolk and households (Kawahashi, 1992, 200; Wacker, 2003, 339). Binary oppositions of the sacred and profane are not influential in Okinawa and instead divinity is a vague potential, which can manifest itself anywhere and can be summoned through ritual. Dualities are further deconstructed both in the deities and persons: 'from the Japanese viewpoint, it is no blasphemy to have two opposite traits in the same person' (Kuwayama, 2004, 103).

life cycle rites such as birth and marriage, and specific rites of passage (Reader, 1991).[56] Buddhism in contrast, is linked to funeral services and facilitates the continuing relationship between the living and dead through memorial services and ancestor worship at the Buddhist altar in the home.

This has led Reader (1991) to assert that it is possible to be 'born Shinto, die Buddhist', with the increasingly popular Christian marriage ceremony in between[57]. In this respective division of labour, both Shinto and Buddhist rites can be seen as a dual function to control the system of social relations; and many anthropologists have argued that rites *are* the system (Bachnik, 1995). 'Some analysts of Japanese practices would argue that the doing of a ritual, in any case, is the key point; Japanese ritual practice is orthopractical: doing is believing, performativity is all' (Ivy, 1995, 138). However, this thesis notes that theoretical boundaries between life cycle and death rites are not so clear-cut and are much more blurred in practice.

Indeed, practice is crucial in understanding Japanese religion where embodied ritual action plays a dominant role, with syncretism as its defining characteristic. However it is important to contextualise the anthropological and religious studies approach that has charactersied syncretic religiosity as the defining feature of Japanese religion. As Reader (1991) has noted, anthropologists have tended to report on what can be observed and have noted the division of labour and complementary relationship between Shinto and Buddhism.[58] As recent scholarship shows, Buddhism

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[56] Rituals such as *schichi-go-san* (七五三) for ages 3-5-7, and the *yakudoshi* (厄年) inauspicious ages for men and women throughout their lives.

[57] Modern couples prefer to marry in a church or wedding hall, reflecting the current trend of adopting an expensive western 'white wedding' style adapted to suit Japanese tastes, Goldstein-Gidoni, Ofra, (1996).

[58] This has been categorised broadly in terms of Shinto for life cycle rites and Buddhism for death rites, but in practice this is not so clear cut: fieldwork shows that despite theoretical divisions, there are Shinto funerals and Buddhist weddings. Therefore, it is important to understand the practices not as

and Shinto have been constructed in relation to one another and forcibly separated due to political agendas that resulted in the separation of Shrine/Temple complexes that were originally often found together. This has led to the viewpoint that Shinto can be understood as co-constructed with the introduction of Buddhism and not the 'indigenous' religion of Japan as it was conceptualised in the pre-war period (Breen and Teeuwen, 2000; 2010; Bowring, 2005). Historically, Buddhism has been regarded as an imported religion from the continent and Shinto as the 'indigenous religion' of *kami*[59] (gods/deities/spirits) rooted in animism. However, scholarship shows the complex, syncretic nature of Buddhist and Shinto deities, official and folk practices that have occurred concurrently from pre-modernity into the present.[60]

The dominant theory in the literature on religion in Japan is that Japanese people petition for *genze riyaku* [現世利益 'this-worldly benefits', i.e. help with exams, safe childbirth] at both specific prayer temples and shrine complexes in a highly syncretic system which has led to the theory that the Japanese are neither 'Shinto' nor 'Buddhist', but instead members of a common religion centred on 'practical benefits' (Reader and Tanabe 1998, 53). This theory is supported by the

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clear-cut entities but co-constituted in a broader historical trajectory with overlapping dynamics.

[59] According to Nelson, (1996) anything uncontrolled, mysterious, powerful, or beyond our comprehension is what constitutes the *Kami*. However, the translated word 'god' or deity' lacks meaning and is not faithful to the Japanese idea in both ancient and modern times (Nelson, 1996, 27).

[60] The concept of *kami* was developed alongside Buddhism including the idea that *kami* could be saved by Buddhism. Additionally, *kami* protected the Buddhist Dharma, and in this mutual division of labour, shrine-temple complexes developed. The ideology of *Shin-butsu* – that *kami* and Buddha save people through mutual effort or as a single entity – is still accepted today. It was only with the Meiji government that Shinto and Buddhism came to be separated in a process called *shinbutsu bunri* whereby Buddhist monks could no longer serve a dual function as Shinto priests; yet in folk belief, *kami* and buddhas remained unseparated (Inoue, N. 1998, 4-5). The remains of this idea may offer an explanation for the contemporary context, where the syncretic system persists, and gods and buddhas are appealed to irrespective of Buddhist sect affiliation. Recent scholarship is now challenging the grand narratives of Japanese religion, and the binary division between Buddhism and Shinto is being re-evaluated by scholars such as Breen and Teeuwen (2010); and Como (2009) who argue that they are not the separate entities that have been suggested historically and that Buddhist and Shinto practices were created concurrently.

idea of *"kurushii toki no kamidanomi"* [苦しいとき神頼み] the *'turning to the gods in times of trouble'* approach, as people visit religious complexes on occasion to pray to the deity of a shrine or temple when they are in need] (Reader and Tanabe, 1998). In this way, shrines and prayer temples are viewed as 'one stop shops' for worldly benefits which influences people's lives even if they do not 'believe' with continuing shrine visits to 'be on the safe side' (Nelson, 2000).

In Reader and Tanabe's analysis of 'this worldly benefits' there is a characterisation of a common Japanese religion practiced throughout Japan that people can engage in irrespective of belief and sect affiliation, signified by their cultural membership as Japanese, rather than as members of a specific religious institution. It also addresses the economic aspect in the management of shrine complexes, as petitions and ritual services are paid for through financial 'offerings'. This is a useful category for understanding continued practice in Japanese society, particularly when people on the whole are ambivalent towards 'religion' and unconcerned about specifics, such as which Buddhist sect they belong to. In fact many only find out their sect-based affiliation upon death of a family member when they need to call a priest to perform a funeral (Rowe, 2011).

However, as Covell has pointed out, the evidence for the 'Practically Religious' approach (which emphasises amulets purchased at shrines and benefit-seeking pilgrimages) cannot be applied to the majority of neighbourhood *danka* temples that do not offer either; but instead are engaged with promoting otherworldly enlightenment and sect-based orthodoxy (Covell, 2005, 41). In the fieldwork, this became evident as priests disassociated themselves from 'folk' discourses, amulets and other 'this-worldly benefits': labeling the practices as 'superstitious'. Some priests would chide *danka* members openly for relying on talismans and would draw

attention to the fact that the sect discouraged idolisation or reverence towards material objects.

More broadly, however, the 'Practically Religious' approach (Reader and Tanabe, 1998) does put the unexplored social and everyday religious needs back into the scholastic framework.[61] However, there are limits to an approach that seeks to categorise 'Japanese religion' in its entirety as a 'common religion' or a cultural property, particularly when regional variation is taken into account. As Isomae (2005), and Shimazono (2000), have argued: it is important to deconstruct the meaning of 'Japanese religion' as a category. There is an inherent problem with the terminology and language surrounding the word religion, which in Japanese is *shūkyō* [宗教 *shū:* doctrine, *kyō:* sect]. The word itself did not appear until the end of the Meiji period (1868-1912), to describe the phenomenon of Christianity; it was only later applied to the Japanese case (Inoue, 1998). [62] Isomae argues that it is important to understand the plethora of religions *within* Japan as a *hybrid space* and move away from an a-historical image of uniqueness and Japaneseness that the category 'Japanese Religion' implies.[63]

Isomae notes that the current discourse surrounding 'Japanese Religion' is actually the result of: 'the dynamic movement of exchange and conflict between Westernisation and indigenisation involving multiple religious traditions –

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[61] This perspective perhaps follows on from a precedent set in Leach's 'Dialectic in Practical Religion' (1968) that describes practical religion for the 'ordinary' people, noting how theological scholarship concentrates on life after death and the 'otherworldly', while 'practical religion' is concerned with the here-and-now (Leach, 1968).

[62] The concept of religion tends to imply either Christianity or State Shintoism – from which people keen to distance themselves, and this may offer one explanation about why people are unlikely to associate themselves as religious and at the same time, regularly engage with ritual practice.

[63] Deconstructing a single category into a series of competing and overlapping elements shows how outside elements have been incorporated and have resulted in current practices that are now categorised as 'Japanese Religion'.

Christianity, Buddhism, Shinto, new religions, and folk religions' (2005, 235). This analysis that deconstructs 'Japanese Religion' as a single homogenous category is a foundation for framing further scholarship: as the term covers a multitude of sometimes mutually exclusive phenomena[64]. Additionally, in an era of globalisation, Dessì argues that a new definition that describes what Japanese religion *is*, and what it does, is needed (2013, 12). Due to the problems of classifying a common Japanese religion as a single process belonging to a mono-cultural and ethnic group, I propose to use the term 'religiosity' that Yang (2008), applies in the Chinese context. [65] It also attests to the importance of moving away from a grand narrative of 'Japanese Religion' and towards specific differences found in geographical locations that can tell us about differences between regions in Japan more broadly.

Another salient issue is that age, locality, gender, status and power differentials are sometimes swept away under the rubric of belonging to a collective 'Japaneseness'. Yet whose identity does this actually signify? Smyers (1999) demonstrates how various actors have differing relations to religious institutions, as well as towards the deities, explored through ethnography of the Inari shrine/temple complex, demonstrating how one space can have a plethora of personal meanings.[66] Similarly in this thesis, through an exploration of one ritual and social space – with connections to the neighbourhood household as ritual units – the ethnography can

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[64] State Shinto and 'folk' Shinto practices are considered to be the antithesis of each other (Inoue, 1998).

[65] Yang (2008) argues that the term encapsulates notions of belief, practices, rituals, ancestor worship, as well as philosophical traditions such as Confucianism and Taoism, alongside folk beliefs and shamanism; this category is able to embrace a wider sphere of practice and practitioners.

[66] Smyers (1999) notes that two Buddhist priests enact the same rituals with different perspectives. One priest believed that his job was to conduct memorial for the dead because this is custom of Buddhism in Japan, not necessarily because the spirit world actually exists (reinforcing the notion of religion as part of *this worldly* concerns). However, another priest explained that all religions must deal with the *unseen* world. In this instance, two priests who undertook the same training in a religion with concrete teachings had a completely different approach towards the meanings and appropriation of those teachings.

demonstrate that there are competing voices *inside* the temple setting; and show that neither parishioners nor priests are homogenous categories. Furthermore, the intricacies of social relations alongside economics, doctrine and ritual that underscore modern temple life can build a picture of the differing agendas found at one site, and move away from the portrayal of a homogenous culture informed by collective religion; while noting that obligations, exchange, history, locality and notions of the *unseen* inform a religiosity that has often been based on what anthropologists have been able to observe and quantify. To summarise, the dominant 'practically religious' approach was effective in looking beyond sect divides at the level of 'lived religion' outside of grand institutional narratives; yet negatively it can fall into Japanese-religion-as-cultural-hegemony or 'Japaneseness' by equating a common religion intimately connected with a specific cultural and ethnic identity that may not be applicable to all, which this thesis will demonstrate.

As religious studies scholars (Vásquez and Marquardt, 2003; Vásquez, 2007) have noted, in a period of global flows, it is important to understand that the 'little religions', have been marginalised by the study of 'Real Religion', as large religious institutions and holy books. Yet there has always been a religion that lives outside of institutions, 'extra-institutionally' which Vásquez calls the 'little religions'. These have been considered strange or superstitious because they are syncretic, and mix the sacred and the profane with multiple traditions, occuring at the margins of sanctioned religious authority, texts and official sect practices (Vásquez, 2007). This category of 'little religions', could be applied to ancestor consciousness in Takachiho, symbolised by the *butsudan*, the grave and *butsudan* rites (referred to as 'ancestor worship' in the postwar scholarship by anthropologists, and now referred to as 'Buddhist memorial/funerary rites' in the contemporary scholarship).

The 'little religions' take place in households and are performed both privately by individuals, and publicly with the invitation of the Buddhist priest at significant times in the Buddhist calendar, or according to the personal funerary/memorial cycle of the household. Vásquez argues that these 'little religions' are becoming re-centered worldwide because they offer localised, situated meanings as people navigate the changes, chances and confusions generated by the increasingly connected global context that brings transnationalism and imported migrant religions to new contexts. Furthermore, 'little religions' reach new audiences as homogeneity of global culture creates a vacuum as people seek unique experiences that local techniques can offer.[67]

Figure 1.6 *Kagura* at a community centre, recorded by national television cameramen

Concepts affiliated with the 'little religions' in the Takachiho context can also be seen as a tool to navigate change, alongside global flows bringing transnational actors into the national sect-based and local temple-based sphere. These

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[67] In the Japanese context Reader and Tanabe (1998) have also noted that the 'great traditions' have dominated Religious Studies scholarship. This is reflected in the case that famous areas such as Kyoto, Tokyo and the Shikoku pilgrimage have been explored yet the 'little traditions' which feature Shinto/Buddhist/'folk' influenced practices found in households in rural areas are usually found within broader ethnographies of rural spaces and ritual (Martinez, 2004); marriage and the household (Hendry, 1981); and contemporary tourism with a spiritual dimension (Daniels, 2001).

factors can be understood as smaller micro-currents in a broader discourse of a globalising 'Japanese religion', that is moving beyond borders (Dessì, 2013). Recent scholarship is beginning to explore how local, national and global religious spheres overlap more than ever before in an institutional context (Dessì, 2013): with former origins in the migration of Buddhism from India through the continent, fusing with socio-cultural and ritual patterns, and transforming into what is now seen as a specific 'Japanese Buddhism'.[68] On the other hand, Buddhism generated in Japan, such as the Jōdo Shinshū Pure Land sect (the sect this thesis focuses upon), took root in the United States with the migration of Japanese people in the prewar period and continues to evolve in an American context (Tanaka, 2007) and more recently is now taking root in the European context.[69]

This thesis can contribute to the exploration of the links between 'Japanese' Buddhism within Japan and outside it, by documenting the experiences of a non-Japanese religious actor embedded within a local Japanese neighbourhood and temple context explored at the level of the everyday. Contemporary anthropological research connecting social change, globalisation, and religion is reflected in the scholarship of the new religions movements[70] in the urban sphere; however the established religions (over thousands, rather than hundreds of years) are overlooked a-historically as static

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[68] Conversely, the spread of Japanese Zen Buddhist teachings to the United States was as instigated by the activities of Daisetzu T. Suzuki in the American context.

[69] 'Japanese' deities who cross borders are also a feature of globalising Japanese religiosity: found in the practices associated with the bodhisattva Jizo in Hawai'i for safeguarding people who spend their lives in and around the sea (for example: fishermen and surfers, Clark, 2007) or the practice of having shrines installed in overseas branches of Japanese companies to encourage economic activity and affirm Japanese identity (Reader, 1991).

[70] According to Hori, (1968, 219) the New Religious Movements are comprised of charismatic leaders; apocalyptic signs; ecstatic behaviour; syncretic doctrines, and appear at times of crisis, such as immediately after World War Two (Hori, 1968, 224). However, despite being 'new' – as opposed to the 'traditional' shrine and temple based institutions that evolved over hundreds of years – and often replicate principles in the established religions in contemporary form.

institutions that do not warrant investigation in terms of social change, (which is why scholars such as Covell, 2005; and Rowe 2011, observe the need for more contemporary scholarship). As contemporary life moves in new and varied directions, established religions are changing; and this study attempts to illustrate this by building on the work of scholars who are already investigating daily Buddhism as it is practiced in Japan (Covell, 2005; Rowe, 2011).

The dominant functionalist argument has led to a framework whereby practice separated from ideas of the *unseen,* or in Western terms 'belief', has led to the idea that religion in the form of 'tradition' acts as a marker of belonging and defines identity of 'the Japanese'. Such belonging suggests that it cannot incorporate those who are Other. Yet Reader and Tanabe have already reported that there is 'open access to foreigners' as Japan has a fluid religion (1998, 31). However the role of non-Japanese in 'traditional' religion has been relatively ignored and this is something that needs to be documented. Equating a common religiosity as a property of 'Japanese culture' does not have scope to incorporate non-Japanese practitioners: the most problematic for this case study. This was the initial motivation for fieldwork in the Takachiho area while based at a Jōdo Shinshū (Pure Land) Buddhist temple managed by a Japanese *jūshoku* [住職 head priest] married to a temple wife and ordained priest who is also a British citizen. Indeed, this is a clear example that religiosity in Japan is inclusivist, in that it has a capability of accepting and even encouraging the participation of non-Japanese within its parameters, and a trip to any shrine on the tourist map in Tokyo will show a plethora of *ema* plaques[71] written in English, showing some level of participation and non-Japanese tourism to shrines.

Also, the Jōdo Shinshū sect has an international division and a forum for non-

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[71] *Ema* are votive boards on which people can write petitions, and display in the grounds of the shrine.

Japanese temple wives and priests within its borders nationally and internationally. Therefore, in a globalised local sphere, where a Buddhist priest is also a British national, religion in Japan needs to be reframed according to even more fluid ideas about 'Japanese religion'; as it is paradoxically inclusive, even while emphasising belonging. It has been assumed that non-Japanese do not have a stake in this, but it is not only in the figure of the *bōmori* [坊守 temple wife][72] and other non-Japanese practitioners, but in the explosion of English amulets at shrines; the interest in Japanese 'traditions' (often with a religious dimension) worldwide; the global spread of 'Japanese' Buddhism; the researchers and international exchange teachers and students who participate in local festivals that demonstrates the category needs to be rethought in the contemporary era.

Debates about migrant religion usually focus upon migrants bringing religions and traditions with them. But in this case study, a migrant in the figure of the *bōmori* has adapted to the dominant religious institution, which she has joined through marriage, in order to have a status and a role in the household and society. Perhaps there needs to be more investigation into the adoption of such religiosity, rather than the one-way process documented in terms of migrants bringing religions with them. Vásquez (2003) has shown the multinational dimension of religions that have found roots in one place and adapted to another context as they cross boundaries between Latin America and the United States. Yet what about people who adapt to the local religion in Japan? What are their various motivations and how does this lend itself to a broader narrative of identity, and the re-mapping and re-territorialising of the self and religiosity in a globalising world? These issues will be explored and raised by

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[72] The category is used to mean a temple wife, or temple wives in the plural colloquially and in sect discourse, but in its original meaning also implies: 'assistant to the head priest/temple representative' and alternatively, 'temple caretaker'.

this thesis.

Yet even more crucially, this thesis seeks to re-centre the 'folk', and the 'little religions' within the wider discussion of Japanese religiosity by using an anthropological perspective; by exploring the meaning and practice of daily Temple Buddhism for local people within a wider, syncretic and cosmological context. Previous Buddhist and historical scholarship has emphasised the importance of sect-based affiliations; and current religious studies and anthropological theories have pointed to a common religion based on practical benefits. However, this thesis seeks to understand the role of the 'little religions', nestled among sect affiliations and outside the dominant discourse of mainstream, mainland Japan that continues to inform the discourse on Japanese Religion until the present day. Having sketched out the key literature that relates to this thesis, I will now turn to the main research question and fieldwork site in order to contextualise my research aims further.

(Above) A statue depicting a *kagura* god, just off the main high street

(Overleaf) *Tensho* (Amaterasu) *bashi*: Japan's fourth highest bridge

Chapter Two: The 'field'
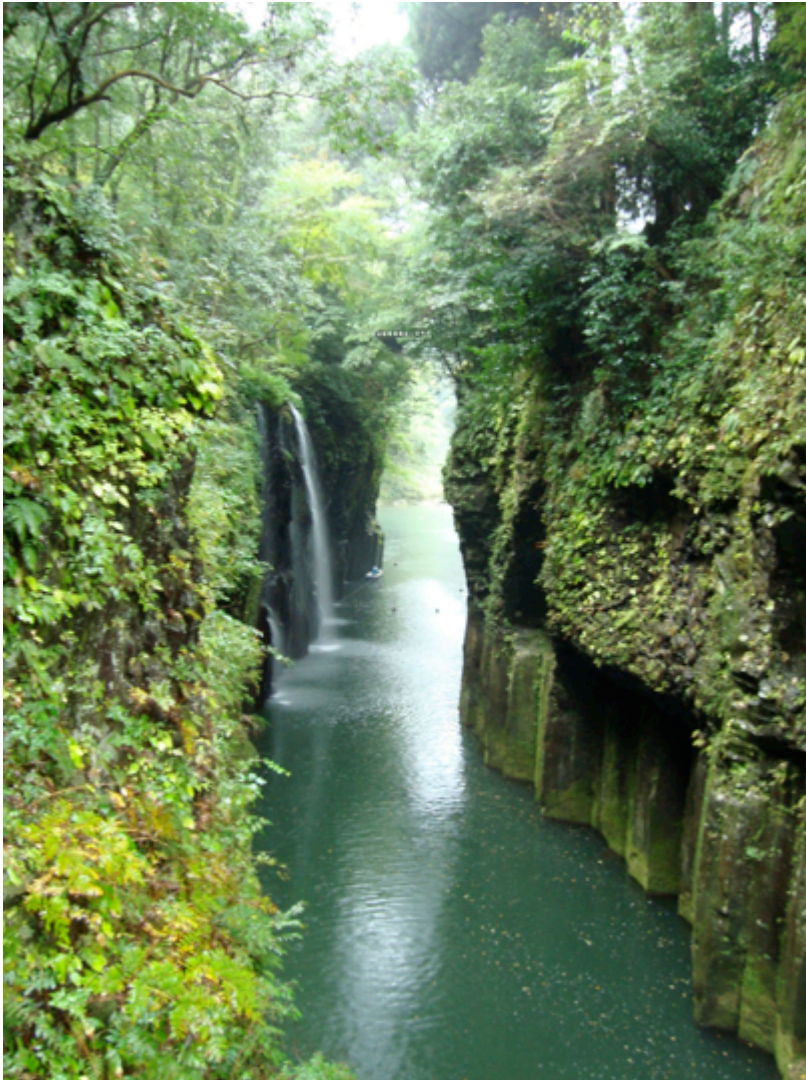
Figure 2 Takachiho gorge: a tourist hotspot

This chapter will consider the research site, the research methods and the theoretical framework for this thesis, closing with the structure of the following ethnographic chapters. The data generated by the fieldwork is informed by three factors: the temple where I lived during fieldwork, the households connected to the temple as *danka*, and the wider social and the wider religious landscape in the local setting. This chapter will outline the geographical and demographic landscape of Takachiho town before considering the specifics of the main Pure Land Jōdo Shinshū temple explored through participant observation in this research. To begin, I will explore the

theoretical issues surrounding the main research question: Why do 'Buddhist' Household rituals continue despite social changes?

> Anyone researching modern and contemporary religion is familiar with problems arising from the assumption that religion is somehow an anomaly in the modern world… Secularization provides the rubrics for explaining religion's disappearance from most political discourse, but it does not suggest an explanation for the continued formation of religious organizations, their social activism, or for the continued salience of the older, established organizations referenced by "traditional Buddhism," Japanese Buddhist sects, their temples, priests, and parishioners. The rhetoric of decline hinders the development of a theoretical stance on modern religion that recognizes these empirical realities as normal and unexceptional.   (Hardacre, 2004, 390)

The above analysis suggests that the current theoretical framework takes for granted the assumption that religion declines with modernity; and this can be seen as a legacy of the secularisation thesis as a principle embodied within modernity. However, in the contemporary context, as Asad has noted: "if anything is agreed upon, it is that a straightforward narrative of progress from religious to the secular is no longer acceptable" (2003, 1). Alongside the reinterpretation of the secularist thesis in the contemporary arena is the reappraisal of the nature of modernity. Asad (2003, 12-14) argues that 'modernity' is a series of projects that certain people in power seek to achieve rather than a verifiable object. 'Modernity is not primarily a matter of cognizing the real but of living-in-the-world. Since this is true of every epoch, what is distinctive about modernity *as a historical epoch* includes modernity as a political-economic project' (2003,14).

Asad argues that secularism is an aspect of the politico-economic project of modernity, which aims to transcend the dividing forces of gender, class, and religious identities and replace them with a unifying secular experience. In contrast, in the 'pre-modern' society, the state interacts with local identities without pursuing such transcendence; and in retrospect – from the Western perspective – the pre-modern becomes associated with enchantment (2003, 5-14). In contrast, secularism is a centrally anchored concept in modernity – even though contemporary societies are

heterogeneous, hybrid, and contain overlapping features throughout the globe. Subsequently, Asad argues that modernity is not a historical epoch *per se*, but an embodiment of 'the West' as an agenda and a hegemonic political goal. Therefore, Asad argues that it is important to understand the ways in which modernity (the 'West') and its politico-economic goals are maintained, and the consequences of the agendas that are purused in the name of modernity.

> It is right to say that 'modernity' is neither a totally coherent object nor a clearly bounded one, and that many of its elements originate in relations with the histories of peoples outside Europe. Modernity is a project—or rather, a series of interlinked projects—that certain people in power seek to achieve. The project aims at institutionalizing a number of (sometimes conflicting, often evolving) principles: constitutionalism, moral autonomy, democracy, human rights, civil equality, industry, consumerism, freedom of the market—and secularism. It employs proliferating technologies (of production, warfare, travel, entertainment, medicine) that generate new experiences of space and time, of cruelty and health, of consumption and knowledge. The notion that these experiences constitute "disenchantment"—implying a direct access to reality, a stripping away of myth, magic and the sacred—is a salient feature of the modern epoch.   (Asad, 2003, 13)

The secularised modern and the sacred pre-modern are dichotomous from a situated and contextualised political (and cultural) perspective of the West; but in Asad's view 'modernity' is neither totally coherent, nor a clearly bounded object, and many of its elements originate in relationship with the histories of peoples outside Europe. Additionally, categories of 'secular' and 'religious'—now applied with authority in public life—have been constructed in relation to one another historically.[73]

What issues contributed to the divide of these concepts? Initially, anthropology and theology played a role in categorising a range of practices, beliefs, and expressions (what Asad calls 'social usages'), found in various overlapping aspects of social life, which were then extracted from their roots and labelled 'religious' (as a supposedly universal human experience, and thus a subject of

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[73] Freethinkers introduced the terms 'secularism' and 'secularist' into English in the mid-nineteenth century, trying to avoid more dogmatic terms ('atheists and infidels') that implied immorality (Asad, 2003).

comparative ethnology) in a previous era of anthropological scholarship. In addition, 'freethinkers', who rejected the ideas of the day in the middle of the nineteenth century, coined the term 'secular' in order to avoid accusations of immoral heresy by the Church. This juxtaposition and co-creation of conceptual terms – now taken for granted as opposites – has a lasting effect upon epistemology and 'common knowledge'. However, their duality obscures the submerged reality that the concepts were co-created. Yet nonetheless, in modern life they seem to be neatly divided in a straightforward process in which: 'nonmodern peoples are invited to assess their adequacy' as a benchmark (Asad, 2003, 14). Yet even in the West, dividing lines between state and religion are not homogenous.[74]

In the current conceptualism of the secularisation thesis (termed neo-secularisation, see: Habermas, 2008), religion moves into the private sphere, and people have individual choice over a religious market place, as religion declines and loses power and authority in the public domain, yet may remain in the private sphere (Berger, 1979). In this case study, the temple is deeply embedded in economics and the social and political life of the area. It is also separated from the state in the constitution, and yet tied to the state: receiving tax breaks for performing a 'public service' (Rowe, 2011). Buddhism has been entwined with the state historically and politically since its conception (Bowing, 2005), specifically in the Tokugawa period and the conception of the temple-*danka* system (Marcure, 1985).[75] In the contemporary context, the temple and sect hierarchy aligns itself with a concept of

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[74]Asad (2003) notes that if we look more closely it becomes apparent that even in Western countries associated with modernity, we find that in France both state and citizens are secular; whereas in Britain, the state is connected to religion while the people are mostly non-religious—yet in the United States it is opposite, where the state is secular and most people categorise themselves as religious.

[75] Although some scholars are now beginning to challenge this view: see Rambelli and Reindeer (2012).

modernity that has suppressed 'folk' practices historically (seen in the separation of folk and State Shinto in the prewar period), and which now simply regards them as 'superstitious'[76]. However, the separation of religion and state in legal terms has influenced academic and theoretical frameworks, and generated data—consciously or unconsciously—that is in allignment with the wider discourse of modernity in the contemporary context.

This is illustrated by the Japanese case, where van Bremen (1995), argues that under the influence of modernisation theories and epistemology, students of Japan have until recently held that mysticism and shamanistic practices were disappearing as a result of urbanisation and industrialisation, which is not strictly the case (as research by Blacker, 1992; Ivy, 1995 has observed). In order to understand industrialised societies it is important to see beyond the apparent secularisation (van Bremen, 1995). However, the quantification of secularisation in 'the Japanese case' is still a research agenda, albeit with caveats that take into account the broader problem of quantifying practices or concepts that subvert from Western norms of 'religion' and take into account a secular constitution (Davis, 1992). However, in order to transcend the secularist/religious framework that Asad has problematised[77] – rather than be drawn into it further – this research will document the practices and cosmology of a religiosity that is specific to place, in an area where spiritual principles are still considered a crucial facet of identity, and informs daily life.

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[76] 'Superstition' has now been deconstructed by anthropologists and regarded more in terms of practices outside the mainstream, rather than as something inherently illogical and unmodern that the term derogratively implies (Asad 2003, 35).

[77] This is important because as Asad notes, representations of "the secular" and "the religious" in modern and modernising states meditate people's identities, help shape their sensibilities and guarantee their experiences (Asad, 2003, 14).

Therefore, the research starts with the premise that secularism is not a living reality for the people in this case study.

This reflects the wider perception that even in the contemporary period, where religion and state is firmly separated in the constitution, religiosity is informed and shaped by a historical legacy of syncretic practice in which Buddhism, 'Shinto'[78] and folk beliefs play an important role. Japan as a whole has a high proportion of religious practitioners, and ninety five million (or seventy five percent) of all Japanese people are Buddhist (Covell, 2005, 3), and over ninety five percent of the population were classified as 'Shinto' according to the Japanese Agency for Cultural affairs (Reader, 1991) – with the majority engaging with both practices. Despite this, although *dentō bukkyō* [伝統仏教 'Traditional' Buddhism] or *kisei bukkyō* [既製仏教 'Established' Buddhism][79] (characterised by *danka* households affiliated to a neighbourhood temple) is the largest form of organised religion in Japan: 'Scholars have all but ignored it' (Covell, 2005, 4).

Instead, the dominant focus of the postwar scholarship in religious Studies and the anthropological approach has been upon the New and the New new religions, partly due to the effects they have had in modern Japanese society in tandem with social change, but also because of the perceived dangerous and threatening elements they contain to society, as Covell (2005); Reader and Tanabe (1998); Rowe (2011)

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[78] There are problems with classifying 'Shinto' as religion. It does not have a sacred book, a set of coherent practices, and is a collection of competing traditions that have been adopted in the process of constructing Shinto historically in relation to the introduction of Buddhism from the continent. Despite this, it is sometimes refered to as Japan's 'native' or 'indigenous' religion.

[79] This refers to Buddhism that was established by founders before the 1600's (Covell, 2005, 4). However Covell notes that this term is problematic for members of the sects who regard the term as implying an old-fashioned approach, or one allied with state interests. The term is also used comparatively to differentiate between the old and new religious movements. Covell uses the term 'Temple Buddhism' to describe the type of Buddhism found 'in the tens and thousands of Buddhist temples scattered across Japan' (2005, 7).

have noted.[80] Yet the minority of people (generally young and urban) who are active in new religious affiliations cannot be compared to the forty three million people who inherit a neighbourhood temple through the household.[81] In stark contrast to the scholastic treatment offered to the New religions and their members, who are situated empirically within contemporary life, Buddhism is considered a-historically as 'traditional' and static: a comparison point from which to understand the 'new religions'.[82] Yet the empirical reality and ethnographic scholarship is showing major changes in Traditional Buddhism (Covell 2005; Rowe, 2011), particularly due to the affiliation of temples with the household, both of which are in flux and transition.

According to Rowe (2007), negative associations with funerary Buddhism and profiteering monks, alongside the modernist narrative of the decline of Buddhism in Japan and an emphasis on the study of the 'New Religions',[83] has contributed to a lack of scholarship on contemporary Buddhism. Buddhist temples have been highly criticised in recent years both in academic literature and public discourse for their expensive funerary and memorial services (referred to in the previous chapter), and summarised by the derogatory phrases 'funerary Buddhism', and 'profiteering monks'. This suggests that priests are primarily concerned with making money from the dominant religious services they provide, and scholars have cited such factors for the decline of Buddhism nationally (Rowe, 2007, 452).

Similarly, the practice of *Mizuko kuyō* [水子供養 rituals for aborted or

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[80] A reality in the 'Aum incident': a 1995 sarin attack on the Tokyo subway by the Aum shinrikyo movement: see Pangi, 2011.

[81] As Covell has argued, the new religions cannot be understood in isolation apart from Temple or Buddhism although most works dismiss Traditional Buddhism as old-fashioned and corrupt (2005, 4).

[82] New religions often contain Buddhist and Shinto elements (Covell 2005, 4).

[83] "New Religions" (although some date from the nineteenth century) are characterised by charismatic leaders, apocalyptic signs, ecstatic behaviour, syncretic doctrines and appear at times of crisis (Hori, I. 1968).

miscarried fetuses in Buddhist temples] has caused controversy due to the financial aspects involved (Hardacre, 1997). Funeral rites and the dissatisfaction of the public with Buddhism in general are debated in broadcasting and public discourse as the general public moves away from Buddhist funeral rites towards those specialist secular agencies who offer a host of tailored services for modern lifestyles and sensibilities (Suzuki 2000; Nelson 2008; Rowe 2011). Indeed, economics are an important consideration in any discussion related to Japanese religious institutions. Donations for amulets, the offering of Buddhist alms, the maintenance of temple and shrines, and the tax exemption for religious centres places religious institutions as firmly linked with profit and economic processes both in the literature and the public imagination (Nelson, 2008; Rowe, 2011).

However, because of the dominant economic critique (that has obscured and overshadowed any other consideration), Rowe argues that: 'Twentieth-century Japanese Buddhism has been almost entirely neglected by scholars, both in Japan and the West' (2007, 452) and calls for more investigation into contemporary Buddhism as it is practiced. To date, there is a lack of ethnographic research that focuses upon neighbourhood temples, yet shrines (often well-known ones) and festival practices have been a topic of anthropological inquiry.[84] Furthermore, an anthropological study of a neighbourhood Buddhist temple situated within social life and connected to the local community are few and far between (with the exception of Covell, 2005 and Takarabe, 2011).[85] Existing research on Buddhism in Japan often takes a historical

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[84] For example, Nelson, (1996); Smyers, (1999); Ashkenazi, (1993); Averbuch; (1995) Bestor, (1984).

[85] In Japanese see: Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya (2005, 2010), for an analysis of Engaged Buddhism in Japan/globally; and Takarabe, Megumi (2011) for the establishment, development and accommodation of the Jōdo Shinshū sect and the practice of Temple Buddhism in Amami Island, whose broader context of religiosity is closer to Okinawa (i.e. shamanism and folk belief), rather than the 'practical religion' of Shrine/Temple petitioning indicative of religious activity in mainland Japan (as Reader and Tanabe, 1998, have argued).

and sectarian perspective,[86] and the dominant religious studies framework has been criticised as consistently prioritising the specifics of sect and doctrine over the ways in which 'ordinary people' experience Buddhism and its associated practices on a day-to-day level. Although it has been noted that 'folk' practices signicantly influence Temple Buddhism (Covell, 2005; Rowe, 2011), memorial rites in the contemporary period have been approached and viewed through the lens of generalised Buddhist doctrine and practices at the national level. This thesis will contribute to a situated, localised understanding in the overlap and divergences between sect-based discourses articulated by the priests, and instead explore an ancestor-based consciousness practiced by local people.

In order to address the need for more research on Buddhist institutions from the perspective of local people who are intimately engaged with the temple and clerical family, this study therefore focuses on a 'traditional' Buddhist temple established over four hundred and fifty years ago, and a member of the Jōdo Shinshū school of Pure Land Buddhism. It aims to transcend the dominant critique of funerary Buddhism and profiteering monks (that has already been much debated) and instead moves beyond the temple gates to understand the ways in which local people appropriate the temple, (while recognising that the temple is first and foremost a household business for the clerical family who manage the complex). Therefore, instead of revisiting the nation-wide Buddhist 'funerary problem' that is an issue particularly in the urban sphere, this thesis will consider aspects which have not yet received attention, such as: the relationship between priests and *danka*, and the ritual needs of the household in which the Buddhist priests play an important ritual and a social role.

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[86] For a historical analysis of Japanese Buddhism see Bowring (2005).

The thesis will also consider the main rituals outside funeral ceremonies are now receiving attention in the growing scholarship of living Buddhism (Rowe 2011, Kim, 2012, Suzuki, 2013). Instead it will consider rituals that are associated with Buddhism and practiced as part of a broader syncretism in the household itself: the visits of the priest to perform rituals in front of the *butsudan* (Buddhist altar) called *omairi*; the *hōji* (memorial services that take place over a series of weeks and years after a funeral in the home) and *obon*, the ancestral day of the dead, that is linked to Buddhism in the public imagination and is also a nationally observed festival throughout Japan. *Obon* practices tied to locality and public festival have already been a staple in the anthropological literature (Ashkenzai, 1993; Bestor, 1989; Nelson, 1996). In addition, ethnography of a temple event will also be explored; and the inner spheres of the households, and the clerical family as a unit will also be considered.

A central question during fieldwork, was why people would continue to sponsor the temple—and by extension, the clerical family—particularly when regarding the persistent negative media and public discourses on traditional temples and their subsequent low reputation in the national sphere. The thesis seeks to unpack assumptions and understand why the household, and household rituals associated with Buddhism remain crucial in the locality; how they are shaped by social changes, and the impact this has upon ritual futures both for local people and the neighbourhood temple itself. In order to investigate these issues, it situates Buddhist ritual within a broader, locally informed religiosity, in order to understand the conjunctures between sect-informed practices taught by the priests, and the understanding of the purposes of these rituals for local people.

As Rowe has noted: 'The study of contemporary Japanese Buddhism cannot limit itself to what occurs behind the temple gate' (2011, 9), noting the importance of

multi-situated rites and graves as: 'central sites of social expression and negotiation for the living, not the dead' (2011, 35). Outside the dominant discourse of decline, this thesis will explore the impact of social changes evident in the *danka*-temple households. This can tell us about changes in wider households and religiosity, as it explores the individual negotiations and desires of local people, the effects of global flows, and a more multi-cultural rural society than dominant research on mainstream Japan has allowed for. It can therefore illustrate specifics that contradict mainstream findings, as well as contribute to the understanding of the contemporary reality of rural lives, situated within twenty-first century transitional 'Japan' more broadly.

The research will investigate the temple and the extended household (both thought to be in terminal decline), and ask why these institutions remain important to local lives. It will look at how the household utilises the temple, and reverse the idea that it is a one-way process, where only the temple benefits and profits from the *danka* system. These issues will be considered alongside the understanding that families are changing worldwide (Giddens, 2002), describing how local places and individuals are affected by global flows as much as elite Cosmopolitans (Appadurai, 2012). Therefore, this thesis attempts to portray that there is more than one story; that nuances, disjunctures, continuity and change shows the local to be both territorialised *and* connected to other spaces – and this is identified as characteristic of this moment in time.

In exploring these issues this thesis will also contribute to the much needed scholarship on 'Established' or Temple Buddhism, (Covell, 2005; Rowe, 2011); the role of ritual in modernity; and explore how rural spaces are connected to national and global worlds. These factors pose issues relevant to a changing Japan and 'Japaneseness' nationwide. The research is influenced by an anthropological

framework that prioritises local spaces (the specific), over dominant discourses (the general), which can challenge homogenous assumptions and the importance of locally situated daily religiosity over grand narratives of religion. Lastly, it conceptualises the contemporary era as one in which mixed temporalities (tiempos mixtos) can be seen as a conceptual device – that reflects the empirical reality – in order to transcend the notions of linear progression from the traditional to the modern, the sacred to the secular, as bounded entities, or a replacement from one to the next. Instead, it will demonstrate that these conceptual temporalities often have more in common with each other than they have in opposition; and this understanding embodies the theoretical underpinnings of the research.

2.1 Demographics

The larger towns situated in coastal areas in Miyazaki prefecture have attracted industry and consumed smaller village units into their municipal jurisdiction[87] and large scale farming has been more viable due to the extended areas of flat land. However, Takachiho, deep in the mountains – with its spectacular geography of gorges, caves and snow-capped mountains in winter – has been notoriously difficult to develop with weak transport links.[88] According to figures from official documents

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[87] Meaning that many villages now longer exist, having been amalgamated into a wider town area or amalgamated with other villages in a process known as *gappei*. This has been the fate of the hamlet and wider village where I first lived in Japan (Unama, 'Kitago son', Higashisuki-gun, Miyazaki prefecture) that also now no longer 'exists' although people are still living there, and calling it by its former name.

[88] A train line from the coastal city of Nobeoka to Takachiho was suspended in 2005 after parts were destroyed by a typhoon. Indeed, Takachiho is in a remote location in the middle of the southwesterly island of Kyushu. Nestled in steep mountainous forest, access involves extended travelling on minor roads that are constantly under construction. It is a three-hour car journey to reach the prefectural airport in Miyazaki, and a ninety-minute flight to Tokyo. Therefore it is regarded both by local people and those outside as '*inaka*' (the countryside), because it remains dependent upon agriculture and is also outside the mainland, mainstream image that characterises central urban spaces that evokes 'Japan' when discussed in general terms (Mock, 2014). Not only is it peripheral it also hovers at the margins, at the tip of the prefecture, bordering on Oita and Kumamoto prefecture, and shares closer ties with

sourced from the local government authority during fieldwork in 2011, Takachiho had a population of 14,280 (it has since decline to 13,276 as of July 1st 2014), spread out over 60 square kilometers in a mountainous region with a network of small roads[89] that climb steeply in order to reach remote hamlets affiliated to the town. This current population is almost half the figure of 29,901 in 1950. Currently, the numbers of children (ages nought to twenty) are half the figures of those over the retirement age of sixty-five. The above statistical representation indicates that Takachiho has a declining birthrate, an aging population, and such features are typical of rural areas nation-wide, shown in the previous chapter.

The majority of people do not live in the small two-street town centre itself but in the wider Takachiho area that is classified into six hamlets (*buraku*), which have their own administrative structures and hamlet organisations, several community centres in each, services (a couple of shops, a day-care centre for the elderly and infants) a community centre and a specific identity.[90] Land ownership is categorised into forest, fields and rice paddies, and the overwhelming majority of work is derived from farming, forestry and employment in the local government. Construction is another major employment sector and the majority of inhabitants are involved in household-run businesses in the farming, service or construction sector. There are ten schools, made up of five primary (ages six to twelve), four middle schools (ages

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them, yet remains part of Miyazaki prefecture. The nearest urban centre is Kumamoto city, eighty kilometers away.

[89] Some of which are not detected on car navigation maps, meaning that tourists and visitors often get lost.

[90] According to sources during fieldwork, the hamlets were very distinct thirty years ago but with increasing communications they have become more connected, yet retain customs, practices and social ties based on generations that continue to make them very distinct; furthermore, they are geographically spread out and it can take an hour or more of travelling to reach some areas from the town centre.

twelve to fifteen) and one high school (ages fifteeen and eighteen). There are six pre-schools (ages zero to six) and a large hospital in the centre of town.

Figure 2.1 Main intersection on Takachiho high street

As Möhwald has noted, Japanese rural society has historically been based on hamlets［部落 *buraku*］of fifty to one hundred households. The prewar structure was close-knit and hierarchical; at the top were wealthy landlords and at the bottom were tenant farmers who were dependent on landlords. In this highly stratified picture, religious events were pivotal to give a sense of social unity (Möhwald, 2004, 262-4). It is also important to note that before the postwar distribution of land the temple was also a wealthy landlord. Indeed, in the key temple in this research, land[91] was still held that was contracted out to neighbourhood farmers to cultivate.

However, it is also important to note, that although the immediate postwar literature until the mid-1970s stressed the *honke*［本家 stem unit of the main household］and the *bunke*［分家 branch households of subsidiary family members]

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[91] Temple owned land includes rice fields, the surrounding temple grounds (co-owned with the *danka*), and a mountain.

this was never the only story. The importance of group relations stemming from the family-as-a-business, the continuity of village relations and the household as a unit – that culminated in the dominant model of Japan as a 'vertical society' (Nakane, 1970) with lifetime employment practices based on the understanding of the household as an economic unit and hierarchical village model, belied the corresponding realities that households often die out; people move in and out of rural societies; and that people often resign from work, or are forced out of positions (Smith, 1985, 43). Furthermore, parallel to hierarchical patterns are horizontal ones of same-age affiliations and friendship networks, which are significant throughout life stages and were reported on from the outset in the ethnographic literature (Embree, 1939; Yoneyama, 1973). The study of horizontal relationships were crucial in this fieldwork, where reciprocal arrangements and exchange, expected and voluntary contributions were key to organisational, economic, and friendships found in the temple context between actors. Alongside this were conflicts, economic agendas, self-interests, and importance of personal identity and continual negotiation of institutions,[92] reflected in this thesis.

Although the statistics indicate decline and demographic change that is typical of rural areas generally, Takachiho has recently been promoted from the outside—not only due to its key place in New Age spiritual discourses but also because of a famous comedian turned politician, Higashikokubaru Hideo, who has also put his home prefecture of Miyazaki on the map in recent years (in terms of trade and the promotion of local products and tourism). Recently, a boon to the town has come in the form of prize-winning cattle that have become popular due to the quality of

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[92] The importance of conflict and the tension between the individual and the group were first explored as a response to Nakane's model of a hierarchical, group society and reflects that external group structures obscures the more common pursuit of internal factors of self-interest (Befu 1980).

Takachiho beef, yet an outbreak of foot and mouth in 2009 caused significant problems.[93] From 2010 onwards, there have been significant local movements to innovate and facilitate a responsible and ecological local capitalism that promote Takachiho's produce and develop a Takachiho brand. These have been instigated by a retired local government official who has been active in developing a sustainable model for small, dwindling hamlets outside the main area by utilising 'slow food' discourses in a local context.[94] These activities have also attracted young people who have left Tokyo in order to live and work according to principles of a more ecologically grounded, glocal capitalism in the mountainous hamlet of Akimoto, a thirty-minute drive from the town itself.

This thesis therefore, will reflect the specifics of contemporary rural life, as well as engaging with the larger theoretical issues and structures (household, religious institutions) that have shaped the scholarship, and continue to influence rural life. In so doing, this research attempts to understand and investigate the external structures (*soto*) and internal dynamics (*uchi*), not by understanding them as structural binaries, but rather as competing and complementary dynamics, in a more holistic representation that favours the understanding of connections rather, than a focus upon clearly delineated 'group' versus 'individual' divisions.

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[93] During fieldwork the 2011 volcanic eruptions of Shinmoedake in the Kirishima mountain range close to Miyazaki prefectural towns such as Takaharu also affected international tourist figures (particularly from China and Korea) due to seeming proximity when viewed from outside Japan, although the area is 200 kilometers drive south by the most direct coastal route and did not affect the Takachiho area.

[94] This vision was instigated after an extensive research trip to Europe which the official took after he resigned from the local town hall in order to rejuvenate the Takachiho, and specifically Akimoto hamlet area, in practical terms by using a global model of the 'slow food movement' in the local setting to accommodate a 'glocal' (global in the local) model of sustainable capitalism.

2.2 The neighbourhood

Figure 2.2 The Kamino neighbourhood: cattle farmer and a member of the *monto*

The main temple where fieldwork was undertaken is situated in the hamlet of Kamino, a mountainous area with households engaged with cattle farming and rice production. A twenty-minute drive from the centre of Takachiho town, it has the look, feel, communication networks, and affiliations of a village, with strong neighbourhood ties formed over generations. In 1961, Smith noted that the hamlet (which varied in size) continued to be significant irrespective of industrialisation and postwar change, and that despite not having a legal identity as a sub-unit of a village or town, it commanded more loyalty than any unit other than the *ie*. This was evident in cooperative effort, maintenance of shared land and roads, and face-to-face relations as representatives of households were sent to weddings and funerals; and this is by and large the same case found in the Kamino hamlet today (which is now even more connected due to an intercom system that announces hamlet and town information daily).

The Kamino hamlet has 775 households, and a population of 2,120 people during fieldwork (which has declined to 1,969 as of July 1st 2014). Out of the 775 households in the hamlet, the temple holds records for six hundred and thirty[95] are affiliated to the temple as *danka* parishioners.[96] This means that the overwhelming majority of people who live in the hamlet (as well as households who have migrated across into other hamlets of Takchiho area beyond) are members of the neighbourhood temple. The temple is part of the Jōdo Shinshū sect of the Pure Land School[97]. The Yoshimura clan, whose ancestors are the current clerical family who manage the complex, established the temple in the area of Kamino in 1578 after their castle was destroyed by a Christian *daimyo*.[98] The temple has been in the same household throughout the duration, and the current head priest is the seventeenth generation in the lineage. The temple is connected to the wider sect hierarchy at the town, prefectural, national, and increasingly, international levels. However, in daily life, the temple is interconnected primarily with its *danka* households at the local level.

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[95] During fieldwork it was made known to me that local temples underestimate their figures on official records sent to sect centres in order to avoid higher rate taxes paid to national sect headquarters that reflect the amount of *danka* a regional temple has.

[96] The remaining households belong to Soto affiliated temple in the hamlet and a very small minority belong to new religions, which clashed with the broader household affiliation to the temple.

[97] Jōdo Shinshū is one of the most prevalent Buddhist sects in Japan, with the largest membership.

[98] This local solution to a political problem was later reflected nationally in 1638 when it became a Tokugawa policy to utilise Buddhist temples to control the populace, affiliating households to the temple as danka and thus minimising the threat of Christianity: 'that not only recognized a power higher than that of shogun or daimyo but also carried with it the implied threat of foreign powers and their territorial ambitions and in 1614 Christianity was banned and in 1638 the *sakoku* (seclusion policy) was introduced (Marcure, 1985 42). In this way, sect temples played an important part in the hierarchy of the Tokugawa Shogunate serving as a brand of government office (similar to the local government today) that was funded by annual contributions from the forcibly affiliated household danka of the area who also supplied the labour for the upkeep of the temple and its holdings (Rowe, 2011). In this way, religion in Japan has historically been intimately connected with power, politics, economics and the state.

Figure 2.3 Kamino hamlet in summer

The temple is managed by an extended clerical family and mirrors the typical household pattern in the area, and the inheritance of the priesthood is based on the *jūshoku* [住職 head priest] system of patrilineal primogeniture; whereby the eldest son of the temple household succeeds his father, the head priest after retirement.[99] This system was evolved in 1334, when the main temple headquarters at Kyoto, Honganji, evolved the patrilineal system of inheritance that has been carried on throughout the history of the sect (Bowring, 2005, 395). However, this was unprecedented at the time and although other Buddhist sects have now reluctantly allowed their priests to have families (while appearing to conform to ideas of 'worldly renunciation' by keeping their wives in the background, as explored by Kawahashi, 1995; Covell 1995), such acceptance, and even promotion of family life within Japanese Buddhism, is the domain of the Jōdo Shinshū sect. Historically, peasants, outcasts and lesser warriors living in agricultural areas dominated Jōdo

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[99] This system is a legacy of the founder, Shinran Shonin (1173-1263), who rejected vows of celibacy and married.

Shinshū, (Bowring, 2005, 383) and it was the only sect historically that preached that everyone – regardless of status – was afforded salvation in the Pure Land after death.

The temple itself lies at the geographical heart of the surrounding neighbourhood. Unlike other Buddhist traditions in Asia, the temple is not geographically or socially separated from society; and the priests also perform roles as teachers, neighbours and members of the town and school committees. Therefore the priests are connected to the community through their secular, as well as ritual activities. Currently, six priests (who are extended family members) manage the temple.[100] The previous *jūshoku* and *bōmori* (the grandfather and grandmother in the clerical family) previously held teaching positions at the local high school. The *bōmori* teaches throughout the wider area at kindergartens and primary schools, runs a part time English school at the town branch of the temple, and is also a member of various committees, including the town's music festival. The *jūshoku* was a teacher at the high school until relatively recently, and is active in the town as the kendo coach for the Primary and Junior high school, serving as the elected head of the Board of Education, various PTA and sports committees.

With links to the education, sports and leisure committees and school age children, the priests retain a high profile, connected to wider institutions in the area. Because of this, the temple is publicly seen as the most '*genki*'(active, lively) temple in the Takachiho area. However, there was fierce opposition when the current *jūshoku* proposed to marry a British citizen who was teaching in Takachiho via the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme at the time (this will be explored in chapter six). Twenty years hence, the couple are the primary managers of the temple and have two

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[100] A husband and wife team, or a head priest and an older relative, managed other temples in the area as the dominant pattern. However, the *jūshoku's* elder sister and brother-in-law (who recently resigned from his job as a government official in the prefectural capital in order to become ordained) act as caretakers living in the newly built branch of the temple in the town centre.

sons and a daughter and their eldest son is expected to train for the priesthood after finishing his High-school education.[101]

The boundaries between temple life and family life in a clerical household are blurred, as each member of the family have a role to play in the maintenance and public representation of the temple in the neighbourhood. In the upstairs kitchen[102] of the clerical household in the mornings, the *jūshoku* reads the temple post and plans for the day ahead. Three calendars on the wall outline future events, but the schedule changes from day to day, hour by hour. The *jūshoku* is responsible for the schedule, daily caretaking and temple accounts, and effectively works from home with the temple next door. Unless the priests are dressed in robes to perform a ritual, most of the day is spent in casual clothes. On a typical day, the *jūshoku* will leave the temple several times in order to run errands and perform the majority of rituals that take place both inside, and outside, the temple gates.

Although events in the Buddhist calendar are performed at the temple (alongside funerals, weddings, and memorial services for the *danka* who request ritual services) an overwhelming majority of 'temple' rituals happen inside the homes of the *danka*. This means that the priests spend much of their time traveling to houses throughout the area in order to perform rituals in homes. These rituals, as we have seen, have been regarded variously as household ancestor rites in previous anthropological scholarship (Ooms, 1967). *Obon* (the festival for the ancestral dead)

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[101] Clerical position is dictated by family role and currently, the *jūshoku* and *bōmori* have the highest ritual and managerial status in the temple and both hold the teaching license of the priesthood. The previous *jūshoku* also holds the prestige of being the previous head priest and the teaching license (as preachers), while the previous *bōmori*, brother-in-law and younger sister of the *jūshoku* have taken the tonsure but are not teachers. However, position in the family is another matter, where it became clear after a few days' of fieldwork that the previous *bōmori* was the most powerful figure in the family, and this status inevitably spilled over into temple life, meaning that the *Jūshoku* and the *bōmori* although acting heads, were not able to manage the temple independently of the previous generation.

[102] The family home has two kitchens and the temple complex has four in total, used for catering for events.

and the seasonal equinoxes are especially busy times for the temple with days spent visiting households, and memorial services are the most offered temple service, (performed in *danka* households throughout the year). Shadowing the priests on their visits to households in the neighbourhood it appeared that the temple was not simply governed by one fixed spatial point and in the movements of the priests, households were invisibly connected to the temple space through the renewing of socio-ritual relationships at neighbourhood homes.

Covell (2005) and Rowe (2011) have noted the centrality of the temple as a social, as well as ritual and religious institution, in the contemporary context. However the temple as a space shaped and influenced by specific local factors has not yet been explored in depth, and this can be contrasted with explorations of Shinto shrine complexes (Nelson, 1996; Smyers 1999). As Rodman has remarked, 'Places are not inert containers. They are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions' (2003, 204). Furthermore, places have multiple meanings, are socially constructed, and contain agency of individuals and forces beyond individual control (Rodman, 2003, 204-7). In the temple context, meanings are multiple, and activities are dependent upon actor and agenda. For the clerical family, the temple is their household business, and for the *danka* it is intimately connected with their ancestors through funerary and memorial rituals; yet for both parties it is a shared repository of socio-ritual and cultural heritage that connects the temple household to neighbouring households over generations, and through a historical trajectory embodied in the solid, unmovable space of the temple grounds; with *danka* households and graves perceived as satellites of the temple (Nelson, 2008; Rowe 2011). Furthermore, although it is located in a tangible, central space, its

borders are also porous, with priests moving between member households and venturing into non-ritual spaces through secular activities.

Temporal, spatial, and event differentiations can also be applied more broadly within daily temple life. The temple space changes according to time: moving throughout the day it can be a site of activities for the family, for *danka* rituals, or community events. At a wake, the bereaved family sleeps with the body of the deceased overnight, and is left to inhabit the space of the temple privately throughout the duration. Temple activities are performed in various places, including temple spaces (main hall, kitchens, function rooms, family house); the homes of the *danka*; subsidiary branches; and at gravesites and funeral halls. The outer face of the temple is changed depending upon ritual occasion: when an event is being held, the priests are in robes, and the temple is decorated according to rituals performed, and a heavy curtain hangs over the main hall on important days. However, on an ordinary weekday, the children use the grounds and buildings to play baseball, the *jūshoku* maintaining the grounds in work clothes. The main hall of the temple is also used as a meeting place for the summer camp, a concert hall, a yoga studio and a place to sleep and is not considered 'sacred' in and of itself;[103] but is dependent upon social or ritual usage. These shifting elements signify changes within the temple setting, as the atmosphere transforms depending on the time, place and occasion.

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[103] In comparison to Shinto shrines (Nelson, 2000) or key places in the mythological landscape figuring in local and national 'power spot' discourses.

Figure 2.4 The main hall of the temple (left) and household residence (right)

2.3 The temple Space

The temple property can also be considered an extension of the clerical household connected via the walkway, and is not accessible to the public in the same way as the Shinto shrine depicted by Nelson (1996). Unlike a shrine that is open for anyone, including the unaffiliated, to wander around the grounds and petition for this-worldly-benefits (Reader and Tanabe, 1998), the temple does not have the same open door policy; and some temples specify certain periods available for visits from the *danka*.

However, the same practice is not extended to unaffiliated households, and it would be unusual for somebody to just 'drop in' to consult with the priest if they were not *danka*. Unlike the shrine office, described by Nelson (1996) as comparable to any Japanese office, with morning meetings and a hierarchical system where junior members are seated near the door, the main 'office' of the family temple is found at the kitchen table. The temple is therefore complicated by the fact that the family home is part of the temple precinct, and private and public boundaries need to be drawn. Unlike shrine priests who are present at the site from nine to five, the temple priests are always available; yet paradoxically, the temple space itself is not. Parishioners must call in advance, and accordingly the temple has specific time

boundaries. The temple priests allow access to the space as a ritual and social centre, but only at certain times, and by certain people. Due to this, the temple can be understood as a public space dependent upon social and ritual occasion, yet ultimately connected to the private space of the clerical family home with the priests as managers of the complex.

The temple precinct houses the main hall, two function rooms and catering kitchens, a mausoleum, car parking and the clerical family house in the grounds. The interior of the temple itself is empty, making it a flexible space, and chairs are set out before events and rituals. The space is often used for activities relating to the secular: a place for children to play during temple parties, or somewhere for guests to sleep. Aside from visiting parishioners there are frequent deliveries from services such as the florists bringing funeral or wedding flowers, or the supermarket supplying the temple's groceries. Inside the temple itself, the altar dominates the space: with lamps, wooden carvings, flowers, and the figure of Amida Buddha in the *butsudan*. The yearly life cycle of the temple is organised according to the ritual calendar of events and ceremonies, such as: the birthday and anniversary of the death of the founder, the Buddha's birthday, and *obon,* the day of the ancestral dead. Rites also reflect the seasonal calendar – such as the spring and autumn equinoxes and the New Year. The agricultural calendar is taken into account, and rural temples take care not to overlap with dates set aside for harvesting. Aside from services according to the Buddhist calendar, the clerical family utilises the space for other non-temple activities and host summer camps, concerts, parties and meetings for various associations: it therefore has a dual purpose as a community centre.

Figure 2.5 The tea ceremony group from Kumamoto in the main hall

The above typically reflects the way in which Temple Buddhism is performed on a daily basis: practiced by neighbouring households and managed by a clerical household, that as Covell points out, is far removed from the image of monasticism as priests are usually married, eat meat, and cannot be differentiated by appearance except when wearing the black robes for ritual (2005, 1-3). [104] The type of temple in this case study is typical of rural areas as whole: it serves a neighbouring *danka*; is managed by a priest who has inherited the title through his position in the family hierarchy as eldest son; is a family business dependent upon the neighbourhood of *danka* for patronage; and reflects the conservative nature of the rural area dependent upon agriculture, forestry and construction. It is representative of other temples in the area and faces the same challenges. However, it is also unusual in the fact that the head priest manages the temple with a British wife. Consequently, it is able to illustrate the generalities found in rural temple life, while demonstrating specific

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[104] As Covell notes 'funerals, families, ritual, salvation, money, married clergy and community involvement are all part of Temple Buddhism in Japan today. Moreover, there are 157 sects, subsects, and branches; two hundred thousand priests; and more than seventy thousand temples' (2005, 5). Indeed there according to a recent report by NHK, there are more temples in Japan than convenience stores (NHK evening news, 5th May 2014).

social changes and the wider realties of mixed marriages and a blending of identities in Japan (documented by Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008).

By exploring the temple as a space that is intimately connected to the locality, it becomes evident that local factors directly affect the temple arguably more so than relationships to the sect headquarters and research centres in Kyoto. This reflects the assertion that: 'Doctrinal difference between the major sects are far less determinative of temple identity than the regions in which temples are located, the degree of urbanization or depopulation that has occurred, and the individual views (not necessarily religious) of the person running the temple' (Rowe, 2011, 2067). When regarding the temple in its physical guise as a property, it becomes evident that the institution involves extensive maintenance and *danka* co-operation, not only financially, but also in terms of organisation, and this will be explored in the ethnographic chapters to follow.

2.5 Methodology

The case study was chosen primarily because of access to the site though connections with the temple made previously. According to Mikkelsen (2005), case studies often focus on 'special cases', because random samples that attempt to represent the whole will seldom be able to produce similar kinds of insight. Typical or average cases may not be the richest in information, and few case studies are chosen for their validity. This case study is 'traditional' in the fact that it looks at one specific locality, and explores a section of the community through their ritual affiliation to the temple institution in order to explore social and ritual change. However, the case study is unusual in many respects: it focuses on a temple of the Jōdo Shinshū sect which has a

clear teaching about non-rational 'superstitions',[105] and holds an ambiguous stance on the role of the ancestors in the afterlife, yet is situated in an area where syncretic religiosity is a defining feature of the locality – in which 'village' ancestors are an important source of local identity, and where personal deceased relatives as ancestors underpin household ideology and generate ritual practices. It is also in an area famous for mythic narratives connected to the landscape that has been re-invented from the outside as a 'power spot'. Lastly, the key temple in the case study is atypical of temples natiowide in the fact that it has a transnational clerical family at its healm.

Ethnographic fieldwork was undertaken over a period from October 2010 to December 2011. A time spent in the 'field' was followed by a time spent reflecting on and writing up fieldnotes, translating interviews, making connections, and charting themes, as well as narrowing down research questions and the focus—based on what was becoming evident was important for people who were living in Takachiho and connected to the temple; rather than any preconceived research design that I had constructed based on what I believed to be important. This meant the process took longer than expected, and was a more organic process as the research grew out of the data, rather than imposing a top-down research framework. Furthermore, the theoretical positions utilised were part of a 'grounded theory' approach (Clarke, A. 2003).

The ethnographer's main method is participant observation. As Bestor (2004, 317) has noted, this could be re-termed 'inquisitive observation': which implies the mind-set needed for fieldwork, and reflects an ongoing process that does not end after

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[105] Post-enlightenment any practices associated with, and ascribed meaning by the 'folk' (ordinary local people who lived off the land) was regarded as 'fetish' and 'taboo'; in the previous Christian period the same practices were regarded as 'devil-worship'. In the later period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries people were understood to need 'liberating' from these false-ideologies that were seen as categories of illusion and oppression from rationality and the objective truth. The main attitude towards 'folk beliefs', i.e. 'superstition as primitivism' continues as a legacy of scientific positivism into the twenty-first century (Asad, 2003, 35).

one has left the field, but continues in interpreting the encounters and in memory, long after leaving. Living in the grounds of the temple complex, I was privy to both the public and private face of the temple and clerical family. Because of the exposure to other temple environments in the area (and outside the area via a temple in the suburbs of Kumamoto city), I am able to ascertain that the temple of my case study is only a 'special case' due to the inclusion of a non-Japanese priest, and in all other respects follows the same dominant rituals, calendar, activities, organisational protocol, and shares the same challenges and concerns that are common to other temples in the area. Contrarily, the temple is more conservative and inflexible that other Jōdo Shinshū temples in the area, seeking to minimise its transnational element and conform to dominant local discourses of what a temple should be, rather than use it as a 'selling point'. Therefore, by being informed by an a-typical 'ordinary' temple, the thesis is able to illustrate how an average local temple operates generally, as well as showing particularities through its transnational composition.

2.6 Art and fiction

In the latter part of the twentieth century, anthropologists became increasingly concerned with issues relating to their prime source of data: ethnographic fieldwork. As anthropology moved away from its origins in positivism it became considered as more of an art than a science, adopting a humanistic, interpretative approach (Monaghan and Just, 2000, 2). Reflecting the generation of empirical data that requires the body to experience the 'field'. Therefore, to attempt to remove oneself: 'for an impossible scientific objectivity, destroys all that anthropology offers. For in anthropology, time spent amongst other people is where the meaning is found' (Hansen, 2007, 1012). That is not to say that it is not recognised (most notably by

anthropologists themselves), as a fundamentally flawed method. As Hansen has observed: 'Reality is constructed and ethnography was, is and will always be flawed in representing an empirical reality' (Hansen, 2007, 1000). Yet this paradox, of human beings attempting to represent humans beings in ways that will never fully capture the embodied experience of being-in-the-world (the ethnographer's predicament), can either be considered a folly, a flawed body of knowledge – or the closest an academic method (rather than an artistic pursuit) can get to engaging with the lived empirical reality taking place outside the window.[106]

The ethnographic process shapes the anthropological research method; but as Ingold points out, anthropology as a discipline is distinct from ethnography as its main research method, although the two are often used indistinguishably. Ethnographers describe in writing how people in some space and time perceive and act in the world, and anthropology seeks to interpret what this means from a socio-cultural and philosophical perspective; but 'ethnography' has become a term so overused in an interdisciplinary context that it has lost much of its meaning (Ingold, 2014, 383). Instead of abandoning the work of anthropology to others,[107] Ingold argues for an anthropology that continues to ask philosophical questions, while being embedded within the world, utilising a collaborative approach with native research institutions and the people who live there. 'Let us call this philosophy of ours anthropology', he suggests, noting that the task of making comparisons to find common denominators and human universals are over, and that a more collaborative approach is now needed (Ingold, 2007, 90).

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[106] As Hansen has observed: 'Personality, style, integrity, and honesty are hard to quantify, but they are central to the ethnographic project and require – like the roots of human insecurity in life, love, or faith – a commitment, a leap. Without the safety net of quantifiable certainty, you believe in it or you don't (Hansen, 2007, 1012).

[107] Ingold (2014) notes that philosophers engage with anthropological questions and literary critics debate the ethnographic project.

The role of the anthropologist has also been linked to the storyteller, and a major contribution has been the rich descriptions of particular places and people within the anthropological encounter (Monaghan and Just 2000, 3) However, this has not been a value free exercise; story telling and text making has also been regarded as 'constructed' and 'artificial' (Clifford and Marcus eds. 1986). According to this evaluation, ethnography is not only bound up with issues of representation but actually *invents* the people and places it describes. This awareness brings to light the central problems with the participant observation method, and illustrates the fact that objectivity in anthropology can now be understood, in hindsight, as a myth of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, there are problems with the issues embodied in the role of the ethnographer, when writing about cultures 'out there'. It could be understood that until the culture has been codified and made 'meaningful' by the anthropologist, people all over the world were simply going about their daily business. It also illustrates the extent to which the ethnographer is an embedded part of the process of describing a culture and determining its structure, and raises issues about how much authority should/could be ascribed to this venture.

The writing-up stage is also fraught with problems. The literature within the texts, which use: 'metaphor, figuration and narrative – affect the ways cultural phenomena are registered, from field notes to the book, to the way it makes sense to the reader' (Clifford, 1986, 4). Indeed, according to Clifford, ethnographic texts are determined by context, the use of conventions, association with institutions, as part of a specific genre, are political in their representation of cultures, and historical in the fact that all of these dynamics are in state of change. Due to this, all ethnographies can be categorised as 'fictions'. This suggests not only that they are 'partial truths'

but also they have been made or fashioned. Furthermore, although: 'good ethnographies can be read as "true fictions" power and history work through them in ways their authors cannot control' (Clifford, 1986, 7).

According to Asad, anthropology is concerned with translating 'modes of thought', which are embodied in linguistic matter (Asad, 1986). As Asad notes, the difference between an anthropologist and an historian is one of construction and reconstruction. According to Asad, the historian must construct a social context from the historical data; but an anthropologist begins in the social situation and needs to reconstruct the cultural significance of what is said within this context. 'The contrast, such as it is, is one of orientation, which follows from the fact that the historian is *given a text* and the ethnographer has to *construct one'* (Asad, 1986, 144).

An MA in anthropological research undertaken between 2007-8 equipped me with the tools to select a variety of social science research methods, with an insight into the corresponding benefits and drawbacks of both qualitative and quantitative approaches and data. I have chosen participant observation and an ethnographic research method because I agree with the statement that: "cultures are not scientific objects (assuming such things exist, even in the natural sciences). Culture, and our views of 'it' are produced historically, and are actively contested. There is no whole picture that can be 'filled in' since the perception and filling of a gap lead to the awareness of other gaps" (Clifford, 1982, 18). Essentially, I also share Hansen's view that quantifiable data can chart general trends but also makes 'messy lives clean',[108] and prioritises the general at the expense of the specific. On the other hand,

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[108] In defending the often criticised anthropological method, he questions the science-meets-business approach, and argues that while 32% sounds more official, on the ground level it means the same thing as 'sometimes': "indeed 'sometimes' may be more clean, honest and accurate owing to the constant flux of the world- there can be a constant 'sometimes' in dealing with people over time, but very few constant '32 percent's cross my mind" (Hansen, 2007, 1011).

qualitative data requires analysis as an interpretative art, and ethnography can be considered an 'art' in the sense it is a skillful fashioning of useful artifacts tied to the artisanal work of writing (Clifford, 1986). Ingold likens anthropology to an art and craft in its underlying sensibilities and practices (2008, 83-86), and notices how time and history enters into the process, arguing that: 'The world stands still for no one, least of all the artist or the anthropologist, and the latter's description, like the former's depiction, can do no more than catch a fleeting moment in a never-ending process' (2008, 74). Therefore, instead of attempting to defend the research methods chosen (in comparison to more objectively scientific and positivist approaches that could have been utilised), I will now outline the details of the case study.

2.6 Generating data

The case study informed by qualitative analysis focuses a spotlight upon local changes found at the level of the clerical family and their affiliated households that is indicative of a changing rural Japan more broadly and emphasises a rural place that is not ethnically or culturally homogenous and is experiencing change. This reflects that the rural sphere of Takachiho society is shifting in tandem with national and global changes, with its own specific currents. For example, at the start of fieldwork in 2010, I was already surprised to find social changes, such as the increase of single parenthood and return to the natal household, that I had not witnessed in the year 2000; and the departure from expectation to reality generated the main research questions. This bottom-up approach was generated by ethnographic data and was later codified using the KJ method[109] and a grounded theory approach[110] – rather than

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[109] This was recommended to me by my fieldwork supervisor at Kagoshima University and is a method for organising multiple (and conflicting data) into clear themes.

prioritising ready-made theoretical frameworks – to arrive at a more 'grounded' perspective anchored in applicability to the data (as opposed to the application of a highly unitary and uniform theoretical position from the outset).

Although the case study is informed by fieldwork that took place while living in a Buddhist temple, it will not bias a sectarian perspective, but instead will show how Buddhist rituals are appropriated by *danka* households and intersect with the wider spiritual landscape, while demonstrating how households (both *danka* and clerical ones) engage with change on a daily basis and the motivations for rituals that underscore practice. Instead of engaging with discourses of the 'disappearing rural' that has been stressed in the folklore approach,[111] the thesis seeks to understand how local people perceive ritual and continue to practice a syncretic religiosity in which Buddhism is one part of a broader whole. The research therefore departs from sect based or historical research that stresses the philosophy and doctrine of specific Buddhist sects and their trajectories. Instead of a top-down approach this research looks at how rituals are practiced in a wider syncretic religiosity by local people at the everyday level that *incorporate* Buddhist discourses by *utilising* the temple as a ritual provider.

Participant observation is supplemented heavily throughout the thesis by interviews and oral narratives. The interviews are in Japanese, with the exception of those conducted with the *bōmori*, (temple wife and priest). Both Japanese and English interviews were recorded and transcribed at a later date. Memory lapse was somewhat circumscribed by this process. I recorded some interviews and temple rituals by video or audio recorder, and it was sometimes necessary to ask for permission and gauge if

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[110] This was also suggested by my fieldwork supervisor, and an explanation of the methods and the developments of the grounded theory approach can be found in Clarke, A. (2003).

[111] As Ivy (1995) has demonstrated in discussing issues in the discourse of the 'vanishing' rural Japan.

it was appropriate for the situation. At a later date, the merits of their inclusion in the thesis in a truncated form were considered. Therefore key interviews (particularly those conducted with the priests), are embedded within much of the ethnography as crucial sources of data, and are faithful to the words of the participants – although they may have been structured in a non-linear fashion in order for them to find a place within the broader structure of the thesis. Information from other sources, such as newspaper articles and documentaries, as supplementary data in which to contextualise observation and interviews was also used. My contacts increased and stemmed from the primary source of the temple, and a natural snowball sample occurred by visiting other temples with the priests, and as they recommended other informants.

Oral narratives can be found interwoven throughout the text. However, they present issues in how they should be presented and analysed, alongside ethical dilemmas of what to leave out, in order to protect the identity of the speaker. Caplan (1997) notes that they are also difficult to obtain and require time-consuming translation to re-represent such narratives to the reader who is outside the context. Yet they engender a unique insight, as we are offered a glimpse into the inner worlds of people as human beings, not as simple representatives of their culture. "It enables the reader/viewer to identify with the subject, to find commonalities in their lives and in predicaments. In short, to empathise even though differences between them may be profound" (Caplan, 1997, 7). Indeed, oral narratives give an insight into a worldview of a person that is often screened from view.

Being trusted with more information that I could have expected surprised me. Although well-rehearsed stories were heard (and sometimes placed in the text), these occured alongside 'unofficial' narratives that were revealed to me. Dusinberre notes

that as a male researcher of Japanese history, he would often be directed towards 'knowledgeable elders' who were always men, even when he expressed an interest in 'the past' or 'daily life', and therefore he laments the lack of individual women in his text. He writes that: 'For better or for worse, this is a history mainly of Kaminoseki's men—of their achievements, difficulties, and human foibles' (2012, 11). As a female researcher, with my gateway into the community another woman, the opposite is true of my research. The majority of interviews with priests or members of society are conducted with women and my contact at the local government offices was a female senior employee. Informants were keen to share their interpretations of society and the effects it had on their own lives[112] and also vocalised very personal narratives of their own history.

Tamanoi (1990, 17-33) has critiqued the lack of women's voices in previous kinship models in the anthropological scholarship while noting that sociological studies of the family have prioritised urban middle-class housewives women that have come to represent Japanese women as a whole. She argues that the balance of women's voices in the scholarship of Japan can add dimensions, contradictions and diversity into the characterisation of a homogenous Japan. More recently, Kawahashi illustrates women's previously ignored roles within Buddhist institutions, and argues for the potential forwarding of a feminist perspective through the vehicle of Buddhism (Kawahashi, 2003, 291-313).[113] In this thesis, women figure heavily in narratives about family and changes in society; and everyone possessed a keen

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[112] Even while aware they were under 'interview conditions' in advance, although the interviews were usually semi-structured or completely informal.

[113] Kawahashi has argued that women in Buddhism are depicted as temple wives with little voice or role to play in decision-making processes. Their role is to support husband and rear an heir. However some wives in certain sects have taken on a role as priest and Kawahashi argues that Buddhism could be a vehicle for feminism and an agent of change (Kawahashi 2003, 291-313).

awareness of the multi-layered dimensions of the problems their community was facing. Therefore women's voices are fundamental to the text. This also reflects the fact that many of the social changes are affecting them (arguably more) profoundly: on the whole, women are more active than men in the temple community, and a dominant element of the aging population in Takachiho where they outnumber men. Yet men are not exempt or marginalised in the discourse, although during fieldwork they tended to give an 'official', or commonly received point of view, before they revealed their own (more truthful?) subjectivities. [114]

The semi-structured interview process always began with a set of relevant questions to ask, although due to the participatory nature of the people interviewed, they often took new twists and turns, (demonstrating what informants considered to be important) and this was exploited in order to gain an informant-centered interpretation. Many of the participants were able to make finely attuned observations based on their own techniques of analysis and impart 'native' cultural translations. Their opinions have also greatly deepened my own understandings, and have shaped my views— moving from a purely participant observatory perspective, to a more contextualised analysis. Therefore, the ethnography is essentially centred upon individuals and informed by place—and evolves from the situated concerns of individuals, and what appeared most crucial in my observations during fieldwork in Takachiho.

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[114] Furthermore, although it would seem that on face value my agenda would be closer to British female priest, this is by virtue of the Japanese context where we would share the same category as 'foreigners', although our roles in this context is also very different: mine being far less pressurised because I was considered a guest and therefore not expected to conform to the rules of local society due to my status as an identifiable outsider who has no personal stake within the context.

2.7 Inside/Outside Roles

During fieldwork I engaged with everyday life as a researcher, friend of the family and occasional worker.[115] The multiplicity of roles allowed for a close observation of the minutiae of temple life – but had its drawbacks. In conducting participant observation and living in the grounds of the temple, I was automatically a temporary member of the household, and sharing a nationality with one member of the household means that a 'traditional' anthropology where distinctions between the ethnicity of anthropologist and informant/subject were called into question. Due to the fact that the temple is unusual in being transnational in nature, in order to make sure I had a balanced view about what an 'average' temple was like, I observed other temples and households to regard which themes converged and which were particular to a transnational temple household.

To limit the bias of one particular view or dominant actor, the ethnography attempts to arrive at a multi-vocal analysis, considering points of view across gender, generational and national divides. Balancing the insider/outsider role was fraught with difficulties, as was the friend/researcher position – something that posed challenges as I became more aware about the internal power dynamics of the temple and family relations (and discussed in Kondo's ethnography 'Crafting Selves', 1990). Out of necessity, I have had to leave out information that would create ethical issues––something I have struggled with throughout the fieldwork and continued to be a source of problems in the analysis and 'writing up' stages. In an ethnographic context where names cannot be hidden, it is important to observe the privacy of informants who are not afforded the protection and anonymity of a more statistical-based

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[115] It cannot be overlooked that I was a source of economic funds as well as an extra pair of hands while staying in the temple complex, and this may be a motivator for agreeing to my stay.

analysis favoured in the social sciences, and with whom a relationship of trust has been built, irrespective of personal opinions of the researcher.

Throughout fieldwork and writing up I remained aware that even while attempting to minimise dominant voices, my own biases, and paint a holistic picture – it was a difficult task. My ethnographic aim is to paint an inclusive picture, aware of contradictory voices. Asad notes that from a Durkheimian viewpoint, society is explained in terms of functions in order to understand what is happening in institutions; however the role of the contemporary anthropologist is often to defend marginalised groups (Asad, 1986, 144). Asad makes the point that 'cultural translation' inherently undertaken as part of anthropological fieldwork is enmeshed in conditions of power – alongside this is the authority of ethnographers to read the implicit in people's actions and speech. Asad argues that the question is not whether the ethnographer should defend or criticise the culture – but how power enters the process of cultural translation. This was a particular issue for my research, as unlike much of anthropology which observes an 'Other', usually in a weaker position in terms of power, agency, and institutional hierarchy than the anthropologist themselves, my research included a British actor who was in some ways in a similar position to myself: as a non-Japanese person, acting in a predominantly ethnically Japanese society.[116]

As a temporary family member and 'insider', privy to internal dynamics, I was often appealed to by both parties (British and Japanese) to defend and appropriate their point of view as being the objective voice of logic, couched in terms of 'the way things were done' in Japan versus England. This could be as simple as

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[116] However, sharing a nationality does not necessarily mean sharing a worldview or formative backstory, and it is perhaps only out of a British context that our similarities are emphasised and our differences minimised, as is often the case when living outside the formative culture, as Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu (2008) have hinted at by drawing parallels with Dejima and contemporary Western foreigners living in a Japanese setting.

which gender should serve drinks at a party, or involve more complicated issues concerning childrearing. Faced with this position, I tried to avoid taking sides but began to understand the problems inherent in the struggle in which actors were engaged. Maintaining cultural authority for either party was a crucial function that could wield power over others and shape the ways in which the smallest to the largest activities were performed – according to whose agenda was represented – and one of my jobs was to not be drawn into these power struggles, while seeking to understand how and why they occurred. The writing-up stages presented further challenges: which 'audience' am I writing for? Whom am I supposed to be representing? These questions become salient issues in a multi-cultural fieldwork context, mirroring a disciplinary context in which anthropology has a twin tradition in Japan and the West; and where the role of the anthropologists is now being reconfigured, particularly in terms of the importance of collaboration with people who have been conceptualised in the anthropological methodology as 'informants' (Hendry, 2007, 585).

The initial act of deciding on a research site reveals a bias in the fact that the case study is often a-typical and thus of interest to the researcher. Throughout fieldwork that hinges on the goodwill and rapport with other human actors, biases that are often shaped by one's own position and identity are constantly brought to the surface of interactions and tested. According to Hammersley (1992) there are dangers however, rapport is an important part of the fieldwork process and yet there can be a process of over-rapport where you begin to see the world too much in terms of those you are studying (which is now being addressed by a collaborative approach). However, even while the researcher becomes sympathetic to some groups and not others it is important to remember that no group holds a monopoly on the truth (Hammersley, 1992, 162).

In addition to participant observation, semi-structured interviews were utilised in the research and these became central to the ethnography. Furthermore, interviews are included instead of the paraphrasing of events and people's thoughts – both in order to minimise the 'inscription' of culture (Asad, 1986, 161), and to maximise the power that people had in speaking for themselves while narrating their own life stories and perceptions; and secondly as a technique of documenting the detailed information I wished to reproduce in the thesis. As Dusinberre notes, local Japan has always spoken in multiple voices (Dusinberre, 2012, 11), and yet there has been a historical legacy of rural people being spoken for historically (Waswo, 2003). In order to limit this where possible within this thesis, the dominant actors speak both for themselves and represent others in society, allowing for subjective opinions, contradictions and revealing power relations and agendas.

Although methodological analysis tends to focus on the position of the researcher as powerful, this was certainly not my experience.[117] However, more positively, I was afforded a lot of flexibility by my lack of status in the community. People in the neighbourhood saw me as another foreigner travelling through the area and helping out at the temple in exchange for a room, as part of an extended working holiday. This perception prevailed perhaps because I was not introduced by a senior academic from a research institute in Japan, but instead already knew the temple family, made further contacts through this source, and slipped in and out of the context fairly easily.[118] Although clearly an obvious foreigner,[119] in an area where

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[117] Only in the writing up stages do you have any power, and then over portrayal, in the field, most of the time you are at the mercy of people trying to manage you and shape (manipulate) your research to suit their own agendas and the portrayal they would prefer. This is particularly true of religious institutions that have a vested interest in being represented positively.

[118] It helped that I am used to living and working in rural japan and familiar with the importance of observing, then cooperating accordingly with the way that social life operates in this context.

foreignness is normalised by exposure to non-Japanese actors in the area[120], this was

not such a barrier to research either. In my experience, people who live in rural spaces

(as opposed to people who live in suburban or urban spaces) are much more likely to

see a foreigner as a person first and foremost, and then differentiate by ethnic group,

particularly when the foreigner is younger than them and alone – and this is a big

advantage of living in and researching rural Japan. It also means that playing by local

rules and observing codes (assimilating into the context) is more crucial.

Kondo, (1995) shows that even a simple activity such as drinking a cup of tea

is a symbolic act with a host of associated behaviour, and layers of meaning that

stems from the origins of tea as ritual practice; and this is especially important in the

temple setting. Also, as Hardacre has observed, doing research on religion in Japan

also means that the researcher has to be prepared to be a student once more,

instructed from the beginning, and relinquishing adult status in the religious setting in

order to learn behaviours which can be physically taxing (2003, 78-87). However

there is also much more informality and less expectations and status associated with

institutions found in the national sphere. Subsequently, there is time and a context to

develop relationships with people that allow for more person-centred data.

As Hendry (2007, 589-591) has noted, anthropology has a long history in

Japan, with 'native' Japanese scholars alongside Western scholars undertaking

research. This is set against a historical backdrop in which Japan (as a former colonial

power) has been both the object of study (Benedict, 1964); and in turn, has studied

itself and its Others (including groups which were once seen as its own 'natives': the

Okinawans and the Ainu). One outcome of this is that there has been a growth of a

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[119] I would be unproblematically classified as 'white-British' by an ethnic diversity box-ticking exercise.

[120] Including former and current JET participants, Asian wives and workers and the tourists travelling through.

Western and a Japanese Anthropological research approach. Generally speaking, (although not always) the Japanese approach focuses on detailed ethnography, and the Western approach on application of theory and ready-made frameworks (Wood, 2012). Therefore, unlike 'traditional anthropological subjects' that may have had barriers to self-representation in the past (De la Cadena and Starn, 2007), and rather than be dominantly 'represented' by others, Japan has the media networks and academic lineage that on the whole, allows it to generate its own representations in the world.[121] This means that Western anthropology could be used variously as a complementary, competing, or collaborative discourse in the understanding of Japanese social life and its 'culture' – or intersubjective process in which individuals adopt different versions of their culture 'cultural styles' to achieve specific and desired aims (Thompson and Traphagan, 2007).

As for the methodological stance itself, the ability to read the implicit—has been suggested in the appropriation of a postmodern grounded theory approach to data (Clarke, A, 2003). This approach is of great benefit in the Japanese setting, where it is widely acknowledged that the majority of what is going on actually happens behind the scenes, and where being able to interpret non-verbal cues (*kūki o yomu:* read the atmosphere) is an expected part of being a fully integrated adult member of society. While avoiding essentialisms, (and recognizing that people are not an homogenous mass but also individuals), it has been noted in previous anthropology by Western anthropologists, how much more advanced Japanese people tend to be in reading and articulating social situations while placing themselves

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[121] However, there are still linguistic issues to be overcome, which create barriers to total self-representation, and often lead to mis-representation and mystification when Japan is represented by outside sources.

within broader social structures and processes, and this is a skill[122] that is demonstrable at all 'hierarchical' levels (Smith, 1985[123], Lebra, 1994[124], Dore, 1958[125]). This research reflects the fact that members in local society are skilled at interpreting social facts and institutions, and this is reflected in the interviews and oral narratives. In this way, local insights are part of the broader mosaic of a wider whole that informs the dominant arguments in this study.

2.8 Anthropology of *place*

Consequently, due to the fact that the community this research depicts does not belong solely to one culture or nationality, this research acts as a counterpoint to theories of what 'the Japanese do' as a whole. However, when more than one culture is present at one site, and when the culture is shared by the researcher, problems of cross-cultural translation become a maze of competing issues, compounded by the usual biases and cultural baggage anthropologists expect to encounter during fieldwork. Kuwayama notes, 'in cultural representation, one's own culture provides a point of reference, whether the author is aware of it or not, and it is ordinarily hidden

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[122] Daniels summarises this neatly using an analogy of football where Japanese people as a whole are 'more skilled at playing the game' (2001, 249).

[123] "What is unusual about Japanese society is not that there is a high degree of group orientedness or that family/household and village principles organize behaviour. What *is* unusual is that the acknowledgment of interdependence is so open and the importance of group affiliation made so thoroughly explicit. It is taken for granted that human relationships are reciprocal and complementary in character, and everyone is made aware from the earliest stages of life that the human being is the product of interrelationships with others. The norms of social interchange specify the devices appropriate to the expression of mutuality of interest and purpose. The person owes and is owed an infinity of debts to and by those with whom he interacts over the course of his life. Some can never be repaid fully, with others are more tractable and negotiable, involving direct exchanges in unbroken consequences of incurring obligation and its discharge" (Smith, 1985, 40).

[124] Lebra (1994) notes that Japanese people do not always submit to system, often negotiate it, but are more cognizant of the social structure beyond the unit of the individual.

[125] "All societies have a family system, but few are as consciously aware of their family system as the Japanese." English people will marry and raise a family but will not think of it as an 'English family system' (Dore, 1958, 91).

backstage' (Kuwayama, 2004, 92). However, this study counteracts the idea of an unseen Western I/Eye that is backstage in many texts, because there is already a tension between the pluralities of cultural perspectives taking place in a multi-situated arena. Ultimately, such issues become less important as the emphasis shifts from one of *culture* towards an ethnography of *place* (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003). This ethnography has a religious institution at its centre in order to explore the interrelated webs of narratives, relationships and socio-ritual techniques in the area. Such an analysis leads to a recognition of changes in the broader local society of which it is part – and further leads to an idea of how this society connects with others, both in the national and global spheres.

In order to recognise non-Japanese in religion and society, and the counter-currents and flows found in narratives of single parents and non-heterosexuals there needs to be a focus upon the anthropology of place, rather than of 'culture' which is becoming more difficult to define than ever before. In this case study, the emphasis is on a particular place, where the local embedded context can be seen to interact with many other places, temporalities and discourses. Furthermore, although the dominant culture is Japanese, the figure of the *bōmori*—as not only a point of comparison between English and Japanese practitioners, but as a contextualised part of the community—shows that it is not enough to compare one 'culture' to another anymore. Increasingly the effect of the rubbing together of multiple 'cultures' within one area creates new scenarios; and this is true of Japan as a whole. Therefore, this case study has helped me recognise the difficulties of comparison between cultures (whose boundaries are becoming increasingly less clear) and the increasing need for an inclusive anthropology of place, which is able to engage with local, national and global patterns.

Garcia Canclini (1995) has noted that the preserve of anthropology is in investigating difference in the local, and sociology as the homogenising of the national. However, it is increasingly arbitrary to make these distinctions. At any one point the actors in my case study could be classed as urban or rural, outsiders or insiders, part of a modernising or traditionalising discourse at the point in which we consider, or enter, their narrative. Such an elastication of narratives and an embodied historical trajectory means that awareness is needed, as the actors focused upon and their motivations may shift, according to the framework that is used. Furthermore, the fieldwork site itself changes face according to the researcher documenting it, and the motivations of the actors and informants themselves. A continued focus on a more inclusive anthropology of place over culture – which does not rely on the binary oppositions of religion versus secular, traditional versus modernity – means it is possible to notice how the local, national and global, as well as the pre-modern and post-modern interact and converge; and larger patterns will emerge from this. As Appadurai (1996) has noted, locality is not a given, it is fragile. Furthermore, locality is a dimension of social life, not a transcendent standard from which particular societies fall or deviate – rather, locality is always emergent from the practices of local subjects in specific neighbourhoods (1996, 198). This research will consider how locality shapes and affects the practices associated with the household and temple which are both reproduced, negotiated, adapted and fashioned in accordance with local values and individual needs in a context of wider social, religious and institutional principles.

Figure 2.6 The non-homogenous Takachiho community: a transnational priest, a local neighbourhood, and family members who live nationally.

2.9 Thesis structure

The preliminary chapters have sketched out the current literature alongside theoretical and methodological considerations that illustrate the foundation for the case study. The next chapters will be informed by ethnographic data. Chapters three and four will focus on the outer sphere of household ritual and inner family change: chapter three will show how Buddhist rituals performed by the priests are a tool to reproduce the household; chapter four will look at changes that affect and underscore ritual action. Chapters five and six will move onto the temple setting: chapter five will consider the discrepancies between doctrine and practice for priests and their parishioners; chapter six will show how clerical families depart from the household system and question the future for the temple. Chapter Seven will conclude the main themes and cement the broader findings of the thesis.

Chapter Three: Local ritual foundations

This chapter will explore how the neighbourhood *danka* practice 'everyday Buddhism' that takes place in local homes. It will show that the *danka* are connected to their neighbourhood temple primarily through visits from the priests, not by visiting the temple complex itself. The chapter is generated by ethnography from three separate ritual occasions: the '*omairi*' ritual performed at the spring and autumn equinoxes; the '*hōji*' memorial ritual performed on specific times and years after a funeral; and '*obon*' the festival for the ancestral dead (and a holiday in August observed throughout Japan). On these occasions, the priests visit the households of their *danka* in order to perform a ritual in front of the *butsudan* and these practices make up the majority of 'Temple activities', although they are not performed in the temple itself.[126]

The overwhelming majority of households in the Takachiho area take part in these practices, irrespective of sect affiliation, generation, gender, wealth and status. It will be argued that for neighbourhood *danka*, 'Buddhist' memorial rituals are utilised in their continuing relationship with household ancestors. These rituals can be understood as part of a technique that reproduces, protects and continues the household. Although this chapter is focused primarily on the continuing importance of ritual practice in order to explore the key research question, it can also illustrate the

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[126] Previous scholarship has focused on funerary rituals and explored the importance of the grave in order to understand Buddhism as it is practiced (Suzuki 2000, Tsuji, 2006), however, the most offered service at the temple are memorial rites, which include *omairi, hōji* and *obon*. Although the *danka* may only attend a funeral at the temple a handful of times in their lives or visit the temple specifically for a ceremony in the sect-determined Buddhist calendar (Buddha's Birthday, Anniversary of the death of the founder, New year and so on) the *danka* regularly contact the priests and ask them to visit the household to perform a memorial rite in front of the household *bustudan*. Therefore, the majority of practices termed 'daily Buddhism' or 'Temple Buddhism' and ritual action itself takes place at the homes of the *danka*, not in the grounds of the temple complex. Therefore in order to understand what Covell (2005) has termed 'Temple Buddhism' as it is practiced outside of sect orthodoxy, first we must understand that the number of ritual actors in majority are the *danka* members, *not* the priests and that the overwhelming majority of rites take place in their homes, *not* in the temple.

socio-economic conditions in the inner sphere of local households and therefore highlight some of the problems faced by people in the Kamino hamlet. Furthermore, the following ethnography is generated from shadowing the British *bōmori* (temple wife) during her rituals visits and can therefore illustrate her relationships with the local *danka* households as a priest and a neighbour.

Figure 3 The priest performs a *butsudan* ritual

3.1 Equinox rites

It is just before noon on a slightly cold spring day in March[127] and the *bōmori* has already visited several *danka* households on the main road of the Kamino hamlet, and is halfway through her list of regular participants (visited twice-yearly at the spring and autumn equinox). These visits are known as *omairi* [お参り the honorific form

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[127] That year the spring equinox fell on the 20th of March, known in Japanese as *higan*.

of: to go/come, and also to visit/return to a spiritual sanctuary]. The priests divide the households according to traffic route and share visits between them. The main road has a few services including: a gas stand,[128] a small Aco-op grocery shop, a couple of hairdressing salons and an off-license. It is relatively busy compared to the other areas in Kamino (whose country roads see few vehicles or passers by) as the main route out of the Takachiho area to the urban centre of Kumamoto, two hours' drive away through the volcanic Aso mountain range.

<div align="center">***</div>

The Hairdresser:

We reach the house of the hairdresser in her seventies just as another guest is leaving. She receives us in the *genkan* entranceway, kneeling down and bowing her head with palms pressed on the floor[129] towards the priest who is standing in the doorway. Then just as quickly, she bobs up and presses hangers full of dry cleaning at the priest who passes them onto me. "Make sure you don't get them creased – and don't forget them!" the hairdresser shouts loudly at us several times. We follow her into a tatami room and find a peg to hang the shirts, as the hairdresser instructs me to sit next to her, on our knees, at a respectful distance behind the priest. The priest sits in front of the *butsudan* – offering incense and striking a clear pure sound from a bronze bowl. The priests always choose the *okyō* [お経 sutra, which both the British priest, and the

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[128] 'Gas stand' is borrowed directly from American English as the Japanese translation of petrol filling station.

[129] This extremely low bow reveals a cultivated etiquette that shows respect for the priest's position, as a guest to the household. It is similar to a bow that is seen at the entrance into a *dojo* (martial arts training space) and towards a person who is being (literally) begged for a favour on the part of a supplicant who is throwing themselves at their mercy.

sect-based literature refers to in English as a chant][130] and the recitation is the primary focus of the ritual which lasts for a few minutes and is always followed by the *nenbutsu*,[131] the central sutra of the Jōdo Shinshū sect.[132] The hairdresser opens her small red sutra book in front of her – the Chinese characters contained inside are printed from right to left, top to bottom – while holding Buddhist meditation beads. Following along haphazardly in a general mumble she is not able to locate the page and the priest has not told us which sutra to recite. When the hairdresser finally locates it in her book she begins chanting in a tuneless full throttle, overpowering the gentle and subtle tones of the priest as she makes her own independent route march through to the end.
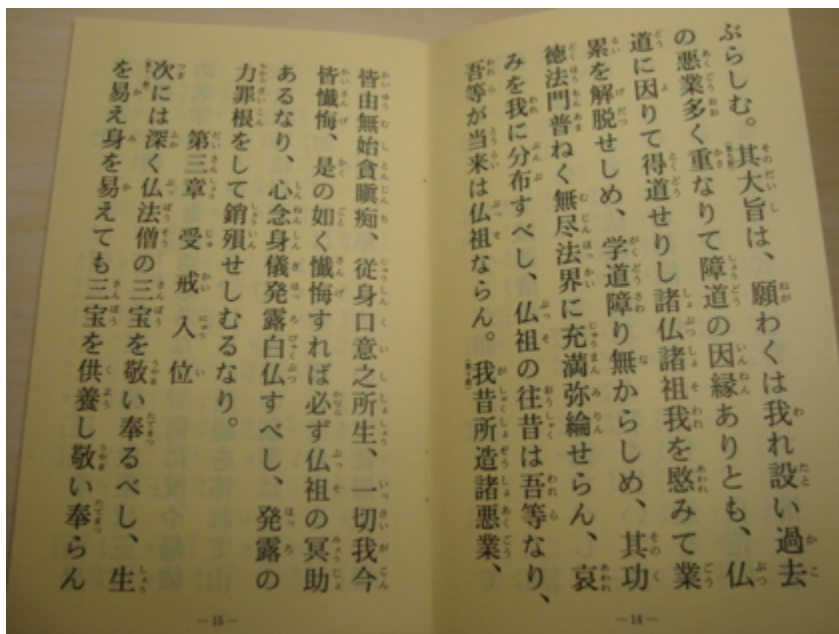
Figure 3.1 Inside a Sutra book

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[130] For example see: Tanaka, K. (an academic, Buddhist teacher and president of the 'International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies': IASBS) 1997, 2004.

[131] A central tenet of the sect is the repetition of the Nenbutsu. It originally meant to contemplate on the Buddha, but within the sect means to recite the sacred name: 'Namo Amida Butsu' (I take refuge in the Buddha of Immerasurable Light and Life) that embodies the essence of Amida or Oneness, as expression of profound gratitude. (Tanaka, K. 1997, 246-7)

[132] This will be discussed in detail in chapter five.

The altar is free standing in the centre of the room against the wall, and contains an offering of flowers. To the far right hand corner of the room is a *kamidana* (god-shelf) for the *kami* deities. Every house visited subsequently follows this pattern: a *butsudan* freestanding in the corner or centre of the room and a *kamidana* suspended above on the wall or next to the *butsudan*. Sometimes the *kamidana* is unnoticeable from a seated position on the tatami, but invariably present, hovering over proceedings. Hanging in the nooks of the paneling near the ceiling, sacred and secular objects are displayed: in this case a couple of *katana* swords, overlapping in a cross position. In a further room is the *tokonoma* alcove, crammed with decorative and symbolic objects such as zodiac figurines, and other *engimono*;[133] yet it is the altar, which takes centre stage in every household.

There is a brief yet welcome pause as the priest finishes the ritual. She turns around and talks briefly, as the hairdresser listens respectfully before getting up from the *seiza*[134] position to make tea. As she leaves the room the priest raises her eyes upwards at me, "her singing's really bad isn't it… don't forget to get those shirts or she'll go mad". I ask what the shirts are for, and it turns out that the hairdresser has laundered them for the priest's father-in-law, as the dry cleaners has gone out of business. At this point I realise how interconnected the members of the community really are, and that the priest-as-neighbour is involved in an intricate web of many reciprocal favours and rules that are part of small town Takachiho life and that are always being referenced, enacted, or sheepishly diverted from by local inhabitants.

We are summoned into the small living room and the hairdresser invites us to sit down under the *kotatsu* (heated low table) as we join her for the informal part of

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[133] *Engimono* are objects associated with luck and fortune: see Daniels, 2003.

[134] Seated with folded knees underneath.

the visit. She serves tea and offers us either chocolates or miso bean paste—definitely chocolates we both agree—"ah, good! Just as well I got stocked up with these!" she says, bringing out a small packet of luxury truffles. We both say they look good, and she chuckles knowingly: "that's because I bought the expensive kind". Sitting with her back straight, her dyed hair coiffed, she continues talking in a very loud voice while pouring the tea before she stops and prods the *bōmori* on the stomach, on the arm, laughing and making jokes; the priest is unfazed by the continued gestures of familiarity. They start a conversation about the recent folk dance festival and the hairdresser mimes her moves, she is an active member of the local group apparently.

"You're still young so you don't need to worry: forty – that's young. As for me, seventy seven in February, seventy seven!" she slaps the table for effect and we all laugh and smile at her dramatic facial expressions; she is relaxed and familiar with us and obviously in her element as entertainer and host. She continues to chat about her hairdressing business and her customers, beckoning towards the fax machine at one side of the room. The conversation soon turns to taxes and household bills. 'It's so expensive to have a toilet even – I can't afford to flush!' the hairdresser tells us, her face wide with mock horror.

'Well, you've got a vegetable garden outside, you could always make do'.

'I'm not proud to say that it wouldn't get to that stage – a toilet is a toilet after all!' she hoots, and the priest laughs again.

After the truffles have been opened the hairdresser offers us the miso bean paste again which the priest politely declines.

"Well, how about some more tea then, actually... you better not, you'll be drinking tea all morning".

Indeed the post-ritual of tea drinking was offered in every house we visited and indicated a time when the priest would by hosted by the *danka* to chat about their families, local news, gossip and general small talk.[135] After the *omairi* visits, I asked the *bōmori* why she stayed for tea at some places and not at others. She replied that over the years she has learned who is able to host her and who is not. It would have been too much for some sick or elderly *danka* to cope with: "Besides, by now I know who serves the best cakes".

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The Carpenter's household:

Figure 3.2 household ritual

We enter a household belonging to a couple in their mid-fifties. The *butsudan* altar is at the back of the room, a *kamidana* above the altar to the far side, suspended from

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[135] In the local priests' meeting group they discussed ways of offering guidance to the *danka* in their pastoral role. One priest pointed out that such small talk was a way in to connect with the *danka*, and that after this they may feel comfortable about discussing concerns and problems they have.

the wall. Masks used in the *kagura* performances, *gohei* (sacred wands) and amulets from the shrine also decorate the room. The priest bends down and kneels, in front of the *butsudan,* offering incense before placing her hands together in a prayer position before beginning the sutra. There is an atmosphere of reverence, and the rounded sounds of the chant become the focus of the room for a few concentrated moments – the incense rising towards the ceiling – as the middle-aged couple of the household sit behind the priest, meditation beads clasped around their wrists, sutra books held out. The priest turns to the couple expectantly after the recitation and they invite us to sit down. We sit opposite the husband underneath a heated table, the blanket cover spread over our laps.

Figure 3.3 A *Gohei* sacred wand from the kagura on the picture rail

The priest asks him about his work: "there's nothing about", he states matter-of-factly, and there is a long pause. I ask him what he does for a living and he turns to

me and says '*daiku'* then, 'carpenter' in English. Warming to the theme, he continues to talk, without either of us interrupting, a sudden smile transforming his demeanour. His wife is preparing tea in the small open kitchen, which is just behind the entrance. Having checked what kinds of cakes we would like, she brings us tea and desserts on delicate saucers. This pattern is formulaic. In every household we visit subsequently, when a couple hosts, the husband of the household talks to the guests and the wife serves tea and snacks. She smiles warmly as she kneels beside her husband, and the priest tells her she always enjoys visiting them.

"Isn't it terrible about the earthquake' the wife says, commenting on the recent tsunami and earthquake of 2011. In other households, most people have discussed family and local topics. She turns to me again and asks about the recent British royal wedding, adding that the Emperor couldn't attend due to the earthquake. "You'll be sad when your children go", she says, acknowledging that the priest's middle son will become a boarder at a private school in the next town. They chat about the reputation of the private school and the kendo team in Takachiho high school that her eldest son belongs to. As we leave they ask me to come again while handing the priest an envelope that contains a financial offering. Walking to the next household the priest confesses that the household was not on the rounds of houses that the priests visit regularly. One particular year they had paid a visit to the temple at the equinox and she asked if she could visit them on her rounds, and they agreed.

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The former town mayor:

The household we visit opposite is deceptively similar to the other houses on the street from the outside, with its sloping tiles and familiar façade, yet turns out to be cavernous inside, and decorated with expensive craft-style objects throughout,

displaying their comparative wealth compared to the other households we have visited that day. The room in which the *butsudan* altar stands is decorated with photographs above the picture rails, showing a young woman in a white wedding dress getting married to a blonde haired man in Japanese kimono robes. Other photographs show grandchildren in the garden outside a large American house. Along the walls and corridors are the ubiquitous sacred paper wands received at the shrine and the *kagura* festival and in the alcove next to the altar, a statue of the bodhisattva Kannon. On a sideboard is a picture of the husband of the household walking in a garden with a cabinet minister, revealing his high status as the former town mayor.

After the ritual, the wife of the household serves tea and the couple talks with the priest for a few minutes about local matters before asking about my research. Delighted at the chance to talk about their daughter who is living in the United States with her American husband, they want us to stay and show more pictures of their grandchildren, urging us to visit them again when we have time. In reality, we barely have the chance to gulp back the expensive *matcha* tea and delicate tea ceremony sweets before we are due to attend the next appointment at a memorial service in a neighbouring area. As we walk back to the car the priest tells me the background story of the former mayor. Unusually, he had only served one term and the couple moved to the United States for five years to live with their daughter after the subsequent defeat in the re-election. "They had to escape Takachiho and the situation, as there was a big scandal and the brother-in-law and campaign manager ended up committing suicide over problems happening with the campaign. They're normally organised by family groups and the situation with the brother-in-law reflected on the mayor and his office so they laid low for a while," the priest tells me.

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Figure 3.4 Chanting in front of the altar, *monto* behind

The above ethnography reveals that on the same main road of Kamino, the households have very different narratives and socio-economic circumstances. Despite the differences there are some common denominators however. Firstly, although the *danka* may not visit the temple regularly, the priests often visit their *danka* for *omairi* at the equinoxes, *obon,* and *hōji* (memorial) services. Secondly, people are engaging with syncretic practices signified through the ritual and objects that are found within their homes. Sometimes these religious signifiers are contained in the spaces set aside for the *butsudan* and *kamidana*, but they also spill out into the living area: along the

walls, on hooks, placed before the altar, in the alcoves, balancing on top of picture frames: and this is the case for every household visited during fieldwork. Thirdly, *danka* households are engaged with national and global worlds beyond the local by virtue of family members, media networks and most noticeably of all, through their relationships with the priest, whom they treat with a range of behaviours – from the casual and familiar comedic expressions of the hairdresser to the polite and reserved expressions in the carpenter household and the shared feeling of transnational experience at the former mayor's household.

Lastly, people are continuing with rituals performed in front of the *butsudan* despite very different economic circumstances, social status and varying connections with worlds beyond the local. Every household visited offered the same amount of money wrapped in special envelopes[136] to the priest (three thousand yen, about twenty pounds) and while this would be inexpensive to the former town mayor, it would represent a considerable amount to the average farming family. Despite these differences, people continue to invite the priest to their homes for an *omairi* ritual and clearly these visits remained relevant. For the priests, the ritual in front of the *butsudan* is understood in terms of the contemplation of Amida Buddha; however, this is not the case for the majority of *danka* households who regard the *butsudan* very differently, as illustrated below in an interview with Priest Iwao, an ordained priest and temple wife from another Jōdo Shinshū temple in the main town area of Takachiho.[137]

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[136] For the significance of wrapping in Japanese society, see Hendry: 1993.

[137] See Appendix for relationship with the main temple and position in the town.

3.2 The *butsudan*

Figure 3.5 An *obon* visitor to the household

Interview with Priest Iwao:

Does everyone (the danka) think that the butsudan is for the ancestors not Amida?

Yes, many people do, they haven't heard that it isn't really for the ancestors. They think that Buddhism is for holding memorial services, and that the ancestors, such as their late husband, are inside the *butsudan*, so that's why they pay homage. We (the priests) tell them that we're actually paying homage to Amida Buddha by chanting in front of the *butsudan* – but their deceased ones are most in their hearts, so whatever we say, that's the way they will continue to feel, and it can only be resolved if we broach this issue little by little. At the moment they think the *butsudan* belongs to the dead person – there are some people who think they can't even have a *butsudan*

unless somebody dies, which isn't the case; when I have consultations and give them advice I talk about this and try and teach them.

Figure 3.6 A simple Kamidana (god shelf)

During omairi *household visits I noticed that everyone still continues to put the ancestral tablets that are inscribed with the name of the deceased in the altar.*

Yes, that's why in our temple after the service we tell the relatives we will do a disposal ceremony and that's why we're taking them away. They aren't talismans, but they seem to think they are, and if we take them back to the temple they can't be treated in such a way. If the priest tells the *monto* there will be a disposal ceremony, then they realise the tablets are not needed, and so they can keep the *butsudan* neat and tidy, which is important. It's one of my jobs to do this, I think. I take lots of things back to the temple for disposal – talismans, tablets, and images of the

Buddha… Every household has a *kamidana,* and they have the *kagura* objects displayed; usually the people who have danced in the *kagura* and received the *gohei* (sacred wands) just leave them in the *butsudan* area because they haven't been told not to. They will treat anything highly, with reverence in this area – even unimportant things, like *Jizo*[138]. Takachiho is *'kami no guni'* (country of the gods) so Shinto is really major here. It's become all mixed up; they treat Amida Buddha and the *kami* (gods) together in the same way, which isn't permitted in the Jōdo Shinshū sect. We often say something to them when they mix everything up in the altar, but if we are too strict about it, they will be turned off. We (the priests) have to create a relationship with them, and over time they will begin to listen. Basically, human beings don't want to hear that they're wrong. That's why I have to listen to them first – if I don't, they won't hear what I have to say in return. So even if they're wrong and misunderstand I don't say anything at first. Then, as our conversations develop, I gradually explain to them that they don't need the other things like the amulets, statues, the *Jizo*, *kami* deities and so on; they only need Amida Buddha. If I approach it gradually like this, they become more open to what I am saying.

Is this the same for other Buddhist sects?

I'm not sure, maybe… within Zen sects they have the *'ihai'* ancestral tablet with the deceased Buddhist name inside the *butsudan*—but it's not the focal point of importance, and it ends up that the tablet becomes central. This isn't *bad* as such—

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[138] Jizō is the bodhisattva who alleviates suffering (of both the living and dead), delivers the faithful deceased to the Pure Land, answers prayers of the living, is a friend to all and has a non-threatening countenance, even to children. In modern Japan, Jizō is venerated as the guardian of unborn, aborted, miscarried and stillborn babies (*mizuko*). Jizō also protects expectant mothers, women in labour, children, firemen, travellers and pilgrims, as well as helping shorten the time of those trapped in hell, desire and karmic rebirth. Jizō's protection is flawless and is the Buddhist deity to whom people feel closest.

but we have to tell them this isn't the real point or meaning of the *butsudan* in Jōdo Shinshū practice*.*

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The above interview touches on the core frustrations and difficulties from the clerical point of view when trying to preach a single doctrine within a syncretic system. Yet fundamentally, it exposes the understandings of the purpose of the *butsudan* for local people that are found throughout the area and irrespective of differentials, such as: gender, status or Buddhist sect affiliation. Whomever I visited with the priest, and whichever household we entered, the same practices were found across the board: from the wealthy town lawyer, to the poorest of farming families. It became clear that there were two patterns operating: the local perspective and the clerical one; and they were diametrically opposed.

According to Traphagan, *omairi* is central when analysing the Japanese experience of the ancestors:

> The primary way by which individuals encounter ancestors on a routine basis is through the practice of *omairi*: visiting or prayer at the family gravesite and at the altar in one's home or in that of another family member. Omairi can be translated as prayer (another word for which is *ogamu*), although the content of meaning does not entirely overlap with conceptualizations of prayer as they are understood in non-Japanese religions. Omairi can be associated either with Buddhism or Shinto and involves a complex of meanings. The *kanji* (chinese characters) used for the term literally means to take part in something. In its verb form, the character indicates the performance of an action, but can also imply a return to one's origin (*mairimasu*). It is in the sense of a return to one's origin that the concept of omairi has particular salience for Japanese in its reference to ancestor veneration. To do omairi at the family altar (*butsudan*) or other sacred locale such as the family grave (*ohaka*) is a return to origins in the form of visiting ancestors.   (Traphagan, 2003, 130)

The above reflects the conceptualisation of *omairi* for the majority of *danka* as ritual practitioners; for the priests however, *omairi* can be understood in its literal meaning as the humble form of the verb 'to go' or 'to come' (*mairu*), and simply indicates the

action of visiting *danka* households as patrons of the temple.[139] This usage of the word *omairi* captures the essence of the ritual when seen by the priests: as a ritual transaction that generates a financial reward. The previous literature has stressed this aspect of Buddhist ritual, noting the practice of receiving money as a return for ritual exchange.[140]Although scholarship has emphasised conformity, cultural hegemony, custom, 'tradition', obligation and duty as reasons that people continue ritual practice (exemplified in Buddhist funerals, as Tsuji, 2006 notes), and though this is a factor, it could not explain adequately why the local *danka* illustrated in the ethnography (many of whom are living in relative poverty in the remote farming areas) would continue to pay for ritual services through these offerings simply in order to conform and belong as a 'Japanese'.

In the interview with Priest Iwao it becomes apparent that the priests and the *danka* are at cross-purposes regarding the ritual in front of the household *butsudan*. For the priest, the *butsudan* is a vehicle for the contemplation of Amida Buddha (Oneness) and the sect teachings; for the *danka* it is a sacred space and receptacle that houses the dead, or the potential agency of the dead to visit the household at specific times, such as when it is invoked by the sutra and ritual activity by the ritual actor – priest or family member – in front of the *butsudan*.[141] In the offerings of the favourite foods and tea placed before the altar as offerings for the dead, Smith observes that the

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[139] This word is also often used by teachers who visit their pupils' homes to consult with parents for parents' evening, or by corporate employees making arrangements to visit the premises of other companies, and simply indicates the activity of visiting a customer, client, or person of higher status, or a patron.

[140] Known as *fuse* (offerings) see: Rowe, 2011.

[141] Water is also placed in the altar and occasionally cups are inscribed with the position of the decased in the family: such as 'mother' and 'father'. The photograph of the deceased, their favourite food, water to quench thirst, alongside objects associated with their likes or status while alive (a doctor's stethoscope, a statue of a cat for an animal lover, a packet of cigarettes, a can of coffee/beer/bottle of spirits) are all immutable signifiers of the deceased and the purpose of the *bustudan* as a space inextricably connected with the dead and the otherworldly.

ancestors are treated as if they are still part of the household (1983, 33) and this is still the case thirty years' later in Takachiho today. In Jōdo Shinshū sect discourse, however, the *butsudan* is a vehicle for the contemplation of Oneness [142] and enlightenment in the here-and-now, and this is signified by the scroll at the back of the altar with a depiction of Amida Buddha.
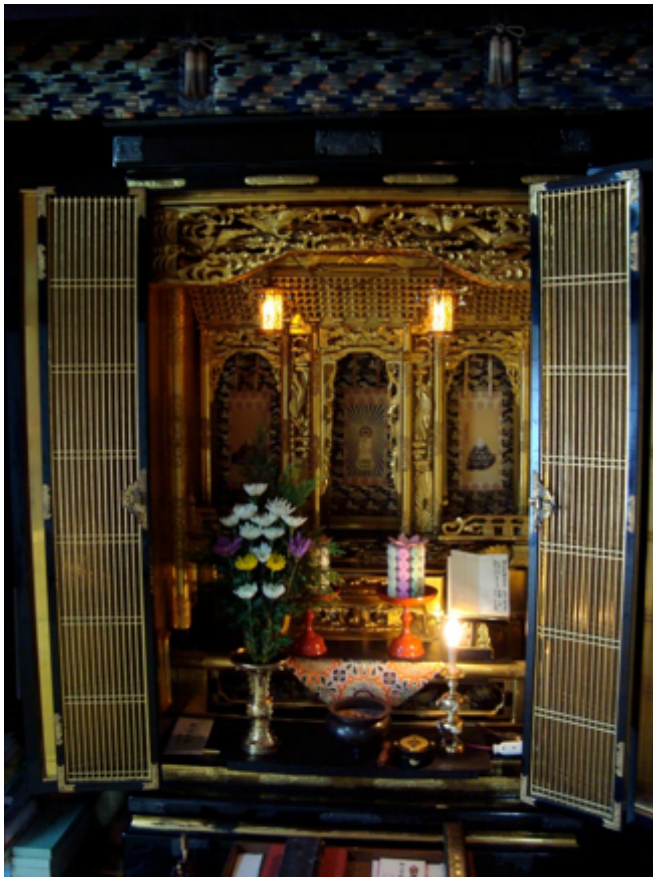
Figure 3.7 An official sect *butsudan*: Amida Buddha in the centre.

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[142] 'Oneness' is a representation of Amida's eternal vow.

Figure 3.8 An ornate *Kamidana* (god shelf) in a *danka* household: unidentified deity in the centre

According to previous Japanese and English language literature, 'ancestor worship' underscores Buddhist ritual; although there are problems with the term and throughout history scholars (including Hearn, 1904; Hozumi 1901; Dore 1958; Benedict 1964; and more recently, Nelson, 2008) have pointed out that 'ancestor worship' should be more accurately termed 'ancestor veneration'. Plath argues that even the term 'ancestor veneration' does not reflect the nuances of emotional ambivalence that is felt towards the dead, and a common feature of social bonds experienced by the living (1964, 306). According to Plath, there are three categories of 'souls'[143] in Japanese religion: the departed, (who died in recent memory, and can

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[143] The concept of a 'soul' is not used in the Buddhist context, which instead teaches *anatman*, the concept of no-soul, or more concretely, no ego or fixed 'sense of self' that is susceptible to becoming overly attached to the idea of a permanent soul that continues into the afterlife, and that can be the cause suffering in the here-and-now. Therefore ideas of a 'spirit' housed in the 'self' that becomes separated from the body at death, is antithethical to sect teachings: which takes the view that although everyone is eventually reborn in the Pure Land, and is automatically saved after death, upon becoming

be regarded as buddhas, spirits, and gods in the afterlife, represented by ancestral tablets in the *butsudan)*; the ancestors, (who were formerly members of the household and no longer in living memory, now plural and impersonal); and the outsiders (who are not affiliated with any household line) (Plath, 1964, 304).[144]

According to Nelson (2008), the development of the *butsudan* itself may originate from the Jōdo Shinshū altar in the main temple in Kyoto, propagated by priest Rennyo (1415-1499). Cabinets used to display a hanging scroll of the *nenbustu* may also have been the precursors to the current *butsudan* (Nelson, 2008, 310). Despite these possible origins, in the contemporary context, the parishioners and priests have alternative perspectives on the function of the *butsudan* and the ritual practice it generates. In the local context, Buddhist concepts of the afterlife and methods to attain *shinjin* awareness (enlightenment)[145] are secondary to the purposes of helping the deceased into the position of ancestorhood through ritual in which the priest plays a pivotal role.

The *danka* place importance on such rituals due to the commonly held belief that the deceased household members become buddhas in the afterlife and thus have continued influence over the household. Therefore, inviting the priests to perform a ritual in front of the *butsudan* is a common theme found throughout Takachiho, which persists independently of sect affiliation, and despite Jōdo Shinshū teachings which discourage (even prohibit) paying homage to the ancestors directly. Although

a Buddha, the deceased return to the world in order to take part in the 'dynamic Oneness' and process of compassion in the world—symbolised by Amida Buddha. The Pure Land is not a place, and Amida Buddha is not a god; instead both are a state of being. This is translated into English as 'enlightenment' and characterised by the connection of all things, yet prioritises no *one* or no *thing*.

[144] On the other hand, Japanese definitions do not make these distinctions and 'the ancestors' is a general category that includes the founder of the household and those who were members of the household at the time of their death (Plath, 1964, 302).

[145] These concepts will be explored in more detail in later chapters.

the *danka* can care for the ancestors at the daily level, there is a specific role ascribed to a religious specialist. Priests have the skills needed to ensure the pacification of the spirit during the process in which it leaves the body and is reborn in another world begins (Ambros, 2010). Therefore, the priest is an instrumental tool in the efficacy of funerary and post-funerary ritual, due to their professional skills and experience, alongside the high status as a specialist religious actor. This factor, combined with the historical legacy of the household affiliation to the temple, and the historical role of the priest as an educator and a judge in local disputes, alongside the legacy of a high status role in bureaucracy that began in the Tokugawa period and has diminished, yet remains in the fact that the priests should be treated with specific etiquette— particularly during ritual, is key to understanding the *omairi* from the situated local perspective. Therefore, although affiliation to a temple is a local custom, there is also a crucial facet of ritual efficacy.

According to Nelson (2008), the function of Buddhism in Japan and throughout East Asia is placed upon venerating ancestors and petitioning their spirits for health, prosperity and safety.[146] This historical legacy has now resulted in the customary altar found in Takachiho households. However, the *butsudan* is also a symbol of sect power in the community, reflecting that Jōdo Shinshū is the largest sect of Japan, and was particularly resonant for the lower classes in previous historical periods, in its teachings that both monk and layman would be saved and reborn in the Pure Land through Amida's central Vow (Bowring, 2005). Yet, even despite the sect-based agenda of the material object, which symbolises its affiliation with the depiction of Amida Buddha in the central alcove; the *butsudan* signifies its purpose for local people by virtue of its surrounding objects, its use, and the spilling

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[146] This can be seen as a complementary practice and extension of petitioning local deities at shrines and temples for particular complaints or 'this worldly benefits' (Reader and Tanabe 1998).

over of syncretic practices that speak to the wider consciousness and cosmology of the area. Some households blend practices more than others, while some local practitioners enforce a kind of spatial separation; but this is dependent upon the members of the household and is customised according to their individual expressions, indicating situated, personalised meaning for the household.

3.3 *Hōji:* memorials

Figure 3.9 Family and neighbours gathered for the *hōji*

Leaving our shoes among the pile of others belonging to the guests, the priest bows in greeting to the head of the household, before sitting in front of the altar, offering a preliminary recitation of the *nenbutsu*. The house belongs to a couple in their late forties: the husband is a mobile phone store manager and the wife a Yakult

salesperson. Firstly, the priest makes an offering of incense and briefly recites a sutra, before changing robes (reflecting the significance of the ritual) and begins the memorial service. The husband and father of the household is the key actor in the public space, directing the guests and accommodating the priest. Some people are already seated, and those arriving take their place on the tatami floor, behind the altar and priest. The women sit on their knees in *seiza* (folded knee position) the men sit with their legs crossed. People are dressed predominantly in dark suits. The architecture in rural Japan allows for divided rooms to become one large ritual space by taking out the sliding doors. Like everyone else, the priest places an offering of money upon a pile of envelopes tied with black and silver wire thread on a plate next to the altar, adorned with flowers. There is a black, framed photograph of the only son, a fifteen-year-old boy with learning disabilities, next to the altar, and a picture of his grandfather who also recently passed away. Alongside the altar are two electric lava-lamps and *kagura* masks, with photographs of deceased family members and certificates hanging along the walls. The air is heavy with the must of incense and the gas heaters pelt out their heady fumes. Due to the repetition of the weekly ritual, the priests inevitably run out of Dharma sermons and are sent in rotation.

To begin the ritual, the priest sounds the bowl in the altar and a hush descends. A box of burning incense is passed from one person to another, as people make an offering onto the hot coals. The priest recites a sutra for twenty minutes, finalising the ritual with the *nenbutsu* before turning to address the guests, ending with the words:

> "The power of the recent tsunami had the potential to destroy but water also has the potential to calm, and reflects the essence of Amida Buddha. In your struggles throughout life, when you are in the middle of a storm, you can always depend on Amida".

This concludes the first part of the ritual in the house itself. Now the *butsudan* ritual is over, people step outside the house, the *hōji* no longer seems as solemn, and the whole party walks behind the priest to the tombstone, which in Takachiho is often at the side of a road, overlooking rice fields, or a short walk up a mountainside, in close proximity to the household. In other *hōji* services during fieldwork, syncretic practices could be observed and we are given white *mochi* (rice cake) orbs to eat in front of the tombstone. Such a custom is not observed within the sect but is specific to the hamlet, and was prepared and distributed by the family members to the assembled. On our walk down the mountain, one well-dressed woman in pearls stopped to pray at the shrine of a deity carved in stone, before picking some wild flowers that she offered to me as a gesture. When I asked the priest about the motivation for her actions in the context I was told it was "probably some local shaman figure" that she was praying to.

Figure 3.10 Walking from the tombstone back to the house

At the side of the tombstone, the priest is dominant once again, chanting and offering incense as people approach the tombstone one or two at a time, heads bowed. This lasts about twenty minutes, and walking back, people are even more talkative and even lighthearted, joking and laughing as family and friends. The wife of the

household politely inquires about my research, and when I tell her I am looking at Japanese culture and Buddhist rituals, she begins to look concerned and asks how their singing (sutra recitation) sounded: "are we doing it correctly?" she inquires, looking anxious. I ask her about the *hōji* and she explains how it is seen as an opportunity for her family and friends to meet, and regarded as an important family occasion, which becomes increasingly rare as some family members are living in the city and cannot return home often. The *bōmori* tells me later that most of the priests take for granted that the *monto*[147] know how to perform ritual actions. However, often the *monto* are unsure and the *bōmori* instructs them more directly, "the other priests just think they know what to do automatically because they're so used to it, and were brought up with it all; but the *monto* don't know what to do most of the time, so I teach them from the beginning, just as I had to learn".

Figure 3.11 Individual incense offerings in front of the tomb

The house as a ritual space plays a key role for the duration of the *hōji*. As we return, everyone gathers outside to take a group photograph. Inside, elaborate lacquered

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[147] The *monto* [門徒] is the Jōdo Shinshū sect based word for temple-affiliated-household and implies a more 'personal relationship' with the neighbourhood, than the generic word *danka* [檀家] which is used irrespective of sect, according to the priests.

bento lunch boxes are placed on low individual trestle tables, and the catering staff that have transformed the space, are still placing second courses underneath, as guests hover around the outskirts of the room, reluctant to be the first to sit down. The husband and wife are the main actors in the space, both in front of and behind the scenes, as the core family members of the ritual and main hosts. The young women of the household pour the first drink for seated guests and the older female relatives and neighbours remain busy in the kitchen cooking, serving hot noodles and coordinating the meal. The women move fluidly between the private space of the kitchen and public space of the tatami room, and it is the husband's role to host the priest, direct and entertain in the public realm. The seating plan reflects the status of the guests, with the tables nearest the altar seating the priest and nearest family members. However, the women are usually too busy cooking and serving to eat, and only the junior family members are sitting down with the guests.

The husband begins a speech by thanking everyone, regretting they have served only 'a trifling meal' and the priest leads the guests by putting their hands together in a prayer posture and offering gratitude for the food. At such services, the older men are seated in the corner and effectively on the periphery of proceedings – as it is expected that they will continue drinking alcohol, becoming more rowdy as the afternoon wears on. Each household in the neighbourhood and friends of the family have sent a representative member to the service and this usually falls to the most senior male member. Therefore, aside from the family there are few young people – especially young women – and the party is made up mainly of men from late middle age to the elderly. Typically, everyone knows each other because they are interlinked geographically and socially in an interdependent farming community and

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at this moment are linked ritually and symbolically by their affiliation to the deceased and the household.

After the drinks have been poured people socialise. I begin talking with one of the daughters in her early twenties and before long we are speaking in English. I ask if she plans to come back to Takachiho after graduation, but she explains that she wants to see the outside world, and is now trying to find work in Fukuoka or Tokyo. Both the daughters of the household live in Oita city, studying at university, and I ask the older one her feelings about her hometown. "It's a very beautiful place and the origin of many myths and legends," she tells me. "I wasn't interested in that before, but when I went to university in Oita I appreciated how important my hometown is for the first time, I really think about these kinds of things now. One day I might come back, but at the moment I want to study and explore!" she says, making widening movements with her hands for emphasis and smiling. She tells me she is very proud to come from Takachiho, but that it is very rural and isolated. She explains that she likes talking in English and has joined an English conversation group in Oita – and everyone who is eavesdropping nearby seems very surprised by her fluency. Realising she has an audience, she entertains the guests by saying that her parents have become closer now that she and her sister have left the household, and are forced to talk to each other more. The couple join in, shaking their heads furiously in denial, the mother complaining good-humouredly that her husband makes no effort, and the husband in turn saying they have nothing to talk about, as they skillfully perform their roles in the shared story of incompatibility; although they are clearly a well-matched couple and kind people, and host their guests in a team effort.

After a few more hours, the priest tells me that it is important to leave before the meal turns into 'a full-blown party', explaining the delicate balancing act between

being sociable with guests, without being seen as a 'good-time priest', clearly conscious of promoting a good image for the temple they represent. As we leave, the husband bows deeply and hands over an envelope containing thirty thousand yen, (approximately two hundred pounds) for the performance of the service. On the way back to the temple, the priest explains that one of the remaining daughters would be expected to return to Takachiho and inherit the sizeable house where the parents now live as the only son has passed away. However, with their proficiency in the world outside of Takachiho, the differences between generations of the same household were striking, and I wondered what repercussions this would have in the future.

Figure 3.12 The feast at the *hōji*

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Memorial ceremonies such as the one above are the most frequently offered services at the temple. They mark the passage of time after death, and there is a post-funeral service every seven days until the forty-ninth day. The frequency of rituals then drops and particular years (such as the first, third, seventh, thirteenth, seventeenth and so on) are marked as anniversaries. According to Ohnuki-Tierney (1984), there is no single moment of death in Japanese cultural thought. Dead people continue to be persons as ancestors, and death is both a biological and social process. Indeed in the area, a person is not considered to be 'dead' until they have achieved ancestorhood. This is understood in the area to be the forty-ninth day after death, when the ashes (and any remaining bones) of the deceased are moved from the household and interred inside the tomb at the site of the family grave (usually a short walk into the foot of the nearest hill or mountain, or edge of the family rice field). Until that time, the spirit is not yet separated from their physical remains, and are characterised by an ontological state of liminality. Furthermore, until this time, the deceased is considered by household members and the community to be '*iru*' (the verb 'to be'/exist) and still 'present' in the house. This is why the forty-ninth day practice described above is crucial.

Indeed, in practices such as the memorial services, the process of becoming an ancestor is illustrated, and such rituals enable the deceased to reach the position of ancestorhood through the ritual activities of the living. In the previous postwar literature, death has been considered as a liminal state, and the spirit of the deceased, polluted by death, may wander until purified, and made safe by a series of rites that culminate on the forty-ninth day after death, and later rites are also necessary (Plath, 1964). According to Kim (2012), these ideas of pollution remain in the rural Japanese

town where fieldwork was undertaken in the contemporary context. The process of the spirit separating from the body that continues *after* biological death is considered polluting and extremely dangerous for the living. Subsequently: 'the continued series of formal memorial services is above all else concerned with the purification or elimination of death pollution and the distribution or replenishment of vitality' (Kim, 2012, 248). This is also important in the ritual meal, which Kim (2012) argues sustains the living as well as the dead, and can be seen as an important practice in the ethnography above, where informal post-ritual tea and snacks are obligatory at *omairi*, and becomes even more important at the elaborate meal of the memorial. Through this process, the deceased will become an ancestor with the power to protect or harm. In Takachiho, if a death has taken place around the time of *obon*, or forty-nine days have not yet passed, *hatsubon* [初盆 rites for the first *obon*] cannot be performed. 'The first time that the soul who has left the house on the 49th day comes back is on o-bon. Thus if a death occurs within 49 days before o-bon, the niibon (first o-bon) is celebrated the year after' (Ooms, 1967, 236).[148] Furthermore until the bones are interred at the gravesite the spirit of the dead is still considered liminal.

However, in the contemporary period, Rowe has demonstrated that modern (and often urban) rites held at funeral parlours have speeded up this liminal time, as the funeral and memorial are held together, and ideas of liminality shift into ideas about memorialising the dead (2000, 372). Although time frames may have altered—due to demographic changes and features of modernity that cause time restrictions, difficulty getting leave from work to attend rites and so on—colloquial and spiritual ideas concerning *en* [縁 bonds, ties, relationships] have not. 'Societal bonds in Japan

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[148] *Niibon* ［新盆 the second *obon*］ is known as *hatsubon* [初盆 the first *obon* after the person has been dead for more than forty nine days].

are most commonly based either on blood relations (*ketsuen*) or regional ties (*chien*) and are signified by both the concrete and the mysterious connections: to have *en* is to be lined by fate or destiny and to bind *en* is to marry' (Rowe, 2004, 45).[149] *En* is also used to translate the Buddhist theory of codependent origination, where everything and everyone is connected to one another through causes and conditions. In this discourse, individuality is subsumed under interconnections that can be both positive and negative (Rowe, 2004, 45-46).

Muen [無縁 irrelevant, unrelated, have nothing to do with] refers to the dead without bonds to the living. The situation of *muen* also refers to graves that have been abandoned through lack of a successor (Rowe, 2004, 46). This is still considered a shameful fate, and the only thing worse than becoming *muen* oneself, is to be the one who allows this fate to happen to the family ancestors (Rowe, 2004, 47). The importance attached to performing rites for the dead so that they do not end up *muen* 'without bonds', and a potential cause of harm to the living, is not only reserved for blood or regional ties, however. Nishimura (2007a) demonstrates how memorial rituals for *muenbotoke* (buddhas without bonds) are undertaken in Nagasaki sixty years later for the unknown victims of the atomic bomb. 'There remain a great number of folk performances and memorials all over Japan in the form of collective memorials for the anonymous victims of disasters, famines and epidemics' (Nishimura, 2007a, 237). The public nature of these rituals shows that even though *muen* literally means "having no relationship", as Rowe notes: 'there appears to be a need to create relations despite the irrelevance or anonymity of the dead' (2007b, 244). *Muen* also derives from Buddhism and originally means dying without an opportunity to encounter the teachings of Buddhism. However, in Japanese folk

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[149] *Ketsuen* [血縁 blood ties] and *chien* [地縁 area, region and neighbourhood ties].

religion it is not linked to Buddhism but rather to lineage (Nishimura, 2007b, 238).[150]

In the emphasis placed on lineage in local religiosity, the living have to reproduce the household in order for themselves not to result in *muen*, without bonds. Reproducing the lineage, and thus the household, is therefore a responsibility and core charter for the ancestral system revealing the historical, patriarchal ideology that underlies its continued practices.

The idea of placating the ancestors who have potential harmful agency over the living has been demonstrated more recently in the controversies surrounding Buddhist temples who have profited from rites for *mizuko kuyō* [水子供養 rituals for aborted or miscarried fetuses] (Hardacre, 1997). In this instance, fetuses have been conceptualised as having the potential to return and harm the living. This can perhaps be considered the contemporary incarnation of previous ideas surrounding liminality and the need to pacify the dead who have the potential to harm without the proper pacification. Although scholars have noted the incongruities of ideas surrounding ancestors who would have no reason to harm their living kin (Covell, 2005), the volatility of ancestral spirits who have the potential to become *muenbotoke* (buddhas without bonds) if not cared for properly echoes the ideas surrounding the deities (*kami*) who also have the power to harm and protect (Kitagawa, 1987). However, according to Nishimura (2007a), folklorists have overstressed the connection between *muenbotoke* and ancestor veneration; more likely rituals remain as a legacy of history and local expression. Similarly, Hirano points out that the dead are on the whole usually regarded as benign; and that if something goes wrong, first geomancy then the ancestors are seen as a possible cause (1980, 12). In the contemporary context,

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[150] Nishimura argues that the patriarchal ideology that regulated Japanese society until its defeat in World War Two, rather than fears of haunting, is the structure upon which ancestral rites are based and this is reflected in the understanding of 'unknown dead' in the contemporary setting, furthermore rituals are repeated due to the social tendency to tend to the dead historically as a custom (2006, 238).

ideas surrounding 'hungry ghosts' have now been supplanted by expressions of performative memory (Nishimura, 2007a), or memorialising the dead and minimising liminality (Rowe, 2000), and changing practices—found particularly in the urban sphere—will be considered in the next chapter. Indeed, who, after all, would want to harm their family?

Figures 3.13 & 3.14 Ritual food

Another view regards ancestor rites as an activity that pacifies, consoles and gives sustenance to the dead. Hirano has conceptualised rituals such as memorials as comfort and consolation for the deceased to take sting out of being socially departed from the world (Hirano, 1980, 13). In this understanding, rituals connect the world of the dead to the social world of the living and are viewed in terms of bonds that need to be nurtured and supplicated in the same way in which other bonds, such as the mother-child bond are nurtured. In this understanding, the co-dependent relationship between ancestor and descendant is one of nurturance and dependency upon the other for mutual care (Lebra, 1976, 240). 'The living would not exist without the ancestors, and the ancestors depend upon the living to keep them involved, as memories, in the world of the living and to provide the love and attention that all humans require. In short, the living and the dead are involved in enacting and maintaining each other's well-being' (Traphagan, 2003, 128). The idea of well-being also extends to the prosperity of the extended family and the ancestors are implicated in their success. Traphagan (2003) argues that the need is greater for the living than the dead, and that ancestors protect the living at their request. Because of this asymmetry, in return for protection from harm, it then becomes the role of the living to protect the extended household, which is seen in terms of land, house, fields, grave, and ancestors. If this responsibility is abdicated, then the family falls apart (Traphagan, 2003, 128-133). The ethnography in this chapter shows that the bonds between the living are equally as important as those with the dead, and a key motivation at the memorial service is to draw spatially displaced family back together through rituals for the dead.

In contrast, and more prgamatically, according to the priests the *hōji* is useful as a clear indication of the mourning period, which allows for a period to grieve and furthermore an opportunity for the family to organise practical matters relating to the

estate of the deceased. The priest's official role is to facilitate over the grieving period and offer the family hope and comfort concerning death and the afterlife by instructing the bereaved in the teachings of Jōdo Shinshū. From the priest's perspective, it is not that the deceased are being honoured or worshipped as such, but that Amida Buddha has facilitated the opportunity for the mourners to assemble and learn more about the teachings, including ideas surrounding the Pure Land. Yet the priests confess that this distinction was ambiguous in the teachings. However, from the mourners' perspective, the rites are focused upon the deceased and a process that enables the deceased to reach buddhahood and become a household ancestor: a task that requires the socio-ritual actions of the whole neighbourhood.

Furthermore, such rites are a chance for people to reconnect with one another, utilising the purpose of the ritual in order to act collectively in memory once more as a family and community. However, although such memorials are common in Takachiho, people are not always at ease in their ritual role; many surreptitiously watch others in determining the correct way to make an offering. The sutra recitation in the ethnography was sporadic, and the wife of the household expresses concerns over their performance. Even with continued practice, it is ultimately only the priest who ever appears completely at ease in the ritual context. Such discrepancy between sect doctrine and personal meaning are found throughout the priest and *monto's* relationship and through their expectations of one another. However, the priest has an opportunity to present a Dharma talk concerning rebirth in the Pure Land to the assembled, who are neighbours and therefore also usually members of the same sect. More crucially, the priests receive a considerable donation for two hours' work; and it is this financial offering that enables the temple to remain as a business, which in turn provides a ritual specialist for household rites that helps the deceased into

ancestorhood. In this way, both priests and households benefit; and perhaps this is why their mutually exclusive motivations are not a topic that either party dwells upon, as long as it continues to serve the purposes of both parties.

Specifically, in Takachiho, *hōji* memorials reflect the fact that a farming community is still able to take time off for weekly rituals involved. It is customary that after a death, the neighbours make the time-consuming funeral arrangements and contacts the priest. Connected by their proximity to one another and interrelated through the *danka* system, at such times the household can rely on these networks to organise the services. In this way, not only the household, but also the surrounding neighbourhood, helps the dead into the position of ancestorhood through funerary and memorial practices. In the previous section, the practice of *omairi* at the equinoxes demonstrates the importance of the household internal structure. At the *hōji*, the ancestral dead interconnect the bereaved family with other households. The whole extended family, including geographically displaced relatives, neighbours and friends are invited to the service. Through the examination of the *hōji*, it becomes apparent that Takachiho society is made up of such interconnected groups, still tied through mutual dependence, obligation and ritual: and these ties go back generations. Furthermore, funerals and memorials involve the employment of several other service sectors such as florists and caterers, alongside those services performed by the temple priests. The system of exchange means that guests and neighbours effectively pay for *hōji* services themselves, in the practice of offering money in envelopes beside the *butsudan* before the ritual begins that helps cover the cost of the memorial rites. This also helps keep the local economy turning, particularly at *obon*, a lucrative time.

The continued rituals found in Takachiho are only possible through the territorialisation of the household and the community; and this generates questions

about how things are beginning to change as younger generations move away and are unable to perform or undertake ritual action in the same ways. In noting the practices adhered to during the *hōji*, where the *ie* and the neighbourhood are involved in performances of ritual, themes of reproduction and transmission have emerged. Households attempt to reproduce the ritual even while it appears difficult to sustain for further generations who are not localised in the same way, and therefore cannot replicate the same patterns of ritual and household in the future. Furthermore, more fluid notions and aspirations found in the younger generations of the locale are already proving a problem for future transmission and ritual embodied in the household. Yet rituals are still replicated with attention to detail in a way that suggests that when the older generation dies, the younger generations will take over the household and its ritual foundations. However, how this will happen in actuality when young people are leaving the area is unclear. It appears that there is an underlying assumption that at some point the heirs will be expected to return, yet if they are willing, or even capable of doing this, with few opportunities, is even more uncertain.

In urban areas there has also been a shift away from ideas of extended and linked households to the nuclear family, and in the contemporary period, the customisation of the *butsudan* has adapted to demands of modernity and the stress upon a personal and individual relationships to the dead (Nelson, 2008). However, these new forms of relationship to the dead are not yet evident in Takachiho, reflecting the significance still placed on household and neighbourhood bonds in the rituals for the ancestral dead as concern and concept that embodies a host of ritual, social and economic relations and transactions. As individual and neighbourhood

rituals have been considered, I will now move on to the broader festival of *obon*, celebrated by the community, at the same time throughout Japan nationwide.

3.4 The communal dead

In August, *obon* – the nationally observed festival for the ancestral dead – is a focal point of the year in Takachiho. *'Hatsubon'* is the first ritual for a household that experienced the death of a family member during the year, and the priests, alongside neighbours, family and friends, visit bereaved households and make an offering before the altar. In Takachiho, the whole extended family, including the younger members in their twenties and thirties who have left for urban areas, are expected to make the journey back home, and it feels as if the population of Takachiho has suddenly increased twofold for the holiday[151]. By mid-morning on the first day of *obon* the country lanes are jammed with cars and the ubiquitous small white farm pick-up trucks, traveling to and from households. At one hamlet we visit there is even an *obon* induced traffic jam where several people are visiting one particular household at the same time.

At *hatsubon* the priest performs a sutra in front of the *butsudan* and the whole extended family is usually present. The household also hosts other members of the community who visit to pay their respects to the deceased, as a continuation of the previous practices explored earlier. Roles are ascribed according to age and gender. In multi-generational households, it is usually the eldest male who performs this role, and younger adults and children observe, or are peripheral to the proceedings. In some households daughters in their twenties and thirties who have left their natal household to become a *yome* (wife) elsewhere have returned, bringing back young

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[151] Nationally young people and families have increasingly taken advantage of the holiday in order to travel domestically and internationally.

children, who run around causing havoc – instructed to sit down and watch the priest silently as the ritual proceeds. In other households, eldest sons have brought back their families from the cities, and for a brief time people spend a while living in the multi-generational *ie* they have left. In the revolving doors of households that the priest walks into and out of, the format stays the same: the priest recites a sutra, stops to chat for a while, is greeted by other visitors who place an offering of money next to the *butsudan*, and receives an envelope 'offering' (usually three thousand yen, around twenty pounds) as they make motions to leave. Everyone who visits a household, priest or friend, puts their hands together in a prayer position before the *butsudan*, and beside it places an offering with the same amount of money. This process involves an interdependent system that is based on exchange, primarily of cash, but also gifts and services.

Figure 3.15 Celebrating *obon* with sparklers

August is oppressively humid, although few use the luxury of air conditioning except the most affluent households, and the sliding screens and doors of the home are opened to catch any passing breeze. Our visits are mainly to farming households with an elderly couple in residence. Businesses such as small rice husking factories and hair salons are hosting their extended family back from the cities. Some houses on the high street suddenly became too small for the influx of guests and priests; the younger members of the family are sometimes forced to spend the ritual in the kitchen, holding their babies and pet dogs that have been relegated for the duration. University students also return to Takachiho and are given the role of handing out the return gifts for the cash envelopes received from guests. This is called *'okaeshi'* which is a small gift, usually in the form of sweets; kitchen products such as cling film; the occasional can of beer or small bottle of alcohol, received in return for the envelopes of money received from visitors. The younger members of the family are not expected to take an active part in the ritual aside from this exchange, and the priest has most contact with the oldest members of the household.

Obon is also a time to socialise and have parties. After dinner with the temple family one evening, the children notice a neighbour's fireworks party from the kitchen window and wander down to participate. In the still, sticky humidity of an August evening, neighbourhood children delight in burning sparklers, while adults enjoy a barbecue and drink beer underneath the awnings at the neigbour's rice husking factory. Because the entire town is on holiday, it is also generally considered a time to relax and catch up with all the generations in the community that may not have seen each other since New Year. Even the ceremony held at the temple to mark the end of *obon* season is suddenly packed with families and children, fathers and

grandfathers nodding off to sleep in the heat as the priest gives a Dharma talk. For the rest of the year, attendance at the temple is predominantly made up of retired people belonging to the Elders and the Women's Association. In effect, *obon* and New Year are usually the only times that the temple is visited by the majority of households.[152]

Obon can be understood as a series of processes revolving around exchange and performed duties have subtexts of *giri* (duty), and *on* (obligation) alongside more personal sentiments (Tsuji, 2006). Every *hatsubon* household is filled with flowers; baskets of fruit; and lanterns—encompassing the nationwide custom of sending summer gifts such as jellies and beer in order to recognise reciprocal relationships and as thanks for actual and perceived favours—alongside the ritual offerings. These gifts are sent by neighbours, companies and friends and require the services of the post office, florists, local supermarkets, and specialist gift agencies, making *obon* and midsummer an important time for secular and religious businesses. Each individual household receives money from guests, who in turn are also guests to other households, offering envelopes of cash. This system indicates a micro-economy of exchange within the community at particular times in the calendar and the temple relies on this system to fund their services provided and enable the upkeep of the temple. Visiting numerous households at *obon* is very lucrative for the temple, and the cash exchange micro-economy that is operating is advantageous to clerical funds, the temple a business like any other. Despite differences in socio-economics, belonging to the community as a whole continues to be emphasised, and households perform the same ritual actions in a group expression of socio-religious meaning regardless of economic circumstance. Therefore, the same amount of money is exchanged.

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[152] This can be compared to the UK, where churches are visited by the majority at weddings and funerals, and possibly for a Christmas carol service.

Figure 3.16 A *butsudan* surrounded by lanterns, flowers, and boxes of beer, bottles of *schochu*

In recent years, the local government at the town hall has unsuccessfully tried to end the custom of giving a return gift for the envelope of cash that visitors offer at the *bustudan*. According to the priests, this practice originated in the Tokugawa era, and is not informed by norms in Buddhist practice, but the dictates of local customs of reciprocity. However, as these standardised exchanges are based on expectation and goodwill, it is difficult to end the custom unless everyone decides to do so simultaneously. It is also important to note that although *obon* is an important occasion in the temple calendar, it is also considered '*dentō*' (tradition) on this occasion, as the local government steps in to try and regulate practices. For other events in the calendar, the temple and its activities are categorised as 'religion', and because the local government cannot be affiliated to a religious institution due to the constitutional separation of state and religion, it has a policy of not promoting temple-

based festivals and events [153]. However in this case, *obon* has transcended its Buddhist links and become part of the discourse of *dentō,* a 'traditional' and national custom, and hence within the domain of the town hall to adjudicate.

At *obon* it is often women who prepare the offerings, serve the priest and instruct grandchildren during the ritual. Traphagan reports that women are more likely to have dreams about the ancestors, and more likely to believe that the deceased have direct protection over the living in a concrete sense (2003, 133). Women regularly ask ancestors to watch over the living and Trapagan argues that eldlery women who report seeing ancestors in dreams ensures their key role in the family by mediating between the living and dead; as in effect, they lose power in the family hierarchy with increasing age (2003, 133-137). Smith (1983) notes more pragmatically, that women are more likely to remember the deceased due to their longevity and therefore become crucial in the ritual process of memorial. In ancestor rites, previous and even future generations are part of the same continuum that absorbs members into an interconnected relationship that is contextualised by the household and expressed through ritual. In this understanding, ancestor veneration is a give and take process that requires the living and dead to maintain co-dependent relationships that also more broadly underscores all social relationships in Japanese society (Rowe, 2011). Ancestral rites are asymmetrical and dependent upon the benevolence of ancestors to help the living, who in return are consoled and comforted having left the world of the living, and although not always present in the here-and-now of the physical reality of the living, remain part of a symbolised, ritual and post-departed nexus of locally contextualised relationships that affect the contemporary

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[153] This is not the case with shrine-based festivals however, which are categorised under the heading of 'tradition'. Due to this characterisation, the local government actively helps to organise and coordinate shrine-based festivals, suiting the interests of the local government to promote such festivals that attract numbers of tourists from elsewhere and subsequently increasing trade in the tourist sector as a boost to town economics.

status of the household after death.

As well as renewing household relationships, and ensuring the protection of the stem family, at *obon*, community bonds are also renewed. People attend *obon* festivals, have parties with family and neighbours, light fires to welcome home the spirits, and perform *bon odori* [盆踊り] folk dances performed for the enjoyment of the dead who have returned from the other-world. Usually performed at the end of the festival to send back the spirits of the dead at community centres and elderly care homes, with music and *yukata* [浴衣 summer kimono] that are specific to the hamlet or neighbourhood. This is reflected as *obon* rituals are performed irrespective of sect, or membership to a new religion, and have become a fixture and habitus in the locality. The *obon* ethnography also demonstrates that ritual actions are performed according to generation and gender, hinting at the transmission patterns that are entailed. In this respect, age and status in the household dictate ritual performance, which alters as the household moves through time. Such patterns influence reproduction of the ritual, as grandchildren watch the performances of the priest and their grandparents until it is their turn to be more active, showing the forward direction and continued transmission of knowledge.

3.5 Multi-locality/temporality

Previous literature has noted the difficulty of locating the ancestors in space. According to Traphagan, the ancestors can be invoked through *omairi*; but *omairi* can be performed at a grave, and also in front of the *butsudan*. Rowe (2004, 274) refers to the 'the multi-locality of ancestors', where there appears to be a contradiction between praying to ancestors represented at the *butsudan*; and who are also symbolised through the ancestral tablets, petitioned at the altar, and the grave. During

obon ancestors are brought back from the grave and into the household, to spend time with the family for three days before being seen off again, and this is symbolised by ritualised actions: such as the lighting of a fire outside the house, and hanging an outside lantern by which the ancestors can navigate their way home. Rowe notes this multi-locality has puzzled anthropologists but not concerned informants (2004, 274).

Previous ethnographic research postwar, notes the a quality of multi-locality embodied by the ancestors who can be invoked, petitioned, prayed to and symbolised at various sacred locations through ritual action. This also suggests the potential of the ancestors to manifest themselves anywhere and not be located in one central fixed point. Asking more about this concept, I was told by one informant that: "My father is in the grave, and we can visit him there, or pray at the *butsudan* but during *obon* he comes back to spend time with the family. He *really* comes back." I ask why he can be in two places at once. "Because he's in another world – not a place determined by the laws of this one. Of course he can be in two places at once; we don't know how it works in the next world, there's always a possibility, for anything. He is *hotoke-sama* [仏様 a buddha] now." I ask why *obon* is special in this respect: "because at *obon*, it's like there is a veil that opens between us and the other-world, it allows the spirit to slip through, and then go back again".

The revered (and reviled) scholar of Japan, Lafcardio Hearn, noted the Japanese belief that the dead are not less *real* than the living. The deceased take part in daily life, looking after the living.[154] Furthermore, this dynamic provides the rationale as to why the living should carefully maintain the continued relationship with their deceased relative (Hearn, 1904). From the brief explanation of the

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[154] This makes logical sense if we consider that the deceased have become buddhas, and in a similar way to the bhodissattva, Jizo, compassionately return to the world in order to help enlighten the living, ease their suffering and help them achieve buddhahood.

importance of *obon* from the informant in this case study, it appears that the dead continue to influence and remain *real* and *present* for the living as non-human persons remains.

Alongside multi-locality there is also a parallel of multi-temporality within ancestral rites. Through *butsudan* rites, the household stretches from the past and into the future and this process engenders the continuity of its internal structure through the principles embodied in ancestral practices.

> It is clear therefore that this kind of ancestor worship does not only foster a vertical consciousness of the past. It stretches also into the future. Since the household as such is the center which gives shape to the ancestor cult once a household has been established, the worst calamity that can occur is its disappearance.   Ooms, 1967, 250

As the household stretches from the past into the future, with the current scenario as an anchor, the internal dynamics and external structure of the household continues. In this analysis, the ancestor system is not only concerned by past and current but also with future generations, establishing the wellbeing of current members to ensure succession for the future. Before generations are even born into the household they are already involved with a system that spans the past, present and future of the household as it moves through time, and is located within the boundaries of the house and its connected land (farm and grave), interlinked with the wider neighbourhood and community, through ritual expression at the *hōji* and *obon*.

By supplicating and comforting the ancestors, the dead provide protection and stabilise the present in order to ensure a favourable future. The idea that the ancestors protect (*mamoru*) the household also implies an activity of preservation. Protecting and preserving the household maintains the situation for the living, procuring its continuance, and ensuring its reproduction for generations to come. As Hirano (1980)

has shown, at volatile political and economic times in the pre-modern past, the household afforded protection and the ancestors were a key technique within this. In the contemporary period, rituals before the *butsudan* remain a technique of security, protection and preservation in Takachiho. This philosophy involves ideas that surround the reproduction of the household and entails the continuation of the whole system and wider society. As Traphagan (2003) has shown, there is an assymetrical relationship, which binds the living to play their role in the reproduction of the further generations of household. In receiving protection from the ancestors, the living are obligated into reproducing the household for the benefit of the ancestral lineage and this enables the whole system to continue. In this activity, ancestors are a sacred symbol that stabilises the present and secures the future. Rituals are a key technique in the reproduction of the household throughout time in this interpretive analysis.

In this system, it is in the best interests of every member of the household to play their role, as everyone will one day end up being an ancestor and hope to be venerated by their offspring (Ooms, 1967, 256). Traphagan (2003) has identified that women have a key role in ritual activity, arguing that this gendered activity is due to their role as caregivers, and fulfills a function for elderly women to maintain status in the household. It can be argued that women are key in this, not simply for the care-giving role that is informed by socially constructed gendered types, but also perhaps due to the physical power embodied as reproducers, both in terms of the ritual world, and in the activities of physically and socially reproducing the next generation of family. In order to protect and preserve the household into the future the family needs to be reproduced and generated, and this is a property stressed in the biological and social role of women.

This is reminiscent of Kawahashi's (2003) analysis of the fundamental role

that women play in reproducing the next generation of the Dharma in the temple context. Indeed this activity is crucial for the continued reproduction of humanity. Similarly, in the local context, importance is placed on the next generation of the household in the lineage reaching back from clan ancestors (*ujigami*) (Hearn 1904), to the present, and this involves the reproduction of the household and ensures the succession of everything embedded within: the family, house, land, business and name. Through these activities, we can see that there is nothing inherent, or natural about the Japanese household that changes through time. In the Japanese case, the household was constructed at a certain point in history reflecting political goals; and in its present incarnation, requires continual effort and labour in reproduction, protection and succession with ancestor consciousness as a key method.

More broadly however, I would argue that aside from the issues of reproducing the household system and its spiritual underpinnings for the purposes of physical and social life, *omairi* is a way of dealing with death. Embodied in the philosophy of ancestor rites, is the concept that part of a person will go on living and remain after death. As Smith has noted, 'As long as a person remains alive in the memory of someone living, they count for something. They are present or their presence can be invoked' (1974, 39). This is comforting for those dealing with death of loved ones, or facing their own death; but more than this, it addresses the inescapable reality of mortality, and it offers continued life after death in the form (and formlessness) of a non-human person who has become an ancestor, yet retains contact with this world. In this conception, the dead continue to *go on living*: both in the memory, conception, sentiment and belief of living persons. And the rituals at the *butsudan*—whether they are conceptualised as memorials or liminal rites—remain an important part of this process. Furthermore, this is true for every member who

continues to play a role in the household after death, albeit loved or unloved by other members during life. Even in death and parallel with life, people have a role to play, and this does not start or end with the physical body. Perhaps this is why, as Rowe (2004) has shown, there remains a need for people without descendants to find alternative ways to be sustained after death, as people in the urban context choose to be buried at a temple that continues to recite sutras for the deceased in lieu of descendants. In this vein, the theoretical conceptualisation remains secondary to the very human need that a person's life will continue to be acknowledged, experienced and *felt* after their biological death. Even in the contemporary context, people are only ready to die once their posthumous fate is secured.

Summary

This chapter has argued that *danka* households, affiliated to the temple historically, continue their connection with the sect in order to utilise the temple as a technique and the priests as a tool in their personal household rites that remain because ritual helps reproduce, protect and continue the household into the future. Therefore *butsudan* rites can be seen to embody a household ideology, underscored by an ancestor consciousness, that is a key motivator to remain connected to the temple from the local perspective, and underscores the motivations for continued 'Buddhist' practice in the area. This engenders the continual affiliation with the priests and broader relationship to the temple. Although history, economics, hegemony and customs play an indisputable role (as previous scholarship has already established); fundamentally, the temple plays a role in sustaining *danka* households through the activity of priests who are regarded as efficacious ritual experts, when viewed from the perspective of local people. Themes of reproduction, protection and continuity

overlap with previous research undertaken from Ooms (1967) onwards – and it appears on the surface that nothing has changed regarding ancestral rites in Takachiho. However, with social changes now underway, and with increasing overlap with worlds outside the local (displayed in the ethnography), local people are less territorialised, unable to perform rituals in the same way, and as a result, transmission can become lost as young people are unsure (or unwilling) to perform rituals in the same way for the same purposes. What happens during these social changes? This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Continuation and Change

This chapter illustrates changing extended family dynamics in Takaciho. Following on from this, it considers the impact that the transitional household has, or will have, upon *butsudan* rituals in the future. Currently extended families, not individuals, remain affiliated to the temple by the household based *danka* system system that is underscored (and continues to be influenced by), prewar patriarchal principles. However, this chapter will show that these principles are being negotiated and contested, and will ask what happens to the *ie*-based household religion, when the *ie* household principle on which it is based is in a state of flux. The last chapter explored ritual practices and meanings through participant observation and interviews with the priests, showing the continued centrality of ritual which underscores the household for local people in general; this chapter will extend the understanding of the household by exploring how it is changing, and examine the ritual implications this will have in the future.

It will begin with an oral narrative of a single parent in Takachiho who is a long-term friend of the clerical family. It will also explore changing household dynamics in the area in general terms, via an interview with a local government official and interviews with the priests. The following narrative explores issues of a single parent who works as a manager in a children's preschool day-care centre owned by her family. The informant, in her mid-thirties, has spent more than a decade working in Osaka, before returning to Takachiho two years ago. The conversation took place in a coffee shop at night, where we were the only customers and could talk freely.

4.1 Single parenthood

I ask if it was difficult to return to Takachiho, and she thinks about it for a while.

"Well, it's inconvenient, salaries are low but things are expensive. There are no cheap hundred yen stores and it was difficult to get things I was used to just picking up easily".

I ask if she had problems coming home after living independently for years in the city. Was it difficult to go back to her rural town and family home after over a decade of city freedoms?

Her face becomes serious, "my father is a difficult human being", she states simply; and from this point onwards begins to tell the story surrounding her return home to Takachiho, and the difficult relationship with her father.

"When I came back home to my parents, even though I had a baby in my stomach, he kicked me there as if it was nothing, and grabbed my hair. My father's that that kind of person. I wanted to live at home, but my father's behaviour was so bad… he said so many things to me... (She goes quiet). We fought so much, all the time, even though I was having a child".

What did you do to protect yourself?

"Oh, I was the same, I hit him back. We fought like cat and dog, but then he hit my mother. He was bitter and I didn't want to get rid of my baby, but I couldn't stay there and live with him either. I was worried and didn't know what to do. I went to see my partner who was living in Nagasaki, and I ended up in hospital. The ambulance came and I was in hospital for a month and a half…I used to wish I had a normal father, but that's what he's like".

What did your mother say?

"That I was a fool, because I had got pregnant, she said, 'well, you've gone and done it now'. She wouldn't forgive me, and the timing was bad. I was living in Osaka and just as I decided I would come back home and try and make a go of it at the day-care centre, I found out I was pregnant. I didn't want to be with my partner or marry him, but I was having a child, what could I do? I thought for the sake of the baby I had to get married. It was the only thing I could do at that point, but I was so stressed, I really didn't want to go through with the marriage, and it made me so ill, so I spent months in hospital before the birth".

After marrying, did you live together in Nagasaki?

"No, I was hospitalised for two, then three months…the baby was born and I moved back to Takachiho. I went to Nagasaki (where my partner was living) for a month, but I ended up coming back. I was back and forth, and was married for about a year in the end; but even in Nagasaki when I was with my husband, we lived separate lives. Whatever I did, tried to do, things didn't get better…and then when I returned home, my dad said so many awful things to me. It was all too much…but I couldn't do anything else'.

Is your father still the same?

"Yes, but he's ill now, that's why he's so difficult. Sometimes we have to get away. If he's bad on a certain day, we can drive to see friends or go to the *onsen* baths, but my mum – she's always there. I wanted to help her – and we live together. But because we're there, he punishes her every night about it. It's awful".

How does your mother feel about him?

"Mmm…that's difficult…but she will still cover for him and protect him, even though he does something awful, every single day." Her tone changes: "it's funny but I still worry about him, even though he does something horrible to me every day… I

wonder why? I have an older brother and it's hard for him too, but the worst is for my mum. The stress she goes through, she can never unburden herself. He was just always like it; he never broke anyone's bones—but his *words*—he was violent with words, always.' Without saying anything more, she looks down and there is a long silence. "In Japan, in Takachiho, there are so many men like this, used to thinking they're 'number one' and thinking they're right no matter what – I hate this kind of attitude. But with him it's getting worse and now he's ill. It's so sad, but as we have the daycare centre, it's bearable in our house, even if it's bad at home. When I go in and the children are all smiling, I smile too. Something has to be done though..." she is quiet for a while. "It has an effect on all of us, and everyone wants to escape, but we have responsibilities… we have to think of the staff and so on. My mum just puts up with it because she's from that era. I wouldn't if I was in her position. It's like she just endures, then endures some more."

Was it difficult for her to understand why you ended your marriage?

"Yes, it was very hard for her. In Takachiho there is still stigma. My parents were horrified. I told them that after a few years' time people would forget; some single women even have two or three children. I told them that people would adjust, and it would become normal after a while. People wouldn't remember the circumstances, and they would just see a woman and her child… but they didn't accept this line of reasoning. They told me we had a day-care centre, so it was different: it looks especially bad. In Takachiho, people complain about parents leaving children for a few hours, yet I think many single parents feel the same. Some kind of service is needed, single parents are always with their child, there's never release from duties and responsibilities. It's not such a bad thing to let single parents have some time off from childcare duties, so they can come back refreshed and be better parents, and

they really need this. Sometimes I worry I'm not being a good enough parent, and what the future will be like for my son without a father…"

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Figure 4 Parents and children at the Children's Association Meeting, hosted by the temple

Although the above narrative describes an individual case, it is also indicative of local government statistics obtained that show that women are returning in the hundreds. [155] It also reveals broader changes alongside consistencies in former thoughts and practices. One factor in the above narrative is the shifting emphasis on the normative value of *gaman* (perseverance, endurance). Although the term cultivates ideas of willpower and self-sacrifice that are regarded in a positive light, in its negative guise the word embodies the toleration of any circumstance. In the interview, the informant acknowledges that her mother had endured a lifetime of domestic abuse, and she

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[155] Public officials trespassed an unwritten rule by showing the exact figures to me. Due to the perceived delicate nature of the issues surrounding single parenthood (indeed the figures are not published for public consumption in the same way in which household statistics are) the exact numbers are not reproduced in the thesis – as a courtesy for the trust they demonstrated in showing me the figures to begin with.

recognised this as being characteristic of her mother's generation, while unacceptable from her own perspective – demonstrated in the resistance to her father and reaction of fighting him back. It seems that such previously revered cultural values of *gaman* are becoming more fluid, as both middle-aged and younger people told me it was: "a good thing up to a point", yet wasn't necessary to the extent that it caused suffering as it had in the past. In the above narrative, although the day-care manager had to re-negotiate a value system in returning to Takachiho, it was equally difficult for her mother to reconcile due to the discrepancy in values between the two generations. According to Lebra (1984), Japanese society can be characterised as having a 'marriage culture' where being married is equal to achieving the full human status as an adult (Lebra, 1984, 113). This is reflected to some extent in the above narrative where the narrator believed she should automatically marry after becoming pregnant. However more concretely, children born to non-married mothers are stigmatised in terms of the household register where they are labeled as illegitimate, and have problems with inheritance rights, which Rindfuss et al (2004) suggest may keep birth outside of marriage minimal. Indeed, low rates of births outside marriage have been understood in terms of the deep-rooted legal and social discrimination against children born outside marriage.[156]

The location of Takachiho in the rural sphere is described as suitable for the narrator's circumstances as a single mother. She tells me that she would be unable to look after her child and work if she lived in a city; childcare providers offer little choice and babysitting is non-existent. Other women I spoke to also confirmed this. One woman in her early thirties with an eight-year-old boy told me that she was able

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[156] In 1992, figures show that 1.1 % of children were born outside marriage compared to 47% in Sweden (Ochiai, 1994, 173). From a broader historical perspective, high rates of divorce found in 1899 were comparable to figures in 1995, and Ochiai argues that it is in fact more remarkable that they were stable in the period postwar to the 1970's, which may be the anomaly in hindsight (1994, 179).

to leave her child in the care of her parents while she worked part time as a nurse in an elderly care centre. At the same time she could study for her nursing and welfare exams in order to gain promotion in the future. Utilising the resources of home and family while trying to improve personal circumstances is a theme that resurfaced during fieldwork. For contemporary women it is felt that the hometown and household is a good, if not an ideal, place to come back to: parents help raise the children and women are able to go to work; although any welfare benefits reduce, which affects childcare costs as the finances of the whole household are taken into account. The day-care centre manager therefore believes young women are now are more likely to divorce a partner and return home to their natal household than remain in an unhappy marriage. This is seen as preferable to being alone in the city without necessary services. Ochiai (1994, 21) notes that there is a psychological resistance to day care stemming from the fact that women left babies with their mother-in-law historically. Perhaps this resistance (continuing twenty years hence) has resulted in a lack of services. In addition, women are overwhelmingly encouraged back by their parents, as illustrated in the next interview. The interview took place in the offices of the town hall and the informant is a government official, wife and mother in her mid-fifties.

4.2 Changing families

Interview with a local government official:

"In Japan, children are seen as the inheritors of a household which is necessary to protect and sustain for their sake. It's all to do with the *ie* (household) system. But if the *yome* (wife) leaves the husband's household, the children usually leave with her. This is how people think the way things are done, and women usually want to take

the children, especially if their husbands were drinkers, gamblers, or had affairs – they don't want to leave the child in that kind of environment. Sometimes when male children are taken these cases are protested against, because they would inherit the *ie*".

Is the return back to the natal home stigmatised?

"That kind of thing is fading; there are so many returning. Before, women had to put up with it if it wasn't working; now if they are constantly fighting and it's too much, then it's better to separate. This way of thinking has increased recently – so perhaps that's why there are higher rates of divorce now. Also there are a lot of people who haven't married. As for the generation now in their seventies, they're happy when the grandchildren return and pleased to take in the child. I suspect it's the *ie* system they're thinking about. They see that even from a different source (not from the direct *chōnan* line), the *ie* can survive through the daughters and granddaughters who return with their children. So then a replacement or substitution takes place after the line has been broken. As for re-marriage, people now think that it's better to get married initially and have children. They may divorce later and possibly remarry in the town. People feel that wherever the children are from it doesn't matter, because the children will maintain the next generation of the household. Also, these women have a positive effect, increasing the local population and stimulating the area. Their experience bringing up children in the city must have been a challenge. There are no baby sitters and yet they have to go to work. Wherever you go, even in big cities, there aren't necessary services. When they return, their parents can look after the children and everyone brings them up together in the household. They don't have to live together in the same house, but if they're close by, their parents can mind the children. If it were my children, I'd definitely ask them to come back straight away,

I'd call them back (miming a beckoning motion, she laughs at her own eagerness). I would want to know they were safe and cared for".

Why don't the women prefer to live alone as single parents in the city?

"Money, work and childcare. Only close relatives can take care of somebody's child – they can't make demands on friends. In the UK you have the custom of paying people to look after children, like babysitters and childminders, but we don't have that in Japan, so that's why it's difficult for them to live in a town or city. Back home in the countryside their own parents are around and will look after them, they can rely on their support. Now there aren't many *chōnan* around, so perhaps anybody who comes back is seen as a welcome blessing: they are happy when the women return. Also in the cities the air is unclean and food isn't so safe, so it's beneficial for the children to grow up in the countryside. There's nothing to worry about here." She smiles and tells me: "Takachiho is a symbolic place. If the countryside is changing, then things all over are really changing."

Figure 4.1 English class at kindergarten

From this interview, it appears that attitudes towards marriage, divorce, single mothers and the structure of the household are becoming more adaptable and fluid in the contemporary era. With a lack of *chōnan* to continue the family business, such returnee single mothers are welcomed primarily because they bring children and new possibilities back with them, which impact upon the town and society as a whole. Furthermore, the lineage continues in succession, and grandparents are able to take up their roles in instructing and transmitting local knowledge to the grandchildren concerning the ways of life in Takachiho, ensuring a transmission of socio-cultural heritage and a continuation of ideas embodied in the household understood to be received from the ancestors. Shifting attitudes and the welcome addition of former members back to the household occurs parallel to the decreasing stigma of divorce and single parenthood. There is also an increase of male single parents who are categorised as heads of households independently of their wider household.

Although in the previous narrative the day-care manager's presence complicates matters for the family's reputation as a business; she is also a source of labour and her child is a potential successor to the *ie*, which softens residual stigmas. However Traphagan argues that returnees from the urban to the rural sphere inhabit a liminal position between nuclear and extended family ideologies, and many feel constrained by the power of the elderly and the gendered birth-roles in the extended family when they return. Indeed, women who are not married and return are once more under the direct authority and power of their father (Traphagan, 2000, 367-381).

The day-care centre manager worries over being a good mother to her son, rather than reiterating her parents' concerns over stigma affecting the business in the local area. Evoking Traphagan, the position of the single mother in the narrative can

be considered liminal in the fact that she inhabits two categories simultaneously: once more under the umbrella (and pull of) of the extended family, while also being a smaller family unit with her son—with the possibility that she may move out or remarry in the future. For the moment, her move back to the household has the broader advantage of assuring succession of the family household through her son (referred to by the town hall official as a 'replacement after the line has been broken'), ensuring its reproduction into the future.

The fact is, leaving is made attractive due to the appearance of wider array of options in the urban sphere, and re-entry is made possible by the security of the *ie* system as a childcare provider and economic unit. For women who find themselves in a marginalised and unviable position in the national arena, moving back home becomes a solution to an unfeasible situation in the urban sphere. When considering single parents as a whole category, their movements can be seen as a micro-current that flows into and out of the national sphere, and back to their original locale. Kuroda coined the term 'U-turn' to describe people moving away from the cities into the countryside, as migration into large cities dropped and a move to rural areas increased in the 1970s (Kuroda, 1979).[157] Yet the phenomenon of women returning to their natal households could perhaps be seen as more of a micro-current than a U-Turn – which implied that people were making a choice out of several available options. In the case of young women who become single mothers, the return to the hometown appears the only realistic option, in order to escape the poverty and struggles of raising a child alone in an unaccommodating urban environment.[158]

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[157] Currently, the local government in Takachiho is trying to encourage '*Ai-turns*' [愛 *Ai* means love] attracting people nationwide (young and old) who have never lived in the countryside to try new, holistic lifestyles based on connections to the beautiful landscape and ecological principles.

[158] It is interesting to note that in the Japanese case, on the whole, it is women who exit the household in which they were living, taking their children with them, in order to return to their natal families after

Alongside the U-turn movement was a discourse of nostalgia whereby people move back to a hometown (not necessarily their own), thought to embody warmth and solidarity in opposition to urban anomie and fragmented relationships (Ivy 1995; Creighton, 1997). In the contemporary period, the lack of options for divorced women with children in the national sphere is another, specific set of conditions that leads to this micro-current. This is not based on discourses of nostalgia in the same way as previous U-turns due to urban anomie, as city-folk dream of an easier way of life in the countryside. In the case of single mothers, it is a necessity in an unstable broader social environment, where young women are rapidly becoming a new category living in relative poverty, and outside the former media and public stereotypes of young women who work for a few years to earn money for consumer items, living with their parents before getting married to a salaryman and becoming a housewife.[159]

Increasingly, a return to the natal household is often the only viable option. In these cases, the hometown may not be viewed in terms of the 'warm, mutual dependency' that has commonly characterised the representation of the rural sphere (Doi, 2005); but has in reality become a site of conflicts that require continuous negotiation of position and place.[160] This is represented in the most extreme form in the oral narrative, which shows that individuals also negotiate violence and the authority of the patriarchal head of the family in the extended family system upon their return.

divorce. This can be compared to the British case where it is often (but not always) the husband who leaves the nuclear family home after separation, while the wife and her children remain. This demonstrates the transitory and liminal nature of *yome* living as part of her husband's extended family household, which is based on patriarchal principles, and in which her position is never fully secured.

[159] A recent documentary by NHK covered this growing issue in June 2014.

[160] These issues have not yet been included in the academic literature (both in the English and Japanese language sources) and demands further investigation but is beyond the scope of this thesis.

4.3 Predictions for the family

Ten years ago, in 2004, Rindfuss et al used the category of the family to predict changes in terms of cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, and non-marriage in Japan. Fertility is one of the lowest in the world and for the last forty years only one percent of childbirth was outside marriage (2004, 841). Due to the changes in society – especially in terms of women's academic attainment and participation in the work force – they predicted that changes in the traditional family pattern would occur.[161] They define the '*ie*' as the 'traditional family', and argued that traditional family expectations resisted norms of the labour market. Women increasingly desire a more equal stake in marriage, and they argued that for changes to occur 'innovators' who act outside of established social norms (such as having children without being married) need to be tolerated, and eventually regarded as an alternative solution to 'traditional family' pattern. A significant number of women (fifteen percent in 2004) are pregnant at the time of marriage, and Rindfuss et al predict that in the future, women may be more likely not to marry the father. Rindfuss et al also cite significant family change in delaying marriage and increasing cohabiting non-married couples – suggesting women are rejecting typical marriages and a rise in divorce. They conclude that: 'change is clearly underway, and family behaviour in Japan is ripe for additional change' (2004, 858). However, according to the ethnographic narrative this does not seem to be happening; although it is less stigmatised to become pregnant outside of marriage, women soon marry the child's father in what is known as a '*dekichatta kekkon*'.[162]

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[161] Although Ochiai has also shown that it was precisely the generation involved in the women's liberation movement that became the generation of homemakers due to rapid economic growth and a favourable financial situation that enabled women to stay at home (1994, 21).

[162] This is known colloquially as '*dekichatta kekkon*' ('already done marriage' i.e. already pregnant at the time of marriage) that is now widely referred to and there appears to be no surrounding stigma as

Noting the lack of marriages taking place in rural Japan twenty years ago, Knight argues that rural women are redefining rural society by refusing to marry men, or only marrying if they can live separately to his parents. Due to these shifts in expectations, many men remain unmarried (Knight, 1995, 17). Twenty years later, in Takachiho, the same case remains, and visits to farming families would often reveal eldest sons now in their fifties who had been unable to find a wife. This was explained locally by the fact that they had had no opportunities to meet potential partners, as farming work was unsociable. Furthermore, echoing Knight, young women were unwilling to take over the task of looking after aging parents. Perhaps most importantly, as many of the remote farming households are still living in a state of poverty, it is unsurprising that younger women are leaving for wider city opportunities instead of marrying into a life of hardship.

Traphagan (2004) notes that residing with family members is also stressful for the current generation of elderly people. Feelings of dependency, alienation and being outside the modern world, aware that their generation is now obsolete, has culminated in high suicide rates of rural elderly in Japan. The desire to commit suicide has been attributed to the frustrations and conflicts that arise while living with younger generations (2004, 327). Traphagan describes the most acute affects of intergenerational conflict, and this research helps show the difficulties of inter-generational living that are being negotiated and experienced by all individuals, irrespective of age, gender, nationality, and identity in the local sphere. As Ariga noted back in 1954, in the household system: 'personal freedom has little room' (1954, 358). However Takachiho society is in a state of transition and the site of the

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commercials and wedding announcements in local magazines and newspapers in Miyazaki prefecture feature newly married couples proudly holding their babies and young children at their wedding ceremony.

individual is challenging the boundaries of the *ie* system and contesting its inner dynamics. At a time of transition, with conflicts issues arising from the prioritisation of individual identity and desires, there is inevitable tension and continual negotiation.

Women hold the position as household reproducers, both physically and socially; and in narratives found in their individual lives are challenging previous stigmas, values and slowly shaping changes. Appadurai (1996) argues that the task of cultural reproduction within the family becomes politicised and exposed to the traumas of deterritorialisation, as family members negotiate their mutual understanding and aspirations in the global age, and women often bear the brunt as they become pawns in the heritage politics of the household (1996, 44). Appadurai notes that people, particularly displaced people, have to: 'play out the desires of new ethnoscapes while striving to reproduce the family-as-microcosm-of culture' (1996, 45). In the case of younger women moving back to natal households, and the daughters of the household at the memorial service shown in the previous chapter, the realities of living elsewhere means that young women are increasingly connected with images, desires and ideas from other spaces. In engaging with larger flows, local perceptions are no longer the only option in their imaginations, and in fitting the new back into old structures, the microcosm of culture that is the family becomes a site of conflict, resistance and adaptation. This is even more extreme in the *bōmori's* case where she plays a role in reproducing an extended family and temple after marriage, which will be explored in chapter six. Furthermore, while Japanese society has a 'marriage culture' with heterosexual norms at its heart, negotiations become more problematised when individuals divert form these norms, which will also be explored in chapter six.

In reaction to the realities of contemporary life, it is unsurprising that scholars predicted an increase of people who would live in individual units or in nuclear families: 'for demographic reasons it will be forced to undergo transformation, if not disappear altogether' (Ochiai, 1994, 151). Ochiai predicted a transition to the individual as the basic unit of society, where people will choose 'families' that will differ in the fact that they are formed voluntarily – not because the family is assumed as the basic unit, and therefore obligatory (1994, 181). This is echoed by Rindfuss et al (2004) and Nonoyama (2000) who argue that families will increasingly move away from extended or nuclear pattern and become a 'lifestyle choice', chosen subjectively by individuals informed by opportunities based on the expansion of social welfare and social security: "In the future in this sense the Japanese family is destined to become increasingly diversified" (Nonoyama, 2000, 40). This case study shows that individual, nuclear, and extended patterns can co-exist concurrently in wider local and national society, as actors shift between the units depending on life stage or if they are living in rural or urban spaces at the time we consider their situation. Therefore these cases cannot simply be conceived as an inevitable movement from traditional extended families, to individual units of choice; but are dependent upon personal and economic factors, as well as changing social, local, national and global contexts.

Figure 4.2 The Montessori kindergarten at a nearby temple

4.4 The case for persistence

Health is the most important life concern in rural areas, and this reflects dissatisfaction nationwide with social welfare (social care and medical care), according to Inoguchi and Fuji (2009). Income inequality in comparison to urban areas, and dissatisfaction with social care, perhaps sustains an *ie* system that has always embodied a role as child and elderly care provider. Inoguchi and Fuji (2009) suggests there needs to be more policy about childcare and reduced working hours in order to sustain marital relationships, because data shows that being married and satisfied with that marriage were two forces most able to produce a high quality of life in Japan (Inoguchi and Fuji, 2009, 225). In fieldwork examples, the majority of women who returned to Takachiho as single mothers have remarried in the town, and

formed new families by marrying local men and having further children; and this appears to suggest that they continue to reproduce dominant *ie* patterns.

Scholarship shows that the household is adaptive to shifts in the social context with increased industrialisation, and economic development (Hendry, 1985) and that there are important regional variations (Kurosu, 1992, 74). Although there is an overall national decrease of the extended family nationwide, within rural regions the extended family remains prevalent. This is due to strong *ie* consciousness, economic factors, the availability of land, engagement in primary industries, and government support for extended kin (Kurosu, 1992, 74-90). Kurosu argues that while there is extended household decline alongside modernisation nationally, there are strong regional variations, and therefore the convergence of family patterns with industrialisation is dependent upon region (1992, 90). Quantitative and qualitative data makes it problematic to suggest that Japan is in the process of moving from an extended to nuclear family pattern (Kurosu, 1992; Traphagan, 2000, 383). Instead, data indicates that people move back and forth throughout their lives between the two, and the ideologies that underscore them. Subsequently: 'the two are not mutually exclusive' and extended and nuclear ideologies exist concurrently in Japan (Traphagan, 2000, 383).

Why is the *ie* so robust? In 1954, Ariga noted that despite postwar reforms and more flexibility over choice of partner the *ie* had not disappeared, especially in rural farming families that can support dependants. At the time Ariga was writing, there was lack of employment in urban industries, and the family was a safety net; and this is parallel to the situation today for single mothers. Ochiai (1994) notes that despite increasing postwar nuclear families, the *ie* continued to be maintained by its successors. It was in fact the extended family's 'spare' members, such as second and

third sons and daughters, who went to the cities and formed nuclear families. Yet successors to the *ie* stayed, and *ie* figures remained consistent between 1955-1990. Therefore, the *ie* was not: 'fragmented with the nuclearisation of the family' as first appeared (Ochiai, 1994, 61). In fact, Moon (1989), has indicated that the household structure remains by adapting to new social changes that become absorbed into the system. Furthermore, the succession of the *ie* system is upheld by techniques such as arranged marriages with non-Japanese, as Faier has shown in terms of Filipina migration to rural Japan (Faier, 2009, 2011).

In this way, the structure remains, as the individuals within it adapt and negotiate changes. Adaptation is a key feature of the *ie* system, seen historically in the practice of adoption; and this research data suggests that in the contemporary period, the *ie* is once again adapting to allow for new generations from other sources outside the original pattern of patrilineal primogeniture through single parents. Accordingly, although there is a dominant narrative of rural decline, it is also possible to see micro-currents within these larger flows. These counter-currents of human motion are embodied by women who return to the hometown, and increasing transnational marriages, both of which help sustain households and the wider community.

As Traphagan describes, even when young people move away to urban spaces there remains a consistent ideological pull of the *ie* and household membership is not *spatially* restricted. Instead of a movement from extended to nuclear, in fact they are both in operation in tandem, and stem family consciousness remains a factor (2000, 369). Therefore, instead of a linear movement of progress: from the traditional to the modern, and rural to urban, the contemporary period is characterised by people living and sharing the ideologies of more than one space at one time, where many social

realities can exist concurrently as people move between them. Thompson (2004) argues that house name plates associated with family history are becoming more popular than ever before in the contemporary era, and argues that this demonstrates the continuing importance of the local identity of the household, allowing for a sense of control within a centralised state, while contesting the fragmentation of post-modern lifestyle (2004, 61-78). In this way, it is argued that people go back to the past in order to find their way in the present (Thompson, 2004, 77-78).

Indeed, the current scenario in Takachiho and beyond is illustrative of the flows, hybridity and multi-temporality that define the current age (Hannerz, 1997; Garcia Canclini, 1995, Appadurai, 1996, 2012). Garcia Canclini defines hybridisation as: 'sociocultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects and practices' (1995, xv). The process of hybridisation involves the mixing between two spheres, which themselves have no pure point of origin, but have been in a continual process of engagement, reflecting a mixed temporality oscillating between the pre, modern and post modern, or hybridisation 'all the way down' (Rosaldo, 1995). Indeed, Japanese society has been conceptualised as hybrid in its blending of continental and native techniques (including Buddhism) from its pre-modern beginnings (Como, 2009). Furthermore, the borders between the local, national and global are becoming more porous as people move in and out of them (Appadurai, 1996).

In the territorialised local, the structures and consciousness of the *ie* remains in accordance with other processes taking place elsewhere with which it is inextricably connected to through family members in the national and global sphere. The household's waxing and waning depends on current economic circumstances and

social trends, yet *ie* consciousness does not disappear altogether, and is shaped by and continues to shape the consciousness of its members in national and wider global spheres, even when they are not physically present. Therefore, this research suggests that dichotomies embedded in the taken-for-granted assumption that movement is linear, and that society 'evolves' from traditional to modern, extended to nuclear, local to national patterns, creates an inaccurate picture into which the micro-currents of women returning back to their natal households do not fit. Instead, the research regards these micro-currents as a process of broader flows that happen concurrently. Garcia Canclini (1995) has understood this hybridity, blending and co-existence of values associated with specific time frames or historical epochs as a mixing of temporalities and spatiality in the recent Latin American context, as local and global worlds overlap and pre-modern and post-modern values co-exist. This is a quality that can also be found in Japan in the contemporary context.

Figure 4.3 A new member of the Children's Association

Interview with Priest Iwao

What are the normal things the danka in Takachiho worry over?

The thing they feel the most is the population decline and lack of work; they don't have any hope for the future. As for farming – it's not stable. Children are here until high school but there's no university, and after they graduate they find work in the city, so there's nobody with real aptitude left – they all move on. Even if people work hard in farming there isn't a further generation for them to pass it on to. So maybe this is the greatest worry. If there is a temple, a large shop or business, students can come back again after they graduate. In Japan we have this idea of inheritance and succession *'tsugu',* and people still want to continue this custom, so if there's anything for them to come back for they return after university – but if they don't have anything to inherit, what can be done?

What do you think the future will hold?

Well, if it decreases any more – I don't know. I can't see it decreasing any further I guess. It's fine until the Kamino area, but beyond that there's even smaller places. These kind of hamlets might be moved over, but I don't think people who inherit land from their ancestors will want to leave… it would have to get really bad for them to move. The old women especially want to preserve the town everyone has the feeling that it's their *'furusato'* (hometown). I think the people who remain here will work hard to preserve it. I can't imagine the population getting larger than it is now, but everyone has a conscious feeling of preservation, which is important.

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Throughout fieldwork and interviews (such as the one above) there were three main themes to which people alluded in regards to the household and the temple. They can be categorised as: reproduction, protection and succession. These themes were linked with religiosity of the household, and were connected to ideas about the functions that the temple holds, and the household was supposed to perform. Reproduction is a theme at the heart of the *ie* system. It embodies the idea that the household and its associated family, business, and family name reproduce in a continuing cycle, propagating received land from the ancestors into the hands of the present generation; and as the interview above shows, people remain attached to this idea and are reluctant to sell ancestral lands. Despite difficulties, as Moon (1989) demonstrated, even with a postwar capitalist economy, land was still seen to have its own value system that did not alter. Indeed, land is a fixed, tangible reality, as opposed to the unpredictability of products and services that could rapidly change value with market values and consumer tastes. In Takachiho, the tangible property of land is linked with the intangible consciousness of the ancestors, and ancestral rites play a role in the reproduction of household and land through the collaborative relationship between living and dead.

According to Moon, despite economic changes in the 1980s, continuing household rituals reflected the continued importance of the household. According to Yanagawa et al (1978), an established household is identified by various symbols: ways of doing things, household name, rules and most importantly, ancestors. The symbols reflect the genealogy and perpetuity of the household, and the overarching structural form of ancestor worship (1978, 14). Ooms argued that 'ancestor worship' is more immune to social change because it does not happen on a larger social scale larger than the household (1967, 226). Furthermore, ancestor rituals are considered

malleable (Ooms, 1975), and Hirano argues that ancestor ritual can also be a spur for change and are not set in stone but allow for flexibility (1980, 14). As Yanagawa et al have noted ancestor veneration and social change have been studied together at peak of social crisis by Japanese sociologists (1978, 21). With considerable changes now experienced both inside the household and in wider society, what does this mean for ritual?

4.5 Changing families and ritual

Interview with Priest Iwao:

What happens to the butsudan in the case of a single mother? When she left the household she probably entered her husband's sect. When she comes back does she re-enter the religion of her parents, and what happens to her children?

It's fine for both to be part of the family's religious sect… It's no big thing. In Jōdo Shinshū the emphasis is upon the *nenbutsu* and Amida Buddha, not the ancestors.

<div align="center">*</div>

The interview above obscures the fact that previously, the *butsudan* has been inherited alongside the *ie* by the *chōnan*. Indeed, second and third sons, or remaining daughters, are not recorded in official temple records. Many people in the locality were not aware of this however, and younger sons often only discover this when they needed the services of a priest, only to find that they do not effectively belong to the sect. Furthermore in practice, but not in Buddhist theory, the household regards the *butsudan* as symbolic of the continued relationship with the ancestors, irrespective of sect teachings, reflecting the wider religiosity of the household in which the temple add to by providing ritual expertise and an institutional context.

In leaving Takachiho, young people make a break with the household as a spiritual unit that involves the transmission of knowledge, usually from the grandparents to the younger generations. With each generation that leaves, knowledge and understanding of the meaning and performance of rituals becomes increasingly fragmented, and in some areas ritual traditions have become splintered as people are unsure of how to perform ceremonies correctly, and lose confidence in issues such as: how to treat the ancestral tablet (*ihai*) and how to correctly wash the bones of the dead, a formerly important practice in Yoron Island, Kagoshima prefecture, that is now declining due to loss of ritual knowledge (Machi, 2013). In the past, younger generations would have been part of a continual cycle of gradual ritual participation from an early age, taking on greater ritual responsibilities later as they gained status in the family. This pattern is now scattered, as people with key socio-ritual roles in the family leave, and divorced daughters inhabit a liminal ritual status in the household that they have re-entered. In returning to the natal household, daughters are not automatically afforded a ritual place. Therefore, the question of who will succeed the household and develop ritual knowledge becomes increasingly unclear.

Younger members of the *ie* currently move more flexibly between the rural and wider spheres, problematising the acquisition of knowledge embodied in the gradual habitual actions of the past, which may possibly become lost in the future as a result. As people move in and out of the locality, it is difficult to sustain a religiosity that is localised in one place, in which the extended household and the *danka*-temple system is embedded. Furthermore, the spiritual system of the ancestor-household member collaboration that ensures the reproduction, protection of its members and succession of the lineage, become redundant if there is nothing to inherit in terms of a

viable business and no further generation to pass it on to. Subsequently, such widely practiced rituals may become increasingly irrelevant for further generations, who have become removed from the performances of ritual that are part of a household-based system. However, despite these demographic, transmission, and spatial issues that affect the ability to practice ritual, the 'little religions' remain important in the area at the present moment.

The manager of the day-care centre reported that many of her generation, "did not believe" in any particular religious system. Although she had attended Tenri University,[163] for its course in sports science, and basically regarded it in a positive light, she also stated that the majority of new religious movements were considered by the majority of Japanese people as: "crazy religions, for young people in their twenties and thirties who are far too fervent". However, she claimed that as people age they were attracted to the older, established practices of Buddhism, because such religions allowed you to feel calm, and the temple is a place where you could go to "really relax your heart and mind". As a regular visitor to the private temple household due to her friendship with the *jūshoku* and *bōmori,* she would often visit to talk and when she needs to escape from her own family circumstances. Although she sometimes attended Dharma talks at the temple itself, she explained that as she brings no offering, rice, or money to the temple, she was simply there to listen, rather than actively engaging in ritual and the practices of Jōdo Shinshū.

The informant's household belonged to a Zen sect, although she was aware that she did not belong to any sect as an individual; yet she maintained that at some point in the future she would "have to decide", assuming that this would be a natural progression of her life as she got older with the implication that practice would

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[163] Tenri University is part of the Tenrikyo sect and a new religious movement, which the informant attended although she was not part of the sect itself.

continue to be performed, despite a self-proclaimed lack of (Western-style) 'belief'. Her family was also active in the transmission of *kagura* to the younger generations, and the day-care centre children would give public performances in the town. Her father, who was seeking a way to connect the elderly and younger generations in the area and continue patterns of transmission, initiated this. However, the informant said that as she knew nothing about Shinto, but a little about Buddhism, she was more likely to choose a Buddhist sect in the future. Despite these sect differentials, she enjoyed attending *kagura* performances with her young son, and was intimately engaged with practice in the syncretic system as a member of the community in Takachiho: helping host pre and post *kagura* parties for the neighbourhood.

Figure 4.4 children perform *kagura* (masks on the dais)

Ochiai (1994) formerly predicted issues with Buddhist ritual and household inheritance, arguing that there would be a shift to bilaterality in the future where married couples cared for both sets of elderly parents and the ancestral tablets (Ochiai, 1994, 152-156). The day-care manager has stated that she does: "not need to worry about the future of the household", as her brother will inherit the family's business. Although the legal system grants equal rights to individuals and lack of discrimination by gender, the legal status of the *ie*, previously enshrined in law and abolished postwar, has now been moved into the more informal language of 'custom' in the current Civil Code. [164] Rowe notes that the move from the household in legal terms to 'custom' ensures that the ideals of the extended household system remain in the code even though they are not explicitly named (Rowe, 2011, 25). Indeed, Yanagawa et al have argued that the revision of the postwar civil code did not abolish the household as a religious institution, but instead made it *clearer* that household and ancestor worship were inseparable (Yanagawa et al 1978, 15). Rowe (2011) argues that clause 897 continued to connect temples to the family system through rights of succession over graves and ritual well into the postwar period, and that this persists despite the legal dissolution of the *ie* system in 1947. The ambiguous definitions in the legal code that shifts inheritance rights over the household and ancestral rituals into the realm of 'custom', allows essentially allows for the continuity of prewar norms.[165] Furthermore, in Takachiho, it is local norms and values, rather than legal

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[164] The current clause 897 that covers the inheritance of ritual/religious assets states: 'the genealogical records, ritual implements, and the rights to the grave, not bound by previous statues, shall be inherited by the person who, according to custom, should perform the ancestral rites. However, if the progenitor designates a person to perform rites for the ancestors, then this person shall be the inheritor. In the case where custom is not clear, the family courts will determined the person who shall inherit' (H. Inoue 1990, 246).

[165] Under the scope of a secularist constitution, the local government can only adjudicate on 'customs' and not engage or endorse practices characterised under the rubric of 'religion' – which means that everything they want to promote, or curtail, is then shifted to the all-consuming category of '*dentō*' (tradition) in order to be able to negotiate a position within the modernist framework. However, a

discourses that are more likely to affect decisions over who will, or will not inherit the household, its associated business and ritual accruements. Therefore, in Takachiho, succession is expected according to the continued 'custom' of patrilineal primogeniture that still shapes the area.[166]

Figure 4.5 The *Jūshoku* with a neighbour's baby (and new *monto* member)

4.6 The patriarchal household

In order to understand ancestor ideology, Ariga (1965) has emphasised the functions that the *ie* had to perform and the importance of its maintenance from generation to generation as a governing internal principle. Ancestors are considered the guardian deities of the *ie* household, but these are not necessarily based on blood, following on

secularist constitution at the level of the state does not mean that Takachiho as a locality has become secularised. As Yanagawa et al have argued secularism cannot be applied to Japan: it was secularised from the outset in terms that it cannot be compared to Western religions and in the Japanese case the household, not an institution, is the main religious body (Smith, 1974; Plath 1964).

[165] However, even despite linguistic differences in the characterisation of what distinguishes *dentō* and religion, both of these processes clearly remain expressed in contemporary social life.

[166] Unless there is a better candidate, or it is problematic to pass to the eldest son, a defining flexible feature of the *ie* (Moon, 1989, 101).

from the principles of the household that amalgamate women who marry in, or adopt son-in-laws who also eventually become ancestors (Plath 1964, 302). Plath notes that if the *ie* is viewed in terms of its function as a business, both the living and dead are crucial to its existence and responsible for the welfare and continuity of the corporation. The dead guarantee the right of their household line through a spiritual charter, and the living provide the functions in order for it to continue as a whole (Plath, 1964, 307). In the discourse of the ancestors – both those recently departed and those who have joined the ranks of ancestors no longer in living memory – the dead remain part of the household. To be without household connections means to lack the security that the dead afford (Plath, 1964, 307). Hirano (1980, 251) argues that historically in pre-modern times, without the security of the household, there would be little possibility of sustaining life during economic and political upheaval and the ancestors were worshipped in order for their lineage and this protection to remain as an alternative to political flux.

According to Nelson (2008, 309), until the 1970s the eldest male would be educated in Confucian ethos of the family, and instructed in loyalty to the ancestors and the emperor who was considered to be a deity. These bonds were nurtured in the prewar years through the state, via education and media, as well as at temples and shrines as part of an ideology that helped to modernise and militiarise Japan (Nelson, 2008, 309). Burial and ancestor ritual promoted the extended family, and ancestor worship was regarded as the 'cornerstone of the Emperor system' in the Meiji Civil Code (Rowe, 2011, 24). In promoting the extended household system, ownership and maintenance of the family grave was both a right and an obligation, and thus fundamental to defining the *ie* as a unit with the male successor as its head (Rowe, 2011, 25). Even with a change of constitution postwar, Rowe argues that despite

demographic changes, the extended family ideal remains ingrained in the popular imagination, customs and the law[167]. Rowe notes that due to urbanisation and economic growth the extended family has almost disappeared; yet the household ideal remains.

The structure remains a Confucian, patrilineal one, and based on the principles of filiality found in ancient Chinese manuscripts (Ikezawa 1980). In pre-modernity, 'Filiality toward fatherhood was essentially obedience to headship of lineage groups, and it was expressed in ancestor worship' (Ikezawa, 1980, ii). With this legacy as its initial starting point, although no longer enshrined in law, the extended family is still referred to as a defining 'custom' of local life, and remains part of the rationale for ancestor veneration in Takachiho. Smith (1985) notes that although the idiom of ancestor veneration is Buddhist, it is essentially based on Confucianism from China and Korea. However, Smith argues that the Japanese kinship system is a bilateral one, whereby no distinction is made between kin on the male or female side.[168] Smith underlines the importance of the continuation of the household, rather than the emphasis upon blood ties, and cites examples where adoption of the daughter's husband as a son is often made. In the Japanese case, the appearance of patrilineal descent is therefore assured, even though the genealogical link with the ancestor is through the daughter, and not the son.

Ooms (1967) points out that interpretations of ancestor worship by native scholars, such as the folklorist Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962), and Ariga (1969), have

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[167] As clause 897 decrees that the rights over genealogical records, ritual implements and rights to the grave has shifted from the 'head of household' to the person who 'according to custom' performs the ancestral rites and that the family determines who this shall be (Rowe, 2011, 25).

[168] Ch'oe (1984, 228) has noted that even though Confucianism in Korea discriminates against women in the social sphere, 'there is no difference or discrimination by sex in gaining status as an ancestor in the afterworld.'

been centered around Shinto elements crystallised into ancestor worship: originating from the idea that deities supplicated at a shrine are the original clan ancestors (*ujigami*). Indeed, ancestral deities are expected to become collective deities at the shrine once they are purified and finally act as the group of local ancestors (Smith, 1974).[169] Embodied actions at the *butsudan* offer a symbolic and spiritual dynamic to the patriarchal system that it upholds and sustains. The ideology associated with ancestor veneration puts the male head of the household at the hierarchical pinnacle, as the successor to previous generations of the household, and also legitimises a discourse of male dominance, or at least the acted out *performance* of male dominance over other members of the family in public. From this perspective, the system, with the *butsudan* symbolising the ancestor being worshipped at its pinnacle, reflects and sustains the internal principles of the household[170]. In this analysis, the living pays homage to the dead, and the *butsudan* can be seen as a symbol of the family – and also the wider clan – as an embodiment of their household and local social system. However, this Durkheimian view only offers a one-way process, in which the dead are a substitution for the worship of the underlying principles of society and the clan.

In contemporary Takachiho, Buddhist practices can still be viewed for the purposes of ancestor rites that embody the structures of a patriarchal system. This reflects the internal system of the household with a male head as head of the family, and a system that stresses continuity and succession for further generations.

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[169] Additionally there has been emphasis placed upon the relationship between linked households and ancestor worship. In contrast, non-native scholars have explored the connection of ancestor worship with a single household (Ooms, 1967, 205). Indeed, ancestral rites have been regarded as the 'religion of the household' and the worship of its underlying social structures (Smith, 1974). In this vein, the stem family is a spiritual community and ancestor worship is its religion.

[170] These ideas are seen in the head male as the *daikokubashira* [大黒柱 literally: 'the main pillar of the house'] and breadwinner of the household.

Historically, ancestor rites have reinforced broader legal and political ideas of households that constitute wider society (Rowe, 2011). However, as wider society and law has changed with the dissolution of the household system postwar, this system has now been shifted to the category of 'custom' that still reflects Confucian patterns embedded within local religiosity as a legacy. As Nishimura (2007a) notes, pre-modern historical structures, which formerly underscored society, are still reflected in the patriarchal system of the household and in the principles of the ancestors. In this way, ancestor veneration is an embodied manifestation of the patriarchal principle that can breed untenable and brutal circumstances, shown in the daycare manager's narrative.

However, although household practices represent the internal structure of the household as patriarchal; on the other hand, it is women who usually have the main ritual role: afforded the responsibility of care for the tablets placed in the *butsudan* (that are marked with the posthumous name of the deceased) and in providing food and drink for the ancestors (Smith, 1974, 119). Traphagan regards ancestor veneration tied to other ritual behaviour (such as petitioning at shrines for this-worldly benefits) as part of a total life-care system that allows for the wellbeing of the family (2003, 128-131). Smith (1974) has pointed out that women are important because they live longer than men, and are likely to know those memorialised and are therefore associated with the transmission of ritual knowledge (Smith, 1974, 120). Traphagan (2003) argues that women are key in ancestral rites because they are considered dominant caregivers in the wellbeing of the family. Accordingly, Traphagan argues that ancestor veneration is a natural extension of the care-giving role of women that allows them to care for the ancestors, and thus the living, who benefit from the protection of the dead, and allows the elderly to remain of value to

the household as they age and become more likely to be recipients of care. Furthermore, this role is: 'a logical outgrowth of the nurturing role associated with women' in Japanese society (2003, 129). Further interpretations include the idea that women may be able to shield men from any harm by their direct ancestors as intermediaries (Martinez, 2004).

In the current context, it is also important to note that in the contemporary era succession is not necessarily a privilege. For (predominantly male) inheritors, the succession of the household can be a filial right and also a heavy burden. In the town, there were several cases where crippling financial debt had been passed on to younger generations who were unable to cope. In one case, an elder son who inherited the family firm committed suicide leaving a wife in her thirties and two young children. The young wife was later blamed as a scapegoat and forced to leave the household by the mother of the deceased, who held the most power in the household, when in fact it was her husband (the grandfather and household head) who had wracked up the debts in the first place that led to the suicide of her eldest son. In other cases, inheritors regard the position of inheritor as a burden and do not want to inherit a temple, farm or day-care centre.[171] In fact many young people would prefer to blaze a new trail outside the limitations of the rural area as the previous chapter showed.

Yet these structures which still underscore local society and can cause such harmful effects, place restrictions on its members, and ensures conflict between generations in the current phase of modernity (as the ethnography has shown), can also still be understood to have positive effects: in acting as a buffer against the ill-effects of the centre-led project of modernity that affects local lives. Instead, the

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[171] One of the reasons that the day-care manager may not be contesting her heritage is that the day-care centre is considered to dwindle in size from over a hundred to less than ten pupils if current trends continue, then literally, there will be nothing to inherit but debt.

household offers an alternative, localised, micro system that can still be utilised into the present at times of need. Subsequently, the natal household is something that can be fallen back upon by people who originate in rural spaces, move to the centre in search of opportunities, yet when disadvantaged by political and economic policies (or lack of), they have another option which they can utilise. Indeed, local people who move to the centre, and then become short-changed by processes of modernity can return to the periphery as a solution, or at the very least, the better of two evils. How are temples and priests responding to these types of changes, happening nationwide in the broader sphere?

Figure 4.6 An advertisement for the temple's mausoleum with a price list.

4.6 Buddhism and ritual nationwide

Interview with the *bōmori*

When I visited the Kumamoto (city) temple it seemed like they were doing less work but were very profitable, why is that?

The Kumamoto temples are rich because they do weekly services called *gakki mairi*. They go to the *monto's* house once a week, not just occasionally like we do. They get three thousand yen a household, and if you do ten visits a day, that's thirty thousand a day. If you send the junior priest – give him a thousand yen, and keep two thousand for yourself, you can make a lot of money without doing anything. Then you can go and play golf three times a week![172]

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

The above indicates how Buddhist temples are adapting to the contemporary setting financially. In order to find successors to the temple system, there are instances of priests advertising for successors in Buddhist publications and secular recruitment magazines (Rowe, 2004, 107). New memorial halls are being built by temples that replace the common extended family grave, and focus instead upon deceased individuals, where responsibilities of upkeep and fees will not be passed on to descendants. Furthermore, new service providers have resulted in funerary practices that are speeded up and simplified, emphasising the needs of consumers and on the deceased as an individual rather than pacification (Rowe, 2003, 353-378). Although many priests who are part of these changing trends are concerned they are moving away from the teachings towards a market driven approach of supply and demand,

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[172] The priests in Kumamoto were ostentatious with their wealth and ample leisure time. Foreign holidays, designer Italian shoes, an interest in wine and languages that reflected a cosmopolitan elite were in evidence during fieldwork in Kumamoto. This kind of lifestyle would not be sustainable for a temple in Takachiho with poorer parishioners.

Rowe's analysis shows that this is a dominant theme in urban, and also increasingly, rural temples. The priests respond to new needs for generations who wish to care for the dead and temples assure their posthumous futures, without the client having the responsibility of being *danka* that would also be inherited by any children they may have. Within these changing practices, Rowe argues that bonds between the living and dead remain, and posthumous divorces (where women opt to be buried outside the plot with friends or alone, away from the extended family grave) are a vehicle that allows people to sever those bonds. Furthermore, Rowe argues that changing practices are not simply indicative of wider social changes, but may allow people to *challenge* social norms in the process, reflecting the fact that temples are part of a changing society and that temples mirror social transformations (2003, 115).

As there are more temples than convenience stores in Japan[173] and their future remains uncertain, how the buildings themselves will be maintained, or if temples offer new services responding to local needs in the communities in which they are embedded, remains to be seen. Rowe's research suggests the possibilities of a post-*danka* Buddhism which responds to the need for funerary, grave and memorial services, while adapting to a migratory population who often live far away from family graves and territorialised temples, yet still seek the services of the temple priests, and remain motivated through sustaining relationships of interconnectedness between the living and dead. In the wider, national sphere, Rowe (2004) has documented the possibilities of a post-*danka* system where the individual is a customer, rather than the extended family as a patron, who is interrelated in a web of obligations to the temple that continues for generations. Furthermore, with secular

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[173] According to a report from NHK evening news, May 8th 2014.

service providers[174] listing comprehensive funerals with an index of prices, there is a shift from *danka* who are connected to a particular temple and offerings (known as *fuse*) to a transparent process with clear lines of consumer and provider (Rowe, 2004, 135).

As for the *butsudan* itself, Nelson has shown a shift to individual altars for the deceased, reflecting modern aesthetics of the contemporary home, and emphasise the memory of the deceased. *Butsudan* product makers are moving away from Buddhist guidelines as consumers move away from Buddhist practices: and these dynamics shape and reflect ways in which people interact with ancestral spirits through new designs (Nelson, 2008, 305-330). Catalogues and magazines advertise an array of new techniques: storing ashes in ornamental vases, in pendants, and dispensing with the services of a costly funeral and the priest, even opting for ecological funerals that requires lack of ritual specialists altogether. In the New new religions and the contemporary spirituality culture, Shimazono argues that there is a move towards individual practices and spirit guardians, over communal practices for the ancestral dead in established Buddhism that emphasises the protection of the family (2007). In the above there is a move to individualism, away from the collective extended family, as ritual services away from the Buddhist temple to secular, competing service providers and New Age practices in what has been termed a 'new spirituality culture', and a manifestation of the re-sacralisation of broader Japanese society, (Shimazono, 2008).

However, although the practices and forms of funerals and memorials are transforming at the national level, the consciousness that underpins ritual remains relevant. The fear of becoming *muen* – without bonds – appears a continuing factor

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[174] Recent service providers include the large department store AEON.

(Rowe, 2011). The localised gravesite (that in Takachiho is often found a short distance from the house itself) may have shifted to smaller, confined, individualised spaces such as a pendant, a vase, or a place to scatter ashes (such as a designated mountain or in the ocean), but with these products there is a consciousness of keeping the deceased nearby, being able to ritually visit the dead (in the case of the site of scattered ashes), and memorial services often remain an important feature. From Rowe's research in the urban sphere, it can be concluded that people are moving away from the institution of the temple as obligated *danka*, but are renegotiating relationships with the temple while striving to retain relationships with the dead and concerned over their own posthumous fate. In short, the consciousness embodied within previous ritual actions remains, while transforming and being expressed in new ways. In this process, the relationship with the temple is redefined, as the individual has new possibilities to enter a consumer-based relationship, which unmasks the price of the donation, and gives people more control. Furthermore people are negotiating bonds, such as when having a posthumous divorce (and no longer subservient to a mother-in-law or husband that hampered her in the this-worldly life), rather than being buried in the extended family grave, which Rowe argues demonstrates new possibilities for a post-*danka* Buddhism (Rowe, 2004).

Rowe's research also shows that the continuing bonds between the worlds of the living and the dead continue in both the urban and rural spheres. This can be extended to the non-human, and there is a growing trend for the funeral industry to offer pet owners the option of being buried with pets, and placing memorial tablets on the family altar. Memorial ceremonies are performed not because of the fear of spirits causing harm, as was previously evident in folk beliefs (animals being associated with deities who have the power to harm), but in order to emphasise the continuing

relationship of companionship and protection between the pet and its owner (Ambros, 2010, 35-59).

Asad (2003) and Berger (2006) assert that religion is not disappearing in the modern world; and it is clear that religiosity has not disappeared or declined in the local area, (instead interest in Takachiho's religiosity is generated into the wider national sphere). Subsequently, religiosity appears to transform.[175] In Takachiho, household rituals, and performances of *kagura* are still deeply embedded and inseparable from the locality – and this happens even as Takachiho becomes increasingly connected to other ideas, and spaces; and when it is also part of the secular nation state. However, such a religiosity dependent on local variables can also be meaningful within a larger, global framework. Vásquez investigates how local and what he terms 'little religions' have become prominent in the contemporary global age. These have been considered superstitious and strange because many have been syncretic and mix the profane with the sacred in multiple traditions (Vásquez, 2006). Vásquez notes that although religious scholarship tends to privilege large institutions or texts, it is the 'little religions' that tell us more about how people negotiate their lives and engage with belief in a contemporary world. He argues that people often use religions as a tool in dealing with the new contexts they find themselves in, especially in an era of mass migrations and social uncertainty. Furthermore, local practices can help construct meaning whereby: 'Religion can serve to reaffirm a strong sense of local identity against macroprocesses.' (2003, 32) Vásquez observes how religion can move between transnational spaces; and both localises and globalises individuals and institutions at the same time.

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[175] This can be seen in the media-generated New Age spiritual and 'power spot boom' and an interest in Buddha and Bodhisattva statues for their aesthetics and spiritual properties has become popular with young women known as "Buddha girls" demonstrating another trend over the last few years.

> More importantly, religion helps to link realities that modernity dichotomized and that has now destabilized: the global and the local, tradition and modernity, the sacred and the profane, culture and society, and the private and the public." (Vásquez, 2003, 29)

Vásquez regards religions as a bridging tool between the binary constraints that have been placed on society by modernity. In a time of increasing uncertainty and social change it may mean that local people increasingly look towards 'little religions' in order to find meaning and rootedness in a locality that is shifting, and overlapping with national and global processes, when seeking control. In this way, religiosity can facilitate a sense of continuity in a transitional world.

According to Vásquez, 'multiple religious affiliation, cross-fertilisation among religious traditions, and religious improvisation and innovation' is the core of a lived religion (2003, 60). This blending and adaptation can clearly describe syncretism at the heart of religiosity in Takachiho, as various techniques have been blended throughout history to culminate in the practices that are found today. Local people are part of this process as they re-enact myths surrounding pre-historical narratives as they perform the *kagura*, recorded by cameramen from Tokyo, who aim to capture the moment to broadcast to people watching in broader urban spheres. And it is in this way, that Takachiho is part of a wider mosaic that cannot be divided into neat categories of tradition and modernity; sacred and secular; rural and urban; the national and the global.

Summary

Ancestral rites underpin the patriarchal principles embodied in the household as a legacy of historical, political and socio-cultural factors. However, these rites continue into modernity because—even *while* restricting and adjudicating the behaviours of its

members—the household also functions as being a viable option in the contemporary era, and still has a role to play in the protection of its members against wider political and economic disadvantages, particularly at times of uncertainty and flux. In short, the protection and safety net the household affords is another narrative, played out alongside the broader processes of the centre-led political and economic project of modernity. This allows local people (who have moved elsewhere) a more flexible repetoire outside the dominant narrative of urban-style lifestyles (which contrary to their desirable image, also potentailly involves as much hardship as found in the rural sphere: as sons of farmers who live in large households swap agrarian lifestyles in order to become factory workers living in cramped conditions, and as single women are socio-economically disadvantaged when bringing up children alone in the city). Until this point, the continued existence of the remaining household *ie* has allowed geographically displaced members to return and utilise another option—an alternative to the dominant discourse—at times of political, economic and personal flux and personal need. Furthermore, ancestral rites underscore and engender the continuance of a household system, which may help support its members when they are negotiating the slippery transitional worlds of (post) modernity. This has already been seen in the popularity of family name plates associated with household status—as a technique of negotiating the negative forces of the contemporary era (Thompson, 2004)—and ritual can also be regarded in a similar vein: as another tool for autonomy and control, taking place within wider processes of the machinations of late modernity.

Figure 4.7 A back wall in a living room. Left hand side Buddhist altar, right hand side is the *kamidana*

Chapter Five: Beyond the temple curtain

This chapter will focus on the co-created relationships between *danka* and the ritual experts (priests and extended clerical family), performed in the public setting of the temple complex. The behaviour, relationships, rituals and orthodoxy found in this context constitutes the majority of activity referred to as 'Temple Buddhism' (Covell, 2005), and is contrastive to the previous two chapters which focused on household ritual for the purpose of personal ancestral rites. This chapter conjures the image of practices and beliefs that take place in the temple setting and are the mainstay of 'religion' when it is viewed in its institutional guise. However, instead of taking the view that religious institutions (such as the temple) and spiritual specialists (such as the priests) create religious need—or more concretely promote rituals for '*genze riyaku*' (this worldly benefits) in order for these needs to be fulfilled, thus enabling the continued domination of the religious professionals as they profit from the petitioners as customers (Reader and Tanabe, 1998)—this chapter will argue the opposite. It will explore the temple as a space that is primarily generated from the 'bottom-up', not the 'top-down'[176]. Therefore this chapter will move away from the dominant functionalist model, and explore the temple as a site of conflict and competing agendas.

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[176] The ethnography contradicts the theoretical position of practice with or without belief for the attainment of 'this worldly benefits' because as Isomae (2005) has shown, locality is crucial to religiosity and that categorisation of a 'Japanese Religion' particular to Japan as a nation state, tends to obscure religiosity particular to a locale found and grounded in a myriad of practices that have meaning at a precise time to a particular set of people.

Figure 5 Temple bell & temple

5.1 The priests take the stage

Every morning in winter at six thirty, and at six in summer, the *jūshoku* sounds the large bell housed in the temple gate, wearing padded earmuffs to protect his hearing. It is possible to buy an automatic bell ringer these days, but as a self-proclaimed traditionalist, the *jūshoku* has opposed suggestions from the family to purchase one. The sound of the temple bell heralds the start of a new day for the surrounding homesteads; although in the Kamino farming area most people wake up before six thirty. Sometimes when the temple bell is late or absent altogether, neighbours call the temple to ask what has happened. In this way, the temple bell is a constant signifier of the beginning of the day and demonstrates in a small but significant way that the temple remains an ever-constant presence in the landscape of local life.

At eight am, the priests begin to prepare the temple for the Women's

Association Annual General Meeting. This mainly involves polishing the outside doors and floors and setting out chairs for the *danka,* which today is comprised of parishioners who hold membership of the Women's Association and the small core of male Temple Elders. At around eight thirty, women from the committee set up a table for the reception outside the doors of the main hall. Parishioners begin arriving in their best formal clothes, smiling as they greet one another – apparently looking forward to the events of the day. Reaching the reception, they hand over an envelope that holds three thousand yen inside and includes one thousand yen for lunch. Everyone receives a printed statement of the Women's Association annual funds and accounts sheet that covers the spending for the year and monies received. Entering the hall, the parishioners kneel before the splendid main altar with a large gilt object symbolising Amida and ornate carvings of Buddhist images, and offer incense – before taking a seat in one of the rows, usually next to friends, chatting amicably together in groups.

Figure 5.1 The temple's Women's Association

The *jūshoku* is not yet visible but the *bōmori* is already in her black summer robes,[177] milling between the groups and keeping an eye on proceedings, while chatting and joking with the groups of women. Members of the Women's Association committee wear blue collars that signify their membership to the temple. One lady approaches me to thank me for visiting her house for a ritual. As we chat, the other ladies observe the conversation and exclaim they never knew she was fluent in English, everyone laughing at the joke. Today, women are in charge of proceedings at the temple and the Women's Association committee takes precedence; the chairwoman in her seventies announces the day's proceedings on a microphone before the ritual begins.

The temple's grandfather (and previous *jūshoku*) announces the entrance of the current *jūshoku*, and emphasises his position as the seventeenth generation of the temple lineage. At this moment, the *jūshoku* appears regally from the walkway leading from the house to the temple, and the atmosphere shifts, the room silenced, as he sits before the altar and begins. Everyone follows his lead with their red sutra books held out with Buddhist meditation wrapped beads around their wrists. The majority of ritual action in the temple revolves around the collective recitation of sutras, the central of these being the *nenbutsu*, and the repetition of the *nenbutsu* closes every ritual before the altar. It originally means to contemplate upon the Buddha, but within the sect means to recite the sacred name: '*Namo Amida Butsu'* (I take refuge in the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life) that embodies the essence of Amida or Oneness, and is an expression of profound gratitude in sect doctrine (Tanaka, 1997, 246-7). Essentially, the repetitive *nenbutsu* practice ensures salvation

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[177] Clerical robes vary depending on the occasion and season. They range from the most lavish, thickly woven and padded burnished gold patterned silks (for the highest of ceremonies, such as the death of a head priest) to the plainest and thinnest of black robes covered with netting in summer.

for priests and laity in the Pure Land (Covell, 2005, 97).

After the parishioners and priests recite the *nenbutsu* together, the priests give a Dharma talk. There are about one hundred women present and four male Elders sitting to one side of the altar. Together they make up the core of active temple participation of the affiliated *danka* households and regularly attend the temple for rituals and events. The youngest members appear to be around fifty and elderly women over ninety are also present. As the sutra recitation continues, a few people fall asleep in the soporific atmosphere. The *jūshoku* announces the seven hundred and fifty year anniversary of the death of the founder,[178] emphasising the importance of history and lineage of the sect. He also promotes a trip to Kyoto that the temple is planning to attend with members of the core *danka*. After this, it is the chairwoman's turn to take the microphone and talk about the year that has past, mentioning the earthquake and tsunami in the Tōhoku region. She also talks about the quantity of rain experienced over the season, which will ensure an abundant rice harvest. The chairwoman encourages people to talk to each other over lunch, remarking that people do not usually get the chance to meet, observing that today is a good opportunity to renew relationships. She then makes a joke that the guest speaker from the neighbouring temple due to speak next is an '*ikemen*' [イケメン a finely featured, cool, intelligent-looking, and above all – sexually desirable man] and tells them they can look forward to his Dharma talk. This prompts a lot of self-conscious laughter from the women. After her address, the head of the committee of male Elders talks about a newspaper article that describes the work of a qualified doctor who is also a priest and is, "able to care for the heart and mind, as well as the body of his patient". He concludes his speech by telling everyone: "the temple is a place to study

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[178] The founder of the sect was Shinran Shonin (1173-1263).

Buddhism. It's a fun, lively place for us as *danka*, so please enjoy this time we spend together". [179]

The guest speaker enters the room, is formally introduced, and begins by talking about his upbringing in a temple and his first experience as a priest visiting parishioners' households. He is a thoughtful, interesting speaker and jokes that he knew who performed rituals in front of the *butsudan* and who forgot about the practice: "you can tell if there are ash remnants of incense left in the burners!" he tells them (cue more self-conscious laughter). Extending the light hearted theme, the speaker talks about how he had an opportunity to become more romantic with his wife when his children left home (knowing laughter). Talking about his son, he explains that he expected him to go to Ryukoku University [180] when his son announced his intention to study at Kumamoto, a public university. "Can you believe it? He hasn't even thought about becoming the next heir to the temple!" he tells the audience, widening his eyes in mock horror and everyone laughs knowingly again, well aware of the expectations surrounding duty and obligation as the next heir to the temple. The speaker makes a joke about his wife chiding him for giving overly complex sermons and urges him to be more straightforward; and so he shows them a *manga* cartoon Jōdo Shinshū manual that describes the main teachings of the sect in a comprehensive manner. In this way, the priests are conscious of their audience. [181]

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[180] Ryukoku is a university training centre for the Nishi Honganji branch of the Jōdo Shinshū Pure Land Buddhist sect.

[181] The priests also note the ambiguity and complexity of the teachings, which are often difficult to grasp for all but those outside sect training centres. Although the key teachings that everyone will be saved and will reach the Pure Land after death are simple enough on the surface, to engage with the intricacies of sect discourse requires specialist training or dedication and devotion on the part of the parishioner. As Rowe (2007) has indicated, many members do not care which sect or philosophical underpinning that they are affiliated with and opinions among the *danka* range from engagement with the Buddhist teachings to open disinterest. Indeed, participant observation revealed that the danka would let the doctrine wash over them, often falling asleep. In the temple ceremony during *obon*,

"Amida Buddha wants you to put your hands together in front of the *butsudan* everyday" he tells them, explaining that the *butsudan* should be seen as a symbol for the teachings, and is important for the spiritual life here and now, in order to demonstrate gratitude and faith in Amida Buddha by reciting the eternal vow of the *nenbutsu* as a path to *shinjin* awareness.[182] He explains that he gets up at 5.20 am everyday to recite the *nenbutsu*. Contemplation in front of the *butsudan* and its accruements is the central practice of the sect, and should be integrated into daily practice by the *danka*. It is not necessary to always light candles and burn incense, but recitation of the *nenbutsu* and contemplation of Amida should be a daily source of inspiration in your lives, he tells them. "After reciting the *nenbutsu*, I wash the windows of the temple and do the gardening. The temple grounds have two beautiful sakura trees that are wonderful in cherry blossom season but now the trees are losing leaves and I am forever sweeping them away. One day my wife noticed I was tired after doing the grounds and suggested that we should cut them down! My eyes opened wide in horror!" Once more he plays to the audience, who are enjoying the extended narrative as a good story.[183]

He explains that he will always have to do the cleaning, and the leaves will always fall again: this mirrors the process of life. He then segues into Shinran's teachings and the meanings of the *nenbutsu*. He says that sometimes the *danka* are embarrassed to sit before the *butsudan* every morning, or go to the temple, '*that it*

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younger people attended the temple as part of their yearly obligation with older family members; on that occasion half the men in the room were asleep.

[182] The only objects that are necessary in the *butsudan* are candles, flowers, incense and a depiction of Amida Buddha in the back recess of the altar; photographs of the deceased or ancestral tablets *(ihai)* should not be placed in the altar and should not symbolise its purpose according to sect-based doctrine.

[183] Indeed, priests are usually good orators and raconteurs due to the fact that the main part of their preaching and mission revolves around giving Dharma sermons to the average group of parishioners who do not want to hear complex sermons, but instead regard the gathering at the temple as a social, as well as ritual, event.

doesn't feel natural'. However he explains that it is not enough to eat once for the rest of your life and that it is the same with reciting the *nenbutsu* once for the rest of your life. The priest advises them that through the recitation of the *nenbutsu* they will reach Amida Buddha. Amida will always understand their sadness and support their worries; in this way they can be happy, sharing their lives together each day with Amida. The *nenbutsu* essentially is an expression of thanks for the blessings *already* received by the bestowment of Amida's loving vow, and reflects the central message that the *danka* have *already* been afforded salvation that will automatically manifest as rebirth in the Pure Land after death.

The priest encourages them to feel this when they 'place their hands together' in *gasshō* [合掌 a prayer position held in front of the chest, head bowed,[184] which instead of praying for favours or salvation, is a manifestation of gratitude].[185] According to the priest, this should be performed in the morning in front of the *butsudan,* after offering incense to *Amida,[186]* and he asks them to spend time this evening in front of their altars at home to contemplate the *true meaning* of the *butsudan*.[187] Through this activity a path to enlightenment in the *here-and-now* known

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[184] This gesture is similar to the infamous Thai greeting, but without the smile or eye contact and is a much more reserved and inward posture – perhaps more similar to the Christian prayer position. Palms should be placed firmly together with the Buddhist beads (that are thought to aid meditation and contemplation) inserted between thumb and forefinger on both hands, with the tassle of the lengthy prayer beads pointing dowards.

[185] This expression of gratitude can also be seen before groups of school children eat lunch together in their classrooms. It is the job of one student to call '*gasshō*' and the rest put their hands together, to give thanks for the food, before they begin to eat at the same time. This is standard throughout the Japanese education system nationwide. It is enacted in order to instil good etiquette and a sense of gratitude for the food production system from start to finish: for the farmers, the land, the life of the animals eaten, the people who have produced, sourced, cooked and delivered the food. This expression of gratitude, and recognition of the lives lost in order for humans to be able to comsume meat and fish could be seen as one factor why vegetarianism is so low in Japan.

[186] The subtext here is that the *butsudan* is for Amida first and foremost, not the ancestors.

[187] The implication being that the *butsudan* ritual should not be performed in order to pray for 'this worldly benefits' as the dominant activity seen in front of the altar at Shinto shrines, or to converse with the ancestors; instead it is an expression of gratitude and reverence in the sect-based doctrine

as '*shinjin* awareness' can be sought. He also tells them that the *jūshoku* will be happy to receive the parishioners at the temple in order to recite the *nenbustu* together throughout the autumn, which is a good season for reflection.

The speaker continues for an hour before his speech comes to a close. Afterwards, the *bōmori* stands up, thanks the priest and draws everyone's attention to the analogy of eating and nourishment. "Lastly, we need to eat both delicious and not such nice food, in the same way that sometimes we don't want to hear valuable sermons that are nutritious and beneficial for us. So please come to the temple and our events and participate as much as possible," she tells the assembled. These words close the morning's ritual and the chairwoman of the Women's Association asks everyone to gather in the function room to eat their lunch together. The *bōmori* changes from clerical robes into *yōfuku* [洋服 Western-style clothes] and asks people to move into the function room for lunch. The speaker retires to the reception rooms in the ground floor of the clerical home, and is hosted by the *jūshoku* over lunch in the clerical family's home as the *bōmori* caters for the *danka* with the help of the Women's Association in the adjacent meeting rooms.

(although the priests seldom refer so directly to this for fear of upsetting their *danka*). Indeed, praying for something or somebody is an expression of the egocentric self and its desires and is not permitted in the sect; instead reliance and faith upon Amida Buddha should be cultivated (Tanaka, 1997).

Figure 5.2 The priest recites a sutra

5. 2 Jōdo Shinshū orthodoxy

The ethnography outlines the proceedings for the Women's Association Meeting and demonstrating how ritual and Dharma talks are combined with more secular issues of finances and catering for the parishioners. Although the ethnography illustrates a specific meeting, it is also formulaic for the Buddhist events in the annual calendar, and religious gatherings in the temple are a variation upon this theme. The temple is prepared in advance and the event is mainly organised by the priest and *bōmori*, who

are also reliant upon the help of the core volunteer members. The ritual activity revolves around collective sutra recitation, with priority upon the *nenbutsu* and after this a Dharma talk – either by one of the priests in the clerical family or a visiting priest who has the position of *kyōshi* (teacher).[188] Bringing in an outside speaker means that the priests can also 'recycle' their Dharma talks to other audiences and connects the temple to other local temples in the area. In these talks, Buddhist teachings from the sect are combined with anecdotes from the priests' own lives in order to make the message relevant and embedded within the 'here and now' of daily life. In order to be considered a good and effective speaker, priests had to be able to speak relatively and appropriately from their own lives, with an ability to connect teachings from the founder and sect orthodoxy with the contemporary struggles and worries that *danka* members face, to give support and encouragement during difficulties. Throughout the Dharma talk, the priest connected the sacred and mundane; making them appear connected and natural as he moved from talking about performing a ritual in front of the *butsudan* to cleaning the temple grounds seamlessly.

The importance of speaking from 'personal experience' was reiterated by a representative from the sect, in the Takachiho area meeting for Jōdo Shinshū priests that I attended. The representative, sent from the national headquarters at Kyoto, urged the local priests to take time to talk to the *danka* and address their concerns – not by dictating what to do, but encouraging them to find their own way into the faith. The representative advised the priests to cultivate a 'religious mind' in the *danka*, and reliance upon Amida and the efficacy of the *nenbutsu*; and to teach them that they can depend on the Buddha in the darkest times. "Do not separate daily life and religion. In daily life we have sadness, so we need a religious mind in daily life to help. In Jōdo

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[188] This position is requisite for all head priests and requires further studying after initial ordination to the priesthood.

Shinshū we have Amida to rely on in all matters, this is the kind of thinking we should be encouraging. It is not a small confined world, but a *large* world we should open up to them through these teachings", he tells the gathered representatives of the local temples in the area. In this discourse, faith and gratitude, alongside a reliance on an Other-power represented by the figure of Amida, symbolised in the *butsudan,* are key elements in the orthodoxy that are transmitted to local people in the temple setting. Indeed this was a key element in the above Dharma talk in the ethnography, as the priests encouraged the *danka* to consider the real meaning of the *butsudan* ritual in their lives.

Figure 5.3 Making an offering before the meeting begins

The priest implements this as he encourages the *danka* to kneel at the *butsudan* everyday to form a personal, meditative relationship with the Buddha, and to address their concerns through this method. He also encourages the *danka* to visit the temple to perform a ritual with the *jūshoku* and renew the relationship between the priest, parishioner and figure of Amida at the *butsudan*. As Traphagan (2004, 79) has observed, the *butsudan* is utilised in ancestor rites as a life-cycle care system, where the living take care of the dead, eventually becoming ancestors who will

protect the living and their descendants. However, in the sect teachings, the receptacle of the *butsudan* contains a representation of the figure of Amida (or 'Oneness'), and reliance and faith upon the principle that Amida embodies is at the core of the teachings.

To illustrate this, below is an interview with the *jūshoku* of the Kamino temple in which I ask him to clarify the main teachings of the sect. The casual interview took place on a winter afternoon in the family living room. The *jūshoku* was reading the temple mail and attending to correspondence sent from the Nishi Honganji headquarters at Kyoto; I was writing up the day's fieldwork notes.

"The most important principle of Buddhism is that everything is connected. Nobody is above anyone else. For example, in society, parents are above children, but in Buddhism they are the same, equal. Women and foreigners are also admitted as equals. It's useful if you think of it in terms of an analogy of a web, or a net – like a fishing net (he draws a diagram and shows it threaded with jewels), they are all different shapes and different colours; red, white and blue. If we release one it will affect all the other jewels: we are all intertwined and interrelated, old people, young people, and children. So we must recognise everyone's place in the world. If we damage the net we will feel the effects in the breakdown in our ecology and as an outbreak of war, for example."

I noticed that you didn't pray for the Tōhoku tsunami victims or have a service for them, why is that?

We can't pray in Jōdo Shinshū because the act is part of your own self-centred ego. The *onegai* (wish/prayer) is asking for something you desire to manifest. In Zen

Buddhism you have to erase your worldly desires, but human beings have a limit in this regard, because they are only people. Jōdo Shinshū recognises this, so in the sect it's enough to acknowledge your own faults and notice your desires.[189]

What do you do about your own faults?

(He laughs). I am full of desires, nothing but desires! Isn't everyone? Zen is too strict, if I were a Zen priest maybe I would have given up by now. Everyone must recognise their own desires so they can become buddhas; yet in Jōdo Shinshū everyone will become a buddha in the next life, whether they are good or bad. They are automatically saved by Amida's loving vow.

The *bōmori* having already entered the living room hears our conversation and continues the theme:

"After death, buddhas come back to help the living, so you are supposed to realise your Buddha nature through this idea of *shinjin* awareness – which is difficult to define and very hazy. I describe it as 'a light bulb moment', where you suddenly become aware of how interconnected everything is. Even if you kill someone, you can admit it to Amida Buddha before you die and be saved… The Amida figure is very ambiguous as well: like a god – but not a god. I describe Jōdo Shinshū using an analogy of a 'bar of soap in the shower'. Every time you think you've got it, you learn something contradictory which throws you and you're back to square one. In a way, Jōdo Shinshū can be seen as not having strict guidance, instead you're supposed to relax into the situation, recognise that it won't change and understand that that you

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[189] Following on from this, the sect emphasises the importance of the mindfulness and self-reflection placing emphasis on personal growth before actively helping others (Tanaka, 1997).

have to change your perceptions towards it instead. Jōdo Shinshū teaches that this is the only way to gain awareness and wisdom, which helps you in your daily life. After death, it's too late: having *shinjin* awareness is about the here-and-now.[190] And that's ultimately what the sect teaches. It's all about the present moment, not about becoming an ancestor after death. There's not much to convert to in Buddhism, or join or anything, you have to do the majority of the work by yourself, on your own.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

The ambiguity within the sect discourse that the *bōmori* alludes to, is characteristic of the sect that can be regarded broadly 'without moral absolutes' (Tanaka, 1997, 215). As members of the sect will be automatically saved and reborn in the Pure Land, the priests encourage the members to have faith in the power of Amida and encourage the acceptance of current circumstances over self-determination or the accumulation of merit. Dessì describes the centrality of the *nenbutsu* for the sect below:

> Following the path opened by his master Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212), Shinran believed that meritorious acts of "self-power" (*jiriki* 自力) should be superceded by the exclusive practice of the nenbutsu (*senju nenbutsu* 専修念仏), which on the basis of the universality of Amida's vow, can also direct the less fortunate and capable of birth in the pureland (*ōjō* 往生). In this connection, Shinran was also eager to clarify that the nenbutsu in itself was not a means but rather an act of gratitude to Amida's compassion and "other-power" (*tariki* 他力). This attitude also provided the pattern to the main traditional Shin Buddhist approach to morality characterized as a "response in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence".
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> (Dessì, 2010, 337)

Reflecting the central sect teachings, neatly described above in the temple context, the priests encourage their parishioners to rely on the power of Amida who is able to understand their sadness and problems and offer support during difficult times instead

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[190] *Shinjin* awareness is considered in the sect to be a spiritual transformation that brings about an abiding sense of wellbeing and a spontaneous desire to assist others to reach happiness (Tanaka, 1997, 4).

of praying for circumstances to change.[191] Recitation of the *nenbutsu* is also a technique to gain *shinjin* awareness: recognising that reliance upon the Amida figure is the basis of the faith. According to Dessì, *shinjin* is often translated as 'entrusting heart', or 'entrusting faith', and denotes a moment of religious experience in which the ordinary person, full of passions, can achieve awareness and awakening through the power of Amida (Dessì, 2010, 337.) Therefore, to attain *shinjin* awareness, the sect teaches an acceptance of circumstances, and faith and reliance towards a figure who is ambiguously not a god, but the embodiment of interconnected Oneness that has the power to bestow rebirth in the Pure Land, whether the parishioner lived by ethical standards in the here-and-now or not.

As the *danka* have already been bestowed salvation in the Pure Land upon death, their obligation in this lifetime is to give thanks to Amida for this and cultivate the circumstances for *shinjin* awareness; a move away from self-power and towards faith upon the Other-power.[192] The attainment of this awareness paradoxically must not be striven for, but is bestowed by the grace of an other-power, and the path to this end is through reciting the name '*Namo-Amida-Butsu*'[193] [南無阿弥陀仏: I take

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[191] According to the *jūshoku*, members of the sect cannot pray, because this would be to assert desire and this is reflected in the idea of 'self-power' that the sect teaches should be replaced with the practice of the *nenbutsu,* which has a dual function of assuring rebirth in the Pure Land and an expression of gratitude.

[192] According to Dessì, doctrinal aspects that relate to other-power has not affected the development of ethics and social interaction (2010, 336). Equality and non-violence are two examples of 'modern values' that practioners are oriented towards alongside compassion, gratitude, peace of mind and ancestor veneration that Dessì notes are 'traditional Japanese values' (2010, 335). However, although broad egalitarian values characterise the sect, direct action and active social engagement also represent an activation of '*negai*': desiring the manifestation of one's will, that the *jūshoku* noted was a part of ego and demonstrated in sect teachings as '*jiriki,* self-power.

[193] This translation used by the Nishi Honganji branch is closest to the original Sanskrit. Alternatively, the Higashi Honganji branch of the Jōdo Shinshū Pure Land sect uses the phase '*Namu*-Amida-Butsu'. Both phrases constitute the *nenbutsu,* which essentially means: 'to recite the name' (of Amida Buddha). The centrality of the *nenbutsu* within the sect and its surrounding philosophy suggests a passive expression of faith that relies upon an Other-power that has the agency to determine salvation. However, this figure is also ambiguous: characterised as an entity that has the power to offer salvation, but also an expression of Oneness – that is also formless as the dynamic activity of wisdom and

refuge in the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life] (Tanaka, K. 1997, 246-7). This is the focal point of all rituals performed by the priests in the temple and *danka* household setting.

Following sect discourses, the priests are prevented from imposing their own will on parishioners, and instead have to encourage their *danka* 'into the faith', as the representative from the headquarters instructed. The central message of reliance upon Amida at the core of the teachings means that any act of attempting to acquire merit or displaying desire and 'self-power' is understood to be an *obstacle* to rebirth in the Pure Land (Dessì 2010, 340). This means that in application, the sect cannot be direct and demanding when instructing its members, and neither can the priests make demands from their neighbourhood parishioners. However, acquiescent deference to this sect-based discourse on the part of the priests has a double function as a smoke screen that the priests can operate within and behind.

The practical and daily reality is that the priests and the parishioners are at odds over the meaning and practice embodied in the *butsudan* ritual; and the priests are worried about offending their *danka* so do not force sect teachings—not because of concerns over etiquette—but because they are fearful of offending the parishioners to the extent that sponsorship in the form of 'offerings' to the temple and the clerical family could easily be withdrawn. If they were too keen to demand orthodoxy in the syncretic system in which ancestors are crucial, the *danka* could cut their ties with the temple, or begin to see the priests as irrelevant in their *butsudan* rituals. The priests are more than aware of this and the central fact that they are only one technique in a larger local system that centres around ancestor consciousness for personal household and local ancestral deities (such as Amaterasu). Ambiguities are therefore often left

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compassion (Tanaka, K. 1997, 69). In this way, Amida is not a personal god in the sense of a creator, or a transcendent, omniscient judge who decides destiny (Tanaka, K. 1997).

unresolved over the preference for teaching a 'simpler message' (even through the use of *manga* cartoons)[194] that the parishioners can grasp easily, and feel is relevant for their daily lives, while keeping everybody happy and the temple in business. Lastly, as the *bōmori* alluded, even as an ordained priest with Buddhist teacher status, true understanding was 'slippery at best'.

5.3 Ethnography from the inside

Figure 5.4 Lunch at the Gokase town temple

The Women's Association is made up of a group of capable, retired women who help to run the events alongside the *bōmori* and *jūshoku*. There is an elected leader and chair within the organisation that spans both the local and national level. In

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[194] *Manga* is not age-specific in Japan, so showing cartoons would not be considered patronising. It does, however, show the extent of the blatant lack of awareness (and I would suggest, interest) in sect orthodoxy, *even* by the temple's core parishioners: the Women's Association and the Temple Elders.

addition there is also an international branch with connections between Buddhist temples in the United States and Taiwan. The committee manages their own accounts, meetings and study groups, and is the life-blood of the temple. They arrive before events in order to prepare the temple: making the food, flower arranging, setting up the slippers for people to wear in the hall, overseeing the reception desk and collecting money. They typically have a longer history of participation in the temple than the priests themselves, who in this case, are over thirty years younger.

With years of experience the *fujinkai* [婦人会 Women's Association], more than anybody else, know how the events will unfold, the order of service, and what needs to be done to prepare the temple for events and how to restore it afterwards. At a wake, it is the Women's Association who arrive to prepare the pickles, rice and tea for the household before the memorial service begins. For a wedding, it is members of the group who come to arrange the flowers with the *bōmori*, alongside the *jūshoku* who adorns the main altar of the temple and the cleaning lady who prepares the hall. Thus, in every event related to the ritual yearly calendar, the Women's Association is the crucial element in ensuring its smooth operation. In fact, the only time that they are not serving somebody else, receiving monies, coordinating the catering, washing up, preparing and clearing away for an event is when they sit in the hall and listen to the priest, taking part in the ritual itself.

Due to the above, it is important to have good, co-operative relationships between temple wife and committee, as the *bōmori* and the group collaborate for most events at the temple. However, the current *bōmori* admits that, "If you get a temple wife to talk to you honestly, which is nearly impossible to do – they would admit that they are terrified of their *fujinkai*! It's obvious that many of the women have frustrated talents and want to run the show at the temple". The *bōmori* has a

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particularly difficult relationship with the chairwoman, evident in the precarious balance of status and power between the two women. The *bōmori* believes this is compounded by the fact that the chairwoman is unable recognise her as a person due to her British nationality: "she once asked me if I could eat *sashimi*! I have been in Takachiho for twenty years! She's always prodding and poking me and telling me what to do, she would never do that to another (male) priest". However, this 'ethnic Othering' of the *bōmori* was so rare that in this particular instance appeared to be a tactic to neutralise her power – so that the chairwoman could have the upper hand in the arena of the wider Women's Association in which the two jointly hold power. When I asked the *bōmori* how she was treated by the core *danka* after twenty years, she told me: 'basically the same as everyone else. The only difference is that if I make a mistake, they're more lenient and let me off more lightly than they would anybody else'.

Indeed, the admission of the *bōmori's* status as a non-Japanese priest and a Buddhist teacher both within and outside the community is accepted (after initial opposition from some quarters, noticeably the male Elders). During fieldwork it became clear that the main reason for this was because of her expert socio-ritual behaviour as a priest, with the corresponding etiquette. On one occasion after a Dharma talk in a neighbouring town temple, an elderly lady—very forwardly considering the strictly hierarchical occassion—came and sat down next to me during lunch. She was reluctant to address the other priests (including the *bōmori*) that I was sitting with directly. Instead, she turned to me and asked questions about how the *bōmori* was currently experiencing daily life in her home temple with the extended clerial family. These questions were prompted by the Dharma talk the priest had just given, which narrated the difficulties she encountered several years before, when she

entered the temple as a *yome,* and her enculturation into temple life. After chatting amicably and exchanging pleasantries for a while, the elderly lady turned to me and lowered her voice to a whisper as the other priests continued to chat. "I knew she was a *real* priest the minute she began to chant" she revealed to me, with a smile on her lips.

This small acknowledgement reflects the standard opinion I encountered regarding the status of the *bōmori* as a non-Japanese priest. Indeed, as long as the *bōmori* is able to perform the rituals, address audiences, and prove her worth—in the same way as a Japanese temple wife and Buddhist teacher—she has been 'adopted', and the barriers between her and the overwhelming majority are dissolved. From this locally situated perspective, she is viewed firstly as a temple wife and Buddhist teacher, and secondly as a non-Japanese, even to the extent that differences were never refered to (both explicity or implicitly) by anyone except the *bōmori* herself. She was not treated like an outsider – in which levels vary from '*nama gaijin'* (wet-behind-the-ears foreigner) to a more experienced non-Japanese who knows how to operate within society as a *kokusaika* (Cosmopolitan). Instead, in the temple and local context the *bōmori* had transcended both these categories ascribed to people not 'ethnically' Japanese, or not born in Japan. Conversely, she had become to be considered one of them: she had been accepted into the fold.[195]

Because of this, nationality and ethnicity are now obscured by personal feelings that preside over the *bōmori's* perceived attributes and faults. Opinions vary

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[195] This is no mean feat, non-Japanese people can live in Japan for years and still be treated separately from the rest of the Japanese community – if, for whatever reason, they (or their skills) have not been acknowlegded, or they are incapable of comprehending or following the 'unwritten code' that dictates social relations in Japan i.e. if they are unskilled and inept in 'the game' being played in the setting. These types of invisible barriers are difficult to negotiate and transcend, but needed in order to survive in the complex world of interpersonal relationships in wider society, particularly for long-term residents like the *bōmori*.

widely, and while the *bōmori* attracts some members, others keep themselves at a distance. The *bōmori* is aware of this and regards the situation self-reflexively, noting that: "it is always the inappropriate people—who don't fit in—that are drawn to me". Perhaps women on the margins of a very rigid social code are attracted to a person who represents difference. Additionally, the *bōmori* shares very strong and firm friendships with women of all ages outside the temple setting, in the wider social life of Takachiho, who have supported her continuously, and taken her side publicly when she was experiencing extended family discord. Yet beyond issues of personality and preferences, more broadly and more objectively, in the depiction of the difficult relationship between the *bōmori* and chairwoman, it becomes evident that the relationship is crucial; and many *bōmori* are at pains to be approved of by their *fujinaki* as a group – despite their own personal feelings towards certain members. In an interview with Priest Iwao, she admitted that the priests had to humour some behaviours of the elderly *danka* as a matter of course*:* "the *bōmori* knows there are some things you should ignore rather than draw attention to. For the elderly people, even if they're wrong – they won't admit it. They need sweetening up, and I have to try and do this as well".

The practice of 'sweetening up' which includes hosting, serving meals, and pouring alcohol for the *danka,* is an elevated performance of the same customs that are found in every other social occasion, and there is little to distinguish the post-ritual meal from a secular event – such as a meal for teachers and parents after a graduation ceremony.[196] After the ritual, the men would drink for several hours in the function rooms while other members gradually departed. According to Covell: 'Unless the priest has abstained from alcohol from the start, any refusal might be

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[196] The signifier of difference is that the former is held in the temple function rooms and the latter in the banquet rooms of a hotel.

interpreted as an insult and could damage priest-danka relations. Priests live in a dependent relationship with their communities, and drinking is a major part of interaction in Japan' (Covell, 2005, 76). Indeed, drinking is important in the temple setting and the offering of alcohol is a chance to serve the *danka*, as well as receive cups in exchange, embodying the ritual obligation to one another that underscores these actions. However, the priests are also careful about when they should be available to serve and when they should disappear and allow the *danka* to use the function rooms as a social space, for their own purposes.

The priests are aware of the need to curate a positive image of the temple in the town, and this has to be tempered with their status as representativeness of the temple as a whole. To be seen as 'too sociable', would be both irresponsibly damaging to their image, and trespass boundaries between priest and *danka* that are negotiated as part of their relationship that is created over time, developing the performance of a mutually cooperative partnership that ultimately ensures sponsorship. Furthermore, there was also an important question of supply and demand: the *danka* spent a lot of money funding the events which were also for their own purpose and pleasure, and they expected to be served by the *jūshoku* and *bōmori* as subordinates in the system in which the *danka* were highly revered patrons, and treated accordingly. When reconsidering the situation through their perspective, it became evident that they expected to receive something back from the temple in their role as supporter and patron. By the end of fieldwork, after witnessing how people who often lived in poverty predominantly financed the temple as *danka*, it became clear why they would expect to be served in return through their own continued patronage of donations and 'offerings' to the temple, supporting the priests and clerical family by extension.

Because of this delicate balance, during ritual and post-ritual the priests are keen to curate an image that is polite, distant, and measured. They accommodate the conservative discourse of the area and comply with gender norms: where women serve food and drink and men are the main recipients. In performances and embodied actions such as the ceremonial pouring of drinks for the parishioners, the priests play on the temple's conservative guise that ties in with norms expected by the elderly parishioners, and capitulates to the prewar values of the older, conservative generation who dominate temple ceremonies, reifying ideologies as concrete rules performed within the temple setting. Because of this, hierarchies between people in terms of age, gender, and status within the temple – reflected by their role – are reinforced and legitimised by performances of humility and the relinquishment of any personal power to the highly stratified temple environment.

According to Dessì's quantitative analysis of Jōdo Shinshū practitioners, after the importance of 'compassion', priests and laypersons prioritise 'traditional Asian values' such as good manners, cooperation, honesty and helpfulness within the sect (2010, 362). However, whatever people report in questionnaires, it became clear that during fieldwork, cooperation, 'Asian values', and good manners was not the only story. These values are reflected, or at least performed in the temple, until a point in the proceedings when post-ritual drunkenness would regularly take over in the function rooms; and the Elders expected to be catered for in the same way by the volunteers from the Women's Association and the *bōmori* as they would be in a local bar. This was specific to the local setting as opposed to a more urban one.

The patriarchal Confucian climate of the temple revealed that although women dominated temple life as temple wives, volunteers and active parishioners,

men performed the highest positions in the institution.[197] The question remains why women were motivated to join the Women's Association – as they had to perform roles of both hosts and guest; client and patron; organizer and dutiful member of the congregation at the appropriate time – doing all the work while remaining subordinate in a Buddhist temple that was supposed to preach egalitarianism and equality and 'Oneness'. However on one level, the women appeared to enjoy their engagement with the temple and utilised the chance to leave their homes, socialise with friends and experience an *occasion*, separate from, yet closely mirroring the patterns of daily life.[198] On another, it was claimed by the *bōmori* that the Women's Association was made up of people: "who were desperate to run the show at the temple having frustrated talents in organisation, with no careers of their own". The lack of autonomy in their daily lives, belonging to an age group where their own desires were submitted to the rules of the patriarchal household, with the mother-in-law at its pinnacle, meant that there were many capable women in the temple, and the Women's Association had its own organisational structure and hierarchical jostling for position that could perhaps be seen as a substitution for a lack of chances afforded in their younger lives.

Previous literature has argued that obligation and duty are key ingredients in the continuation of Japanese religious practices. Davis (1992) notes that motives for participation in religiosity often include obligation (*giri*) to family and gods and the expression of gratitude for favours and blessings already received from superiors and ancestors (1992, 19); and this is true of the Jōdo Shinshū sect. Furthermore, Dessì's

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[197] In their capacity as head priest and main decision-making body (the Elders).

[198] After catering and serving has been executed, priests and members sit alongside one another and socialise. Although Covell (2005) notes that abstaining from meat in this setting is problematic for those within the Tendai sect, this is not an issue in Jōdo Shinshū, where eating meat is permitted. On occasion, temple food consisting of tofu and vegetables are offered, but at other times local beef (an expensive delicacy) is offered.

(2010) research argues that the repayment of obligations is considered even more important by laypersons of the Jōdo Shinshū sect than the Japanese average. Dessì argues that this is due to the value placed on 'responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence'. In this instance, a moral value of repaying obligation in kind is the effect of the Buddha's grace and not a self-generated virtue (2010, 362). In such a discourse, gratitude towards Amida could also be seen as extension of the obligation towards priests and other members in the temple environment. However, theoretical (and actual) perceptions of duty and obligation (which are one factor in the setting) tend to obscure the hierarchical relationships that determine temple life and the power relations between actors. These in turn reveal that the ability to perform gender, generation, and status hierarchies in the temple environment, is prized. The main beneficiaries and pinnacle of this hierarchy are the Elders and the head priest; yet while they perform status hierarchies on stage, behind the scenes—as the ethnography demonstrates—it is the women who run the temple.

5.4 Generating the priests

Rowe notes that: 'Parishioners have a genealogical and financial stake in the temple, so for some, supporting the temple means that they have a say in how it is run; accordingly, parishioners think of the temple as 'theirs' (Rowe, 2011, 143). This is certainly the case in the Kamino temple and it could be argued that it goes deeper than this because the *danka* have ownership rights and also the power to approve all major decisions. The temple does not 'belong' to the family – although they live on the premises and have a caretaking role – and signatories of the Elders are required for contracts and financial accounts. Primarily, the temple is considered to be for the use of the *danka* and a resource for temple members first and foremost. Accordingly,

the fact that the temple is difficult to define in terms of ownership (where *danka* and priests are often at cross-purposes) makes it difficult to draw boundaries. Indeed, the temple is an ambiguous space that is informed by invisible aspects of social relationships, as well as tangible household records, accounts, representatives and temple property.

A theme that resurfaced during conversations with the priests concerned the complexities of a temple also connected to a family home. Interviewing Priest Iwao, who had moved into her husband's family temple in the centre of town after marriage (from a temple on the outskirts of the urban centre of Fukuoka) I asked if it was considered difficult to marry into a temple.

> "Ah, people often say so, but because I was brought up in a temple I didn't really feel this way, especially at first. But the temple is so open and the congregation is always coming in, there is a lack of privacy. The place which we live in – the temple – it isn't ours; it belongs to the congregation."

The *bōmori* also reiterated that the temple did not belong to the temple family although they owned the private house in the temple precinct, and said that it would be difficult to do whatever they wanted with the temple, including utilising it for any business purpose without the permission of the Elders. All discussions about the public use of the temple needed permission from the signatories. One temple in town is currently under scrutiny after the parishioners collaborated to build and fund a new function room that was then turned into a piano studio to generate private income, which has resulted in a poor reputation, and led to a subsequent lack of co-operation. This, combined with the fact that the head priest is usually unavailable, acting as a guest speaker that he claims is an important part of his mission, means that the temple

wife is left to the wrath of the *danka* who complain that their priest is never available 'always off, giving talks' i.e. making money somewhere else.[199]

As Priest Iwao observes, visitors are likely to visit or call at any time. Furthermore, they always expect somebody in the clerical family to be home, and by living next door to the temple the *danka* always know where to find a priest. After a death, one of the neighbours will contact the temple to organise rituals on behalf of the family. As this is one of the main ritual services that the temple provides it is important to have somebody 'on call' at all times and present at the temple. The need to travel and be present at the same time means that a temple needs more than one priest, or a temple wife to be available at all times.

In essence, the priest is born into the role and then enculturated into the position, mainly by the *danka*. In this way, to a large extent the role is generated by the expectations of the *danka*. In one informal interview with the *jūshoku* – that took place while sitting underneath the heated table on a winter afternoon – I asked if he wanted to become a priest when he was younger. He shook his head and laughed – "No! Not at all… but I was brought up here with the community around me all the time. People would come to the temple and say: "when you grow up I want you to be the one to do my funeral and memorial services". They would often say things like that – the elderly generation, and I didn't think too much about it when I was younger. At university I studied Buddhism, then for the first time I really heard and understood what Buddhism was about. Before that, I didn't know too much about it, and then I listened to the philosophy and I thought Buddhism and the teachings were wonderful. The university was built by the sect, so it was there that I really learned about Jōdo

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[199] Asking if the *bōmori*'s private English conversation school, held in the town branch of the temple was subject to the same scrutiny, I was told that as it was transitory and did not take up permanent space, it was permitted.

Shinshū."

I ask him what he thinks will happen in the future to the temple. "I don't know what will happen to the area, up until my generation it was fine because we have an elderly *monto* and so there's still funeral services to perform, but after they have died, there will be few funerals and very difficult for the temple to survive. I worry about passing it onto my eldest son. He will have to do something else beside the temple as well. We've built a temple in town, as the hamlet here may get too small in the future; but even that isn't certain. Now the priests in the area are thinking about what will happen to the temple and if it won't be needed in the future, also our income is uncertain. People are discouraged from coming to the temple, they think the priests put on airs and graces – but if we're too friendly then that doesn't work either, so we need a balance. The family needs to have a profile in town, we can't attract a bad reputation – to be seen drinking, or out all the time. But we can't seem too distant either. People definitely observe our behaviour, so when I go out I can have a drink with everyone else, but I need to exercise self-control. It's like putting the breaks on (he mimes the action of an emergency stop, making a twisted face, before we both start laughing). Actually, thinking about it, maybe this isn't such a bad thing!"

I ask him about pressures involved in maintaining a temple, "we're also a family so we can understand the problems that the *danka* have. The main one is income and unemployment, and we also face similar things. The sect has survived eight hundred years. There have been ups and downs. I think this is a down time; but maybe this is when people will discover that they really do need the teachings. It might be a motivator for the sect. It's important to continue into the future and preserve the traditions and culture." He tells me he considers himself a traditionalist, and I ask him about the role of the head priest and how he balances the various roles

of being a father, teacher and priest in the community. "It happens naturally. All human beings have to switch roles. When I put on the robes I automatically feel more like a priest – the robes *change* you. Being a priest doesn't take the place of my other roles in life, but you physically and mentally make the change when putting on the robes – you adapt. And this has an automatic effect on the way you act and relate to people."

I ask him about being part of the temple household and the effect of his international marriage in the town: "It's not like a city temple where you take off your robes and nobody knows who you are. Everyone always knows you here in the town. That's why you can't go crazy. At festivals I have to greet people, take part, but I'm always a representative of the temple, I never forget that." (As I was told by the *jūshoku*, his colleagues in city temples can take off their robes and nobody knows their clerical position, yet in Takachiho, in robes or a tracksuit, the priests are known to everyone in the wider area.)

I ask him about how having a family – as permissible in the sect – influences the situation, and how it differs from other countries where monasticism is the norm. He tells me that: "We are in the middle of a community, but if the community dies out – so will we. Also, as the community changes, we change. We have to change. There's a discussion among priests now about what we can do – to survive into the future".

<div align="center">*</div>

This narrative is reflective of the contemporary situation in which dominant norms of the localised *jūshoku* (head priest) system are found nationwide. As the lineage is passed from father to son, the role of priest is expected and evolves on the part of the heir – although it may be met with resistance initially. The child will inherit the role

of *jūshoku*, and will not necessarily be involved in the temple in any way or show any interest in its management and teachings. However, when the time comes, through duty to the expectations of parents and community, the temple heir will train for the priesthood. After this, unless they opt for an academic or administrative path in the sect hierarchy as 'career priests', they will return to their home temple after graduation in order to learn the ropes in the family firm. It is considered that the *chonan* is already used to the context of temple life due to their exposure from a young age, and therefore better placed to deal with the discipline of a temple environment. The heir will be further inducted into the role by parents and the *monto*, as he takes on priestly duties. The process is gradual, and only begins formally after graduation from university, after the priest license has been obtained.

This is the essential dynamic of the *jūshoku* system, and it is this aspect that prevents change and prioritises reproductive and continuous succession, leading to stagnation, resentment, inequality, and separation from the wider local community. Therefore, the *jūshoku* is an ascribed role that the individual is born into, willing or otherwise, not one achieved by merit or skill. In this way it has two components: of birthright as privelege, and also (and very often) a stressful and unwanted burden that places huge restrictions on the permissable activities of the individual, limiting their freedom – even to the extent of not allowing them to make their own choices over a marriage partner.

Figure 5.5 Hinokage town priest, in robes appropriate for a dharma talk

5.5 Reproduction and change

In the temple the ritual and secular events calendar were repeated annually, and it became evident that the existence of the temple and its repetitive occasions were something that elicited a feeling of nostalgia and security within the community. People who had moved elsewhere and then returned to Takachiho after a period of years remembered how the temple was from their childhood, and expressed admiration for the fact that everything was more or less the same. In fact, the ritual calendar is categorised by an absence of change (mirroring the broader temple and *jūshoku* system) and is in synthesis with the farming seasons that characterise local life. In the temple setting, continued lineage of the temple through the clerical family and the attention to the repetitive calendar reflects the image – or perhaps misplaced illusion – that nothing ever changes at the temple, and this appears to serve a need for the security and for its elderly parishioners, combatting the psychological fear of

change.

An emphasis upon continuity without change is an important dynamic in temple life: while everything is in decline and in a process of flux, the physical structure of the temple building and its calendar of events lends itself to the idea that the neighbourhood will remain robust. In this way, the temple offers a source of comfort and combats the anxieties associated with change, especially when society at large is clearly in the process of transitions often revolving around the household system. However although it serves the human need for continuity, it also implicates the priests in a performance where they are unable to divert from the expected norms, and any kinds of changes are often resisted from the outset by the older members of the parishioners and clerical family.

The emphasis of the temple's history and continued connection to its neighbourhood is a narrative that weaves both priest, *danka*, and temple space into a larger historical framework of which they are obligated to play a role. As the older priest reminds them, their priest is the seventeenth generation in a line of unbroken continuity. In this way the responsibility to reproduce this heritage both on part of the *jūshoku* and *danka* are emphasised: the weight of shared history on their shoulders. Primarily, the temple emphasises its historical and religious significance in order to situate itself in a wider, cosmological plane of time and space, made significant by founding fathers and a Buddhist framework that allows it to transcend spatio-temporal dimensions of this world and the next. The neighbourhood is its context and source of financial supply, and this crucial to the temple. In stressing its own significance for the community, the temple motivates members to play their role in a context that is larger than any individual, or family, and part of a neighbourhood legacy unique to the locale, and of a broader sect and cosmological discourse.

In a more practical application, members of the community offer rice in front of the altar, their names written on leaves of attached paper, in a re-establishment of their status as the local farmers, surrounded by fields that sustains the *danka* household businesses, the clerical family and the temple neighbourhood. This symbolic offering draws attention to the physical dependency of the clerical family upon their neighbours, while demonstrating that through the labour of the *danka* famers the neighbourhood continues.

Appadurai has argued that ritual is an important technique in reproduction. 'Rites of passage' produce local subjects (actors who belong to a situated community) and in this way localities are inscribed onto bodies (Appadurai, 1996, 179). The ceremonies for the stages of life and death also reflect stages within the community, as local subjects become enculturated into the techniques and procedures for their locality. As was often remarked, Takachiho has many 'small, local rules' imperceptible and invisible to 'outsiders', and learned through adulthood as subjects acquire local knowledge. This reflects that: 'local knowledge is not only local in itself but, even more important, for itself' (1996, 181). Space and time are also localised quantities that are expressed and marked through ritual action:

> Space and time are themselves localized and socialized through complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation and action. We have tended to call them cosmological or ritual – terms that distract us from their active, intentional and productive character (Appadurai, 1996, 180).

In the ethnography of the temple, time is localised through ritual action performed by the clerical family: the temple bell marks the point in which the day begins and ends. Agricultural seasons are reflected in the calendar of events, marking time and at convenient points in the farming calendar. Speaking at the temple, the *danka* reflect on the weather and the likelihood of a good harvest, reflecting their common interest

and dependence on climate and the productivity of the area for survival. Within the temple, the neighbours are connected as a symbolic and religious community that is sanctified by the collective gathering and ritual actions by the priests. They are connected to one another as both neighbours and *danka* members, horizontally and inclusively; leveling out differences and suspending them as the temple becomes the central context of their activities and practices, emphasising the uniqueness of the locality as opposed to other spaces, temples, and congregations within a specific historical framework, while connecting them to a larger, and global sect discourse.

This technique bonds them as an inclusive assemblage with a shared purpose; and while links between them may be fractious, as a whole, the temple has a priority to be united for mutual benefit. This motivation adjudicates behaviour, making everyone seem equal in the ritual context, while deflecting internal divisions and re-emphasising hierarchy post-ritual. As the congregation recites the name of the Buddha together as a group, divisions are suspended; this has the effect of transcending the community, at the same time as it reaffirms it. By conforming to performances of an unchanging temple system, which upholds the core values of the neighbourhood, the temple gives an impression as a never-changing entity which will continue as it always has done, demonstrated by the hierarchical performances of gender, generation and status, sanctified by ritual that appears timeless and connects the teachings of seven hundred and fifty years to the present day – wildly contrastive to the lives played out in the empirical reality that households face on a daily basis, explored in earlier chapters.

Applying Appadurai's theories of locality to the case study, the *danka* can be categorised as part of a certain sect, at a certain temple, at a particular point in time, as opposed to other neighbourhoods, sects and nations. The temple is the setting for

ritual, events, and meals: social communications and interactions are performed and sanctioned within the context of neighbourhood and its local space. Indeed one of the successful techniques of the local temple is to take a religious philosophy with its geographical roots in the continent and make it appear uniquely specific to the local setting.

Physically, in the contemporary context, the temple attempts to reproduce the area by introducing young single people to each other through a 'speed dating' party, hoping relationships will produce a further generation of local subjects born into the neighbourhood *danka* system. Ritually, it reproduces the area by the succession of *danka* households, bound together as a reciprocal ritual community, ensuring further generations as part of the 'life-cycle care' system (Traphagan, 2003). Socially, the temple reproduces values according to gender, and generation, and of custom, etiquette and unwritten 'local rules' enacted in the temple performances. Lastly, the temple reproduces the area symbolically by protecting and preserving it, in the discourse of *'mamoru'*: acting in a capacity as a specified guardian, at the geographical centre of the community and symbolic core of the area.

In this discourse, the temple 'protects' the area intangibly, embodying a powerful status similar to that of parent over child, offering stability and security in a context that connects the temple to its neighbours, and neighbours to one another through the neighbourhood-as-*danka* system; and the temple serves the same purposes as the family does, as a 'microcosm of culture' (Appadurai, 1996). All of these activities are performed against contexts happening 'elsewhere' (Appadurai, 1996, 184) and offers a structure and feeling in the neighbourhood that is based on the continued historical reproduction of previous forms that lend continuity to the present day. The maintenance of these techniques and the sustained reproduction of

ritual and social behaviour adjudicated in the temple setting suggests to the *danka* that their neighbourhood will continue in the same way into the future – irrespective of the crushing realities of social change.

Appadurai argues that the task of producing locality – as a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of situated community – is increasingly a struggle (Appadurai, 1996, 189). If we take this view then in this sense, the temple offers misplaced illusions that a particular way of life found in the locality can be sustained in the continued performances that negate changes, even when found in the temple's own clerical family. In fact, it depends on this negotiation for its continued livelihood, and as Covell (2005) and Rowe (2011) have noted, as the *jūshoku* and temple-*danka* system is based on the household, the temple cannot manoeuver outside this system. In lieu of clear leadership from the clerics divorced from an economic agenda (an almost impossible task given the nature of the temple as a self-sustaining business, required to pay taxes to headquarters), or the possibility of a post-*danka* Buddhism, the future of the temple hangs in the balance as its sponsors literally die out.

Figure 5.7 The temple gate

5.6 Buddhism in the local system

According to the priests, teachings in the sect were often misunderstood due to various factors, including the difficulties of transmitting the 'true' meaning of Jōdo Shinshū within the wider belief system of Takachiho. Other practices connected to the shrine, local folk beliefs and embodied practices such as the *kagura* were termed harvest-based 'superstitions' according to the Buddhist priests, yet despite this disparaging attitude the clerics were also forced to concede to the syncretic system. According to the *bōmori*, Shinto and Buddhism run seamlessly together in the minds and actions of the *monto*. They believe that whatever actions performed for one, have to done for the other, and that neither should be prioritised within the syncretic system. When I asked if it was difficult to teach Buddhism in an area famed for the gods and legends, I was told that in some ways it helped, as people had a natural respect for the religious sphere and believed it was part of their duty to perform both 'Shinto' and 'Buddhist' rituals. This was why the local shaman also invited the priest for a Buddhist ritual, as it was believed that the priest had a role to play in visiting the *butsudan* to honour the ancestors.

In a temple in neighbouring Gokase town, the priest told me that: 'In japan people go to both the Shrine and the temple; but new movements like Sokka Gakkai don't permit shrine worship, they are pure and earnest. They don't sing the national anthem either, because it's seen as supportive of Shinto. It's difficult to do anything about the mix of practices. Maybe Japanese people in general don't believe in 'religion', but the core group who come to the temple do, they have *real* faith.' Additionally, the *bōmori* at the temple told me that she appreciated the lack of superstitions in the sect. She regarded many of the local people as very superstitious, yet also noted that it was difficult to demand allegiance to the temple, explaining that:

"it's their beliefs and culture, there's nothing much we can do, just keep repeating the message and hopefully they will come to it of their own accord. In a way, there's nothing much to convert to in Buddhism anyway, most of the work you have to do by yourself."

Although the parishioners may attend the temple to attend a Dharma talk by a priest in order to "study Buddhism and have fun", as the Elder in the ethnography instructed, after a discussion of the here-and-now message of the sect, when the parishioners leave the temple, they revert to more broader local expressions of *butsudan* rites and the common understanding that it is their deceased relatives, not the figure of Amida, that they are ultimately venerating at the *butsudan* and by extension at the temple setting. Indeed, as Covell (2005) has already noted, parishioners do not want to hear overly complex sermons, instead they want the priests to deliver something jovial that will 'cheer up the ancestors', reflecting the temple's core responsibility as a ritual repository, and to care for and maintain bonds with the dead. This is not only found in the local context: according to a qualitative study by Dessì, eighty percent of Jōdo Shinshū laypersons nationwide consider ancestor veneration as a fundamental value (2010, 341).[200] This neatly reveals the very real distance between sect discourse and the reality of ancestral rites as a principle motivation for participation on behalf of the *danka* that will be further explored below.

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[200] According to the priest from the Gokase temple, the majority of visits to the temple by the *danka* (outside the yearly calendar of Buddhist observances which between 50-100 attend) are to ask the priests to preside over memorials for the deceased.

Interview with priest Iwao:

How do the danka regard Buddhism and Shinto in Takachiho?

People think having lots of beliefs and doing lots of practices is a good thing – it will serve them well – so they pray to the Buddha and to the gods. It's not bad; it's just that you don't need to do all this. So I have a duty to tell them that if you're praying to the Buddha, you don't have to pray to the gods as well. I don't say you *shouldn't*, I say you don't *need* to; but they don't agree – they tell me they need to do both. Maybe because their families have always done it this way, they think it's the correct way of doing things and so they want to continue like this… They believe as soon as someone gets sick it's to do with the gods; they always need a reason in order to understand why something has occurred. But of course there's nothing we can do about a person getting sick. It's not as if they did something wrong to cause it, but this kind of thinking this is characteristic of Japanese people I'm afraid. People think that if they didn't do anything wrong then they shouldn't suffer misfortune, that's why all the gods and buddhas are treated with reverence, for protection against harm.

I saw a woman praying in front of a statue sculpted in stone beside a roadside while she was walking her dog – I guess it was a depiction of the bodhisattva Jizo. I asked her what the statue was and she told me it was 'a kami-sama.'[201] I wondered why she prayed to this one deity in particular and not to the statues of other kami figures that were placed either side?

Yes, it's strange… I really can't explain it I'm afraid. It's just that they really feel like they have to treat everything in high regard. It doesn't really seem like it has any

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[201] Kami is a general term for a god/deitiy/spirit/manifestation of non-tangible 'other-worldy' energy.

meaning and that they have to do it just because they always have. As soon as they see a roadside shrine they feel like they have to stope and pray.

Do you think they learned which deities to address from their family?

Yes, they are especially concerned that if you don't treat such-and-such a god with respect then you will offend it. Especially the god of water or fire – they believe neglect will create disturbance and disorder.

So the gods are dangerous?

Yes, without a doubt. That's why it is weird, having to do all these things for protection; it's not really religion is it? I want everyone to understand this, but from primitive times this kind of thinking existed, so they continue to practice in this way, even when they don't need it anymore, and that's why it's difficult to understand the kind of threat they feel and they don't have the courage to give it up. But *real* religion should be about personal meaning, shouldn't it. Yet everything is mixed up here, because they just welcome anything and open their arms to everything. In Japan as a whole, Christmas has become part of this too – but what are they celebrating? Without thinking about it hard enough, they just do whatever they want. I really think it's weird and strange. I want them to think it through, but I'm not powerful enough by myself to make them realise about what they're doing and why it's unnecessary.

So it's difficult to restrict people to Jōdo Shinshū orthodoxy and people still call on the gods when they are in need? (kamidanomi)[202]

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[202] *Kamidanomi* has been referred to as the 'praying for the gods in times of trouble' approach. This has been interpreted by scholars such as Reader and Tanabe (1998) who observe that Japanese people pray for this-worldy benefits 'just in case' when facing difficulties in life as part of a religious system specific to Japan.

Yes, but there is more to it than this. It may be a vague expression, and very difficult to describe, but there's a respect and longing, a kind of feeling of awe that people definitely have towards nature and primitive concepts in this area. Of course there's the *kamidanomi* (call on the gods in times of trouble) but even naturally, without thinking too much about it, they perform these actions for no specific reason or problem... It sounds weird, but it's as if they are giving thanks when they do this… I guess this is how you can describe it.

When I first came to Japan, people in the village I lived in told me to close my book so it wouldn't catch a cold. It seems there's a vague feeling that everything should be treated with reverence and respect.

(She laughs), it's funny but Japanese people treat 'things' very carefully. So the fact is that they often treasure things – especially natural things – such as rivers, trees, and the ocean. Sometimes someone simply says –"this stone is important" so everyone begins to treats it with importance and reverence. People always think there always has to be a reason for things that occur. People always talk about *unmei* (fate/destiny), but in Jōdo Shinshū there's no idea of causing the bad things that have happened to you of your own accord. The idea of a curse – it doesn't have any meaning. Probably when they can't find a reason for something that's happened then they say it is fate. For example, if the sun keeps shining then people begin to pray for rain. Sometimes by chance this happens and the rain falls but nobody caused this to happen… I think this view is very simplistic and primitive.

Are there shamans[203] in Takachiho who communicate with the ancestors?

I don't personally know of anyone directly, but sometimes I hear about their activities. The *danka* tell me they have been 'seen' by somebody. I am so shocked when they treat this casually, as a matter of course, but this idea is normal in Japan. They (shamans) tell people what they are doing wrong – why they have received misfortune or why something has happened and what they should do to correct it. So I don't say anything (to the *danka*) directly, but in my mind I am thinking "what on earth?!" But if I tell them what I think – that it's actually really bad or strange, they will be hurt, so I have to ignore it. When I was younger and tried to tell them what to do, they would say: "Ah, she's young, she doesn't know anything about it yet, she'll grow to understand". They say: "we've done it this way for a long time – since *mukāāshi*[204] (ancient times)". But when they say 'a long time' that's not the case, it's really only been about a hundred years from the Meiji era – but they still see that as *mukashi* (the old days/the past). So we can't just try and enforce it when they regard this as a tradition. We have to be careful.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

It is clear from the above interview that there are competing discourses at stake: for the *monto*, the syncretic system is inherited and part of the daily rhythm of life, passed down in narratives via family members as instructors, yet the priests have to compete with this system by alignment with national sect discourses that instruct them to encourage exclusivity and dependence on one central figure of Amida Buddha. All of the priests I met during fieldwork were quick to assert explicitly to me

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[203] The word '*itako*' is often used to refer to psychics or mediums in Japan (see Blacker 1992), but the word shaman coined from the English is also used for people who communicate with the ancestors.

[204] *Mukashi* refers to the 'old days' or 'long ago' and has no specific time frame, however, the emphasis on the last vowel implies 'since ancient times' in this context.

that the Jōdo Shinshū sect is aligned with 'rational modernity' (over superstition and idolisation of objects); and it soon became clear that the priests were implicitly opposed to 'traditional folk beliefs and superstitions' that were looked upon pejoratively.[205]

However, despite Priest Iwao's beliefs that the local people have 'misunderstood' that practices have a longer history than a hundred years, this is not strictly the case. In fact, the local perspective is much more grounded in the empirical reality and outside of the political and economic discourses—that religious institutions have played a key role in—throughout Japanese history. Conversely, it was only with the Meiji government that Shinto and Buddhism came to be separated in a process called *shinbutsu bunri*. In this undertaking, Buddhist monks could no longer serve a dual function as Shinto priests, yet in folk belief, *kami* and Buddha remained unseparated. When Buddhism was first introduced into Japan, statues of the Buddha were believed to possess the power to bring about worldly benefits magically. Buddhist clerics were expected to recite sutras constantly and to offer magical incantations for all conceivable occasions (Kitagawa, 1984).[206]

Anthropologists have argued that from the layperson's perspective, traditions remain complementary, each serving a religious function, typically with the Shinto shrine for life cycle rites alongside rituals for the community; and Buddhism for family funeral services. These practices can still be seen today as it has been argued

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[205] This attitude is cultivated by sect research centres in their contemporary analysis of the Buddhist scriptures but could also be seen as a product of modernity with which the sect regards itself as in close alignment. Furthermore, this prejudice could be a legacy of the contact with Christianity in the '*sakoku*' period when Japan was supposedly closed to the world, with the exception of trading ports such as Dejima in Nagasaki. Jesuits and Franciscans spread the concept of God as a creator and by 1605 there were 750,000 Christians in Japan (Nelson, 1996). Many sponsored schools and Christianity became synonymous with westernisation and notions of polytheistic *kami* came to be regarded as primitive by intellectuals of the time (Inoue, 1998, 9). This legacy still survives in the Buddhist context.

[206] Reciting the name of Amida was also used as a form of magic (Hori, I. 1968).

that people in Japan are 'Born Shinto, Die Buddhist' (with a Christian wedding in between) (Reader, 1991). However, when I asked the priests about the services they offered at the temple outside funerals and memorials a different picture emerged. I was told that the temple also offered rituals for the life cycle, such as after the birth of a baby and that they would never consider using any other institution for rites of passage themselves. The priests argued that the shrine was 'just better at promoting itself for these services, and always advertising' which is why they considered Shinto had become associated with life cycle rituals at the expense of the Buddhist temple.[207]

In pre-modernity, due to the idea that everything was potentially a manifestation of the sacred power of the *kami*, the early Japanese people never developed anthropomorphic representations of them. The symbol of the sacred in a human-inspired form (seen in the depiction of Amida Buddha) was a revelation, and changed ideas of the divine at the time (Kitagawa, 1984, 138); and the current manifestation of roadside shrines with depictions of deities from various traditions are a legacy of this. Therefore, although the contemporary discourse embedded in Jōdo Shinshū teachings preaches against idolatry, or believing that 'any-*thing*' is imbued with a sacred power (Tanaka, 1997), these practices are a legacy of traditions that were co-created in an former historical period that still have meaning for local people today, irrespective of the particularities in doctrine that their priests teach and wish to prioritise for sect based and politico-economic goals at the centre.

These circumstances raise contentious issues between local people and their priests, and there is also a coherent theme in the continual relevance of local or 'folk'

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[207] This is a contentious point; priests in Kagoshima prefecture told me that there would be no time for a temple to branch out for further rites already being inundated with funerals and memorials. Despite the emphasis on Shinto as a 'life cycle' religion I also attended a Shinto funeral during fieldwork because the household was dominantly Shinto, not affiliated to a Buddhist sect and therefore would not have entertained a Buddhist funeral.

beliefs practiced alongside Buddhism on the part of the *danka*. While the priests regard local people as very superstitious, they realise they cannot demand allegiance to the temple; and also recognise that this local belief system ultimately benefits them. Shinto, Buddhism and its associated folk practices run seamlessly together in the minds and actions of the *danka*. They believe that whatever actions are performed for one tradition, has to done for, or at least include the other, and that neither should be prioritised. The strong feeling that people have for the gods, shaped by the status of Takachiho in mythic narratives, was beneficial for the Buddhist temples as local people had a natural respect for 'religion' and 'tradition' in general and this corresponded to participation in Buddhism as part of the wider religiosity that was the norm of practice in the community.

Figure 5.8 *Kagura* performance at a community centre

5.7 The Monkey story

One story I was told during fieldwork by a priest who wanted to illuminate the 'superstitious' and contrary nature of the *danka* is described below.

> "The local government had offered a reward to farmers who were prepared to shoot the monkeys that were coming down from the mountains and slowly encroaching on the territory and destroying crops. There had been lots of complaints and the government offered an incentive of fifty thousand yen[208] for every monkey. Then it turned out that one of the farmers who had shot a monkey and received a monetary reward became very ill shortly afterwards. Everyone started talking about it. The locals were already concerned about his actions and didn't agree that he should be shooting monkeys in the first place, but then when they found out that his hospital bill came to exactly fifty thousand yen they had a field day. Everyone said it was because of the monkey and refused to participate in the government cull, they stopped co-operating with the town hall, who were powerless to do anything about it. Nobody shot any monkeys after that."

The above narrative demonstrates a particular cosmology of cause and effect, an awareness of the importance of a spiritual economy and ecology of balance, and which local people consider themselves part of. The story of the monkey, (who is often perceived as a messenger of the gods) although deemed 'superstitious' by the priests is in essence grounded in notions of conservation and in accordance with enculturated rules about how to treat the environment, and the sphere in which they live and cultivate for their survival. In the recent past local people have been affected by the arsenic pollution of the landscape by corporate mining companies, affecting health of inhabitants and tainting the source of their livelihood, (Ishinishi, 1977). After the event, the prefectural government then sent officials to 'encourage' the community affected not to pursue a lawsuit, bamboozling them with legal jargon in order to implicitly force compliance. Indeed 'rational modernity' in this particular

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[208] Between two hundred and four hundred pounds sterling, dependent upon exchange rates.

guise, has been regarded by local people at a basic level as antithetical to local concerns in the past; and possibly, still in the present.

Furthermore, monkeys have increasingly been encroaching on human territory as their habitat has been undermined by deforestation instigated by national government projects (Feldhoff, 2002b), and are now seeking food closer to spaces near farming households, which in the past would have a natural buffer zone by virtue of the forests as a physical boundary in the landscape: one which humans and animals seldom trespassed. Monkeys play an important role in the symbolic imagination in Japan and are often associated with danger (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1987).[209] These very tangible dynamics of cause and effect play out physically at the level of empirical experience for local people: and their supposed 'folk beliefs' and 'superstitions' (or more concretely techniques of understanding how to live in accordance and cooperation with the wider ecology of which they are part), are key in reminding them to respect boundaries that impact their lives on daily, tangible, irrevocable levels; and the monkey story served as a warning narrative that this delicate balance between man and nature had been foolishly trespassed for the sake of modernist principles tied to economic and political profit, which ultimately do not benefit local people who have to live with the aftermath in the destroyed spaces that these policies create.

Therefore, is clear that for local people, the priests and the government can only tell them part of the story, and provide certain services; yet other techniques provide explanations and give meaning to events people cannot explain themselves but are closely engaged with. As Moore (2011) has noted: science deals with the

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[209] With the declining demographic in rural Japan wild animals are now venturing into human spaces as the boundaries between wild and cultivated areas diminish. Wild animals have transmitting diseases to pets that are then passed onto owners, a number of whom have died in the past year.

'unexplained' and faith (in this case a cosmology of cause and effect, misfortune and destiny) deals with the 'unexplainable'. Local people have a large repertoire of religiosity from which to draw in order to construct their system of understanding about the natural and 'super' natural worlds, and they utilise these techniques in order to survive and live-in-the-world. Syncretism is the fundamental basis of religious practice in Takachiho, and if the modernist Jōdo Shinshū principles were submitted to and followed in their entirety, the syncretic axis on which the cosmology of Takachiho is based would be tilted; and lives and practices on both a practical and conceptual level would be affected tangibly as a result.

Kitagawa (1987) argues that the Japanese worldview conceptualises life as a series of concentric circles and harmony of contrasts, which do not separate sacred and profane. Furthermore, this is noted as a legacy of previous belief structures.

> One of the basic features of the early Japanese religious universe was its unitary meaning-structure, a structure which affirmed the belief that the natural world is the original world. According to this paradigm, the total cosmos—including physical elements such as fire, water, wood, and stone, as well as animals and celestial bodies—is permeated by sacred, or kami, nature (See Kitagawa 1980, pp.27-42). In such a world-view, there were no rigid lines demarcating various activities such as religion, commerce, arts, and recreation. It is not surprising, therefore, that human beings and kami of multiple forms were believed to constitute a single community.
>
> (Kitagawa, 1984, 129)

In Takaciho, these original 'basic features' of ontology and cosmology remain in actions, ideas and feelings that are embodied within, and expressed and manifested by, ritual in all its syncretic forms. The legacy of these original concepts has changed over time, yet remnants of these ideas remain, and the views which they engender hold a specific philosophy concerning the place of man-in-the-universe. These ideas govern and shape actions even in the contemporary period, and in parallel with political and economic agendas embodied in a modernity of which local people are also part. These central concepts are held by people raised in the area, and they inherit

them as narratives while expressing them in embodied actions (such as stopping at a deity to pray and give thanks while walking the dog); and these should be taken into consideration when attempting to untangle and comprehend the depth of religiosity in Takachiho as a whole.

In the above interpretation, it appears that a rich, deep, syncretic religiosity can still be found both in the daily lives of the household and within the wider community as a whole; and motivations for ritual action (and participation in Buddhism) depends first and foremost on the cosmological beliefs of local people underscored by efficacy and cause and effect outcomes. For local people, the practices run seamlessly; and past practices reflects those performed in the present. Such actions contradict notions of linear time, as rituals are often woven around the agricultural seasons in a cyclical calendar, which is reproduced through generations by transmitting knowledge within a household family that moves through time. Such ritual actions are part of an axis on which life turns, and which local people are clearly keen not to disrupt or contradict – anxious that they will not be able to continue such actions in the future, alongside the inability to reproduce the household. This is their core worry, as the interview with Priest Iwao has illuminated. For the *danka*, there is efficacy in the actions performed at the household *butsudan,* and by extension, in the temple setting. Such rituals ensure protection and continued reproduction of a family and a business, and the succession of ancestral lands; and this is the main reason they continue to sponsor the temple, with the priests as professional religious providers who can officiate over specifics.

The current inhabitants of the household have received the land and business embodied in the *ie*. It is significant that as members of the household move away from the land they inherited from ancestors, they are also motivated to return, or

remain sporadically linked to territory. In this process, people are keenly aware that it becomes their responsibility, both physically and ideologically, to maintain a household that will be reproduced and succeeded by future generations. The maintenance of the relationship between living family, and the intangible worlds of the ancestors, are conducive to protecting the household, and facilitates reproduction of the *ie* and its members. As each household performs the same actions with the prerogative of ensuring the legacy of the family farm or business for their children, with the continued protection from the spiritual world in which the ancestors are now part, the total neighbourhood and wider society is reproduced. In this way, a whole society based on households will be generated for the next generations through socio-ritual processes and an ancestor-based consciousness.

As Ozawa-de Silva shows in her discussion on Japanese ideas of ontology, contemporary Western sociological analysis depends on a Cartesian split of body and mind. She argues that: 'British sociology of the body is still characterised by ethnocentrism and the not fully recognized or addressed limitations of its Cartesian-rationalist philosophical ancestry' (2002, 22). However, contemporary Japanese philosophers in contrast, 'draw freely from religious traditions as living forces which shape the organization and perspectives of Japanese culture' (2002, 23) and she suggests that this could be a useful addition to Western sociology. Ozawa-de Silva notes that oppositions of nature/culture, subject/object, sociology/biology are alien to Japanese thought historically, and that contemporary philosophers engage in a framework that is holistic. Ozawa-de Silva argues that this historical legacy of a unitary perspective allows a perspective whereby the Japanese view:

> Transcends conventional social constructivism; allows the biological, the psychological and the social to be seen as a unity; and is non-dualistic, transcending the cruder forms of materialism by seeing embodiment as non-

To apply this, in the reverse, to Western scholarship, it becomes apparent that inherent, unconscious divisions are prioritised in the current conceptual framework – such as in the dichotomy between practice and belief – which is then implanted into the Japanese context; yet it is difficult to quantify 'belief' in any context at all (Needham, 1972). When generally applied to the Japanese case, anthropologists have tended to look at that what can be observed and find ritual, which can be theorised upon from the Durkheimian mould. Yet Ozawa-de Silva shows that the *unseen* is an important component of Japanese thought; and this should not be overlooked when considering Japanese religiosity in general – and particularly in a place such as Takachiho: where the surface structure and the internal conditions can be completely at odds, yet appear, at first glance, in accordance. What is the role of Buddhism within this wider framework and why did Buddhist doctrine become opposed to local beliefs?

5.8 Buddhism and the status quo

Figure 5.9 Overview of the temple complex

The first Buddhist sutra was introduced to Japan from the continent via Korea in 538 CE (Bowring, 2005, 1). Buddhist monks brought over sutras and images of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and temples were built to house them. Buddhism was initially one method among a host of Chinese practices[210] (Como, 2009; Inoue, N. 1998). These modes of belief were accepted without resistance, because there was a lack of strong competing intellectual or religious ideologies at the time (Kitagawa, 1984, 346). Buddhism was accepted in its Chinese, not original Indian form, and the Japanese Buddhists did not make effort to translate the scriptures into Japanese until the 1900s

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[210] Including Confucian, Taoist, Yin-Yang and five-element theory – legacies of which are now categorised togther as 'folk beliefs'.

(Kitagawa, 1963, 53-4).[211] The early Buddhist teachers were mostly Korean with limited Japanese language, and due to linguistic barriers only a small group of intellectual Japanese:[212] 'could comprehend the intellectual content of lofty Buddhist doctrines and philosophies during Buddhism's initial period in Japan' (Kitagawa, 1984, 136).

The concept of *kami* was also developed alongside Buddhism at this time; including the idea that *kami* could be saved by Buddhism. Additionally, *kami* protected the Buddhist Dharma, and in this mutual division of labour, shrine-temple complexes developed (Inoue, N. 1998, 4).[213] By the fourteenth century, Shinto scholars had established that buddhas were the manifestation of Shinto *kami*. The ideology of *Shin-butsu* – that *kami* and Buddha save people through mutual effort or as a single entity – became recognised and is still accepted today (Inoue, N. 1998, 5).[214] It is therefore important to understand the historical and political implications and legacies that are deeply embedded in Japanese Buddhism, from its creation to its internal principles, that still underscore and are manifested in temple life today; and which explains why there is both resistance, adaptation, amalgamation, but ultimately an 'othering' of the Buddhist temple in the community by local people *even while* the

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[211] As Kitagawa observes: "Buddhism was initially accepted in Japan for cultural and political reasons as much as for magico-religious reasons, first by the influential uji groups and later by the Imperial court. Lavish temples were built, elegant Buddhist statues were imported or created, a series of scriptures were copied, and colorful rituals were performed mostly to gain mundane benefits, but very few efforts were made to understand the subtleties of doctrine" Kitagawa, 1984, 138.

[212] The intellectuals of the time were mostly descendants of Korean emigrants (Kitagawa, 1984).

[213] Alongside the hierarchy of *kami,* the *honji suijaku* developed – which discriminated between the eternal Buddha who transcends the world and the historical Buddha born in India.

[214] These historical factors explain the ways in which Japanese religion has been conceptualised and defined throughout the modern anthropological literature as having a dual division of labour for 'this worldly benefits' at shrines and temples.

temple serves a broader purpose of producing important socio-cultural principles (such as the maintenance of the household) as a function in the locality.

Historically, Buddhism has been regarded as a supporter of the status quo, and specifically the state and its policies. Kitagawa (1984) argues that Japanese Buddhism is nationalistic in character, concerned with the 'protection of the nation' in modernity. According to Covell (2005, 65-73), Buddhism has been historically linked as protector of the state even further back, since the Heian period (794-1185). Buddhist sects have emphasised their usefulness as a 'servant of the state' as a key strategy in their remaining continuance and influence. From Imperial Japan's war with China (1894-1895) to the Second World War, Buddhists had the opportunity to serve their fellow citizens (and the state) through comforting soldiers, increasing support for the state's efforts in the community, taking care of families and holding memorial services. Furthermore, young Buddhist priests during World War Two worked in fields and factories and in military service.[215]

Covell (2005) argues that priests either argued the need to fight through the interpretation of doctrinal precepts, or were vocal in their outright support of war; and although some priests protested, they were in the minority. The roles that priests adopted in war were passively accepted through: 'twists in doctrinal interpretation', whereby priests were instructed to do their duties as 'citizens', supported by doctrinal arguments such as: not *actively choosing* the situation, but *complying* with it in order to do their duty (2005, 71). In the contemporary period, doctrine has been galvanised once more, and more positively this time, nonviolence has been promoted in the postwar period in the Jōdo Shinshū sect through the active declaration against war:

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[215] Buddhism has been connected with politics since the policing of the populace in the Tokugawa period in order to combat the threat of Christianity (Marcure, 1985). The *danka* system tied to the Emperor as a symbolic father (Rowe, 2011) and the support for Japanese war efforts throughout history.

again supported by doctrinal interpretations (and also the teachings of the founder Shinran: Tanaka, 1997).

Indeed, the temple has a history of adapting to the contemporary social situation and accommodating other practices, and has been continually shaped by political and economic agendas.[216] Davis (1989) argues that Buddhism has been ambiguous enough to be interpreted in many different ways for political purposes and to encourage modernisation historically. Davis observes that temple institutions are purposefully ambiguous in their teachings in order to comply with society or political aims that ultimately benefit their agendas. In this way, temples are more likely to adapt to the society as 'bystander' institutions, or 'collaborators' in social change, and not as initiators. Furthermore, Budhism responds to change by modifying its ideas and practices to accommodate wider society, with the ultimate purpose of serving its own needs at the forefront (Davis, 1989, 335). Perhaps this is why temples have been regarded as passive during the Meiji period, and colluded in collaboration with modern nationalist discourses in the past (Davis, 1989; Yoshida, Tomoko 2006, 398).

Although Davis' analysis is based on a historical reading of Meiji Japan, there are correlations in the current climate temple environment. In the present day, Hardacre argues that with the exemption of Jōdo Shinshū, temples were 'passive' about issues surrounding rituals for aborted or miscarried foetuses, because they do not want to become 'politically involved', or 'upset parishioners' (1997, 155). However, passivity could also be a technique of flexibility and strategy: in the same way that the temple accommodates the local system to maintain sponsorship in the present day, aware that it is one part of a syncretic religiosity which it needs to

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[216] This includes being amalgamation into a syncretic system, divided in 1868 and suppressed during State Shinto. Temple certification was abolished in 1872 alongside criminalisation of Buddhist cremations. Ancestor worship became the cornerstone of the Emperor system (supported and embodied by the extended family grave). Postwar land reforms in the 1950s also led to the decline of temple finances (Rowe, 2011, 23-24).

negotiate in order to remain attractive. This can be seen as a historical pattern, as Buddhist sect teachings from the pre-modern period set themselves apart from 'this-worldly-benefits' associated with the gods, while emphasising that other beliefs should be 'tolerated and accommodated' (Yoshida, Tomoko, 2006, 404-405); allowing for a dual system that culminated in life cycle/death rites without conflict.

In the historical period, the Buddhist temple tends to be a passive agent that supports the political and economics status quo as a strategy to remain. The legacy of this history still prevails, but it has shifted form. In the current context, Buddhism has been allied with modernity and postmodernity across the globe, and its philosophy has been separated from practice, and is now enjoying popularity among the global cosmopolitan elite. It has the ability to shape-shift in form, as the Buddhist message is flexible and always open to ambiguities and interpretation. Throughout fieldwork, it became clear that the priests would pursue whatever was best for their household temple as a business, while balancing their precarious and mercurial middleman status between national sect hierarchy/orthodoxy with local concerns/beliefs. For example, although the priests were instructed to wean the *danka* away from 'superstitions' (local cosmology) as instructed from above (from the direction of the headquarters), and while interviews describe that there was an attempt to encourage local people 'into the faith' and away from syncretic practice, conversely, participant observation showed that the priests never addressed these issues in any sincere attempt; and this can only reflect the fact that for local priests in the area, doctrine and orthodoxy will only ever be secondary to rites in exchange for sponsorship. This is compounded by the fact that they are not 'Engaged Buddhists' and bound by a system whereby future heirs may not want to take on the role, and furthermore, may regard it as a burden. Despite this, the household has to keep running, and nobody wants to be

the last of the family line.

In fact, when there was talk of a priest from another town chiding her *danka* over the use of amulets, the priests were concerned that such directness and lack of prudence was both ineffectual (because the *danka* would not listen), and a source of potential problems (if the *danka* decided to leave). This response reflects the historical origins of the associated practices of Shinto and Buddhism, where suppressing folk beliefs has been a political as well as sectarian based principle.[217] In alignment with the economic-political project of modernity pursued at the national level, local beliefs are regarded as feudal; and as Schnell (1995) has noted, in the past, folk practices have been used for political resistance and to challenge the dominance of hierarchies imposed on them from above. Indeed, the alignment of the temple with modernity (and by extension a neo-liberalist agenda) does not reflect local concerns, and instead could be seen to marginalise peripheral areas like Takachiho further. Yet where do local people fit into this discourse of modernity as an economic agenda?

5.9 Counter-resistance

The local *danka* and the temple parishioners are cognizant of the role that the temple has played in pre-modern and recent history, and continues to play in its allegiances to mainstream discourses found at the centre;[218] and there is a counteractivity to this

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[217] During the period of State Shinto, deities were appropriated as common ancestors of the 'Japanese people' by the government for political ends; yet Folk Shinto is considered a personal system that was discredited as 'superstitious' and suppressed by the state (Isomae, 2005, 240). Buddhism has also been an important historical ally for the state and as we have seen in this case study, priests still attempt to separate 'superstitions' from '*real* religion', although they are compromised in this project as they rely on their *danka* for funds and receive little direction from the upper hierarchy, as Rowe (2004) has noted. In the contemporary era, local temples reflect and endorse the 'modernist project' (Asad, 2003) through their links to the centre and sect headquarters.

[218] Two of the central government officials, sent to 'clear-up' the complaints over the mine poisoning incident, married into the extended clerical family - and thus the temple remains associated with this issue.

power in the actions of local people. Although eager to perform rituals 'correctly' when in the temple setting or when the priests visit (as Rowe, 2004 has also shown), local people maintain two systems in one, and keep the priests and their opinions at a distance. Furthermore, as the ethnography shows, they create and generate the position of priests, ignore its central teachings, and keep them in line in order to neutralise the power of the temple so it can be utilised and set to work for ancestral rites. For local people, the temple holds a complex and ambiguous position: on the one hand it is an important social, ritual and public space, a repository of history, local culture and a technique in reproducing its neighbourhood through the discourse of the ancestors, as well as a 'resting place' for the dead 'protected' in its mausoleum, and remains a key provider of ancestor rites. Yet despite this, the temple also inhabits a liminal position, outside the standard norms of religiosity and belief.

Local people are not passive recipients of the temple's message, and they utilise the services of the temple to reflect local principles and beliefs: as already argued, the temple and the priests are regarded as a tool for this broader purpose. In the local discourse, temples are *peripheral*, not *central* to local practices, and this is reflected by the lack of parishioners: only a minority attend and practice its Buddhist calendar of observances, while the majority make use of it almost exclusively for memorials. In chapter three it was revealed that priests even *ask* the *danka* if they can visit the households for *omairi* – not the other way around. Furthermore, local practices on the whole are possible without the middle-man of the priest; and in the

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"Old arsenic mine polluting Miyazaki Prefecture water source" – Japan Times, February 14, 1996. More than 30 years after an arsenic mine in Takachiho was closed, samples from water originating at the mine show arsenic levels as high as 8 times the acceptable limit. Local authorities hope to seal the source of contamination. Farmers are still permitted to use the water, as there are no standards for arsenic in farm products. The Toroku mine opened in 1920 and produced arsenic acid for poison gas. It later compensated victims of chronic arsenic poisoning. Eighty people have died. *News summary by Jeff Durbin*, available at: http://www.jeffdurbin.org/Water.htm (accessed 17 July 2014).

urban sphere the ritual professional is being replaced by a secular funerary director. At the local level, household members maintain the *kamidana* and *butsudan* inside the home, and the priest is only invited at specific times, or not at all. At *kagura* festivals, narratives connected to the sacred landscape allow a direct experience of the divine, without the medium of a priest – or an institution – as local people perform parts in the mythic re-telling. The majority of *kagura* performances happen within neighbourhood households, performed by local people (not priests) and cosmological narratives and practices are inherited within families, as Priest Iwao noted.

In short, Temple doctrine and sect orthodoxy is of minor importance in comparison with the folk practices and mythological narratives that have been inherited since pre-historical records, and are expressive of local cosmology connected to the landscape that still exists today, informing daily life. In the long view, even a temple with a four hundred and fifty year history is a 'newcomer' to the area. This dynamic, coupled with the fact that the temple has been closely aligned with political hegemony historically and is now aligned with modernity as a political-economic project that 'dis-enchants the world' (Asad, 2003, 95) and relegates the ordinary people outside mainstream, mainland, discourses as 'backwards' and 'superstitious', means that local people are reluctant to embrace the temple in totality.

Instead, true to syncretic form, the religious institution has remained in order to serve households in venerating their ancestors. This is compatible with a broader local discourse in Takachiho where ancestors are key (beginning with Amaterasu, the sun goddess). From this perspective, priests will always be considered liminal, because they are outside the locality's dominant cosmological view; yet as the ethnography has shown, their power is neutralised, and any negative effects minimised in order to be put to work by the neighbourhood as a useful tool in

reproducing the household through ancestor consciousness, which serves as a buffer for some of the more negative impacts of modernity, and can be considered as a separate system embedded within the broader project of centre-led state engendered modernity.

According to de Certeau (1984), power is about territory and boundaries, in which the weapons of the strong are classification, delineation, and division (so-called strategies); while the weak use furtive movement, short cuts and routes (so called tactics) to contest this spatial domination. And as Foucault infamously noted in the History of Sexuality 1: Where there is power there is resistance. In the wider local context, while the temple may be an embodiment of the political project of modernity, connected to the centre and its principles through sect hierarchy, local people skillfully resist this domination, and the temple's core message; amalgamating the priests insead into the norms and 'local rules' based around the maintenance of the area, while putting them to work for their more significant personal agendas.

What became evident through fieldwork was that the priests were enculturated into the positon and localised through their interactions with the *danka*. As previous scholarship has noted: 'their livelihood is based upon an intricate web of relations with *danka* members and the local community; should they throw that relationship off balance, the fate of their temple could change radically' (Covell, 2005, 101-102). This is compounded by the fact that the core parishioners have a formidable say over temple finances. As the ethnography demonstrates, major decisions in the temple have to be agreed by the Elders and core members as co-signatories and co-owners.

As the head priest told me: "it's the *danka* who decide on the *jūshoku* – they determine everything – not the other way around. They can always just get up and leave so we are dependent on them". This was reiterated by his father, the previous

head priest – "We depend on the danka – without them we can't eat", he adds for emphasis. Indeed, this is symbolised by the offering of sacks of rice that are placed before the altar at temple ceremonies, with the envelope sent by the temple attached (inscribed with the name of the household providing the donation that keeps the clerical family stocked up on rice). However, although it has been argued that priests are profiteers, it is important to note that the core *danka* are well aware of the financial aspects of the temple: they are part of its decision making body. The *danka* understand they are 'keeping' the temple, and they use this point to control the behaviour of the priests. Priests develop a poor reputation if they are seen 'out drinking' in the town, and if they are seen to profit from the labour of the parishioners, and people know that their donations are by extension funding the clerical lifestyle, which means the local temples are keen to downplay any display of wealth they may have. Although this scenario has afforded the priests in urban areas a reputation for squandering cash, in Takachiho, the priests have to perform a lifestyle in keeping with their surroundings.

For the parishioners, the local temple functions as a protective institution for the ancestors, and is a conservative force in the area. It is the responsibility of the clerical family to uphold these values, and the *danka* to remind them of this post-ritual as patrons. In the past, the priests told me that the role was revered, but if so, this has now been lost. In the historical context, priests controlled the populace; in the contemporary era, reverence for the priest has been replaced by accountability for their every action which is under close scrutiny – and it is now the temple who have to acquiesce to the wider population and submit to its rules, or lose its footing – and the tensions involved in negotiating local and sect ideology is at the interface of conflict and tension within the temple setting.

Summary

This chapter shows that despite modernity, rituals in the temple context continue under the management of the clerical family assisted by their core parishioners. They continue for two different reasons – depending on whose narrative is considered. For the *danka*, the temple is used as a *strategy* in the continuation of the principles of ancestor ritual seen in chapter three: its role is to reproduce the locality, protect the area, and serve as an institutional repository that is able to care for the living and dead, and thus play a role in ensuring the continuation of the local area. This technique becomes even more important as local, national and global shifts happen.

As the temple and its ceremonies caters for an aging and elderly group, promoting continuity over change can be seen as a temple *tactic* which feeds into notions of security, and which helps sustain the position of the priests as caretakers who ensure continuance and succession of the temple that assists in the execution of ancestor rites. From the clerical family perspective, temple rituals ensure that they, in turn, survive as a household business, and therefore (in the same way as *danka* households) Buddhist ritual ensures the reproduction, succession and continuation of the temple as a household business for the clerical family as well, with the *jūshoku* at the healm. This is because the temple's structural dynamics are based on the household system, which mirrors the internal structure of the neighbouring households, and both are inextricably linked. Furthermore, history, politics, economics – and last but not least – concepts surrounding the *unseen* (usually termed 'belief' in Western literature), are crucial in order to understand how the contemporary local situation came about; and how it continues alongside a broader context of state-led secular modernity.

Chapter Six: Changing clerical families

This chapter will explore the situation in three different clerical families in order to demonstrate how changes reflective of wider society are taking place in the inner sphere of temple life. As previous chapters have indicated, the clerical family depends on the inherited structures of the *jūshoku* and *bōmori* system, where ascribed role in the family dictates the ritual role performed in the public sphere of temple life. This chapter will demonstrate that despite changes occurring in the clerical family in terms of nationality, gender and sexual identity, emphasis remains upon the norm of reproducing historical structures. These are embedded not only in the locality, but also in the sect principles of Jōdo Shinshū, where unlike 'world-renouncing' sects, priests are expected to marry and raise a family: following the example of the founder Shinran. This chapter will show the negotiations and necessary adaptations that take place within the inner sphere of daily clerical family life in order for the temple to be succeeded by further generations within the same family. It will also show the inherent difficulties and contradictions in reproducing an outer form for public consumption in which inner realities are not aligned in private.

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The Kamino temple household is a transnational one by virtue of the marriage between the eldest son of the clerical family and a British national – who first came to teach English in Takachiho via the Japan Exchange Teaching Programme (JET) twenty years ago. This programme is part of a top-down government policy of 'internationalisation', whereby recent graduates from mainly western countries are employment in schools and government institutions (McConell, 2000, x). Although the programme encourages short-term, selective immigration, the temple case shows

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how the programme has engendered unexpected results in the guise of the British *bōmori*. In the localised context, the marriage between the *jūshoku* and *bōmori* caused considerable problems at the time. Almost two decades years later, they have three children aged ten, fourteen and sixteen. Furthermore, the British *bōmori* also studied for *tokudo* (ordination for the Buddhist priesthood), and the higher ranking *kiyōshi* (teacher license), which allows the priest to give Dharma talks at other temples, and is a requirement for becoming a head priest[219]. The *bōmori* has been a *yome*, living as part of the extended family of priests with her mother-in-law and father-in-law, since she married the *jūshoku* in the mid 1990s. Below is an oral narrative in which she describes some of the experiences in adapting to temple life, not only as a non-Japanese living as part of an extended family household, but also as non-Japanese priest in a notoriously conservative, hierarchical environment.

<center>***</center>

"I married my husband because I loved him. I knew about the temple and had visited several times. I got the impression it was a place for young people to hang out and have a firefly festival and parties… I guess I could still organise one of those now if I wanted to. My introduction to temple life was through events and parties. When we were dating, he brought me down to Miyazaki to meet his sisters. Straight away everyone said 'no way', as soon as they met me; and later said they didn't want us to marry. When my husband was younger he was a rebel and didn't want to be in Takachiho, so he went to stay at his aunt's, then nearly got expelled over a boat

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[219]*Kyōshi* are referred to as 'doctrinal instructors' by Covell (2005). Doctrinal instructors have taken the basic ordination and initiations required from those who wish to become head priests. They can also perform ceremonies (Covell, 2005, 115).

incident, then was sent to Kyoto to study for the priesthood – where he went to all the bars and clubs. So he knew what he was doing in marrying me.

I got what I bargained for, except I didn't expect my sister-in-law to have such an influence. She can't understand me, or why her brother would marry me – it's like a thorn in her side. My mother-in-law did everything she could to split us up in the beginning, including spreading rumours about the family so I wouldn't want to marry into the temple. She was completely against the marriage. I'll never be happy because of my mother-in-law. People in town ask if our relationship has got better compared to how it was before, and it has, but it still makes things difficult. Eight years ago we had an argument about the children who were playing in her kitchen when I was with them downstairs. She lost her temper and told us all to get out. She never apologised, and I have never really forgiven her for that. After that I vowed never to go down there unless I was invited or I had to help with preparation for the temple. Even if I go down I announce myself… I think she's probably forgotten all about the argument by now and wonders why I don't go down… It's hard to live like this, especially at New Year when all the family is downstairs, laughing and spending time together, and I'm upstairs alone with the dog (she shrugs).

I met my husband when we sat next to each other at the high school when I was an ALT and he was teaching Japanese, and it went from there. We had to keep it a secret for a long time. The *monto* got together at the temple for a meeting with the Elders to see if we could get married. Everyone moaned and groaned about it, but finally they accepted it because my husband was nearing forty and they were worried there wouldn't be another generation for the temple. I quickly had two sons after the marriage – an heir and a spare – then when my second son was three years old I

decided to take *tokudo*[220]. At the time I was really unhappy. Motherhood was not the be-all and end-all. Once I had children everyone expected me just to sit around and spend all my time with the kids, but I wanted to get out of the house, and I needed something more than that, so I decided to take *tokudo*. I went to Kyoto for a two-week internment and it was like a school trip: we had to run around, men with shaved heads, women symbolically shaved, it was really good fun. I took the same exams as everyone else. There was also another guy there from the States there who had inherited a temple in Kumamoto but couldn't speak any Japanese. I was helping translate for him. He quit eventually – he didn't know anything about the language, the culture… I could understand it and looked foreign, he looked Japanese and couldn't understand any of it, and we had a translator for the exam. It was actually a really fun time in my life (she smiles at the memory), and I could escape the house and learn more about myself.

Tokudo is a really good thing to do for yourself anyway. I really had to think about my life during *tokudo*, it was a really good experience. So after that I decided it was up to me to change the situation and not just sit around and be depressed with the kids and my husband. They were not going to change I realised – so I had to. After I came back, life went on as normal and the family were pleased I had taken the ordination, as I could help out at the temple and do services – and it's just a good thing to have generally. For my first memorial service, I had to do about three in a day. I had never done one before and I was really nervous: the whole etiquette of going into houses. Becoming a priest is the ultimate door opener really, but it also stops people coming in (she mimes a gate coming down). Before that, some of the old guys used to harass me and treat me like a hostess when we had events at the temple

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[220] Ordination for the priesthood.

and they'd been drinking; but they can't do that if I'm wearing robes. I don't mind the *ningen kankei*[221] that goes on in a temple that people often complain about either. I like being a priest as people listen to me – nobody listens at home – and I can get out of the house: it gives me freedom. I don't mind the phone much either, often it doesn't even ring. When I give a speech at another temple I get to be a princess for the day; people listen and I can talk about my life and the difficulties I've had. The *monto*[222] are interested, especially when I first came out. I gave lots of talks all over the place around Japan, and was really popular because it was such an unusual situation, and everyone wanted to know about me.

Everyone in the family was happy with my ordination, but then I decided to take the next level – *kyōshi* – to become a teacher, and they didn't want that. They said I was being *wagamama*[223] for wanting to take it further, and said it wasn't necessary. But I decided to do it anyway. The other temple wives spread rumours that I did 'an easy foreigners exam' (she pulls a face), which isn't true. I think they're jealous of me, and the freedom I have. My husband shares the childcare and housework, which they just can't understand. My mother-in-law thinks he's way too nice to me, she's always complaining about it. Her husband didn't treat her well, he was notorious for having affairs – one woman ended up homeless when her husband found out. Everyone knew about them, she only lived up the road, and yet he still never did anything about it, even when her husband chucked her out of her house… She thinks mine should be the same, I guess.

Then there's other women in the area that have taken the teacher's license too:

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[221] Interpersonal relationships.

[222] The sect's category for *danka*, core parishioners, Elders, and Women's Association members.

[223] Selfish, egotistic.

one *bōmori* took *kyōshi* because of her husband's manic depression, so she could take over the temple if anything happened to him… Through studying I began thinking that the here and now is important, not why we're here or what happens after. The things I can understand about Jōdo Shinshū I like: I often talk with my husband about theology – sometimes he steals my ideas for sermons. We are supposed to talk from our own lives in order to be good at it, so living with me gives him lots of material for his speeches, he always has something to say about what I've done or said recently, that everyone finds hilarious.

The *monto*[224] at the local level acknowledge female priests. I learned all these obscure rituals for ceremonies I will never use, like how to ordain a head priest, but they would never ask me to do it. The middle level of the temple hierarchy is anti-women, but the top level at Honganji are fine.[225] Only somebody who has the *kyōshi* license can become the head priest and run the temple. I'm more qualified than my mother-in-law now. *Kyōshi* totally changes everything: it's higher than the temple wives, than the other female priests. The local *monto* don't mind, but the middle level do[226]… I think the *kyōshi* reminded the family of the *jūshoku's* mortality, and that's why they didn't want me to take it. Part of the reason I took it was because I was worried they were preparing my brother-in-law to become the next head priest in case my husband died. Now with the license I can take over the temple until my eldest son

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[224] She is referring to the temple's local parishioners and patrons.

[225] The headquarters in Kyoto at Nishi Honganji also have an international division.

[226] I also came across these prejudices when speaking with priests at the mid-level of the sect hierarchy in another prefecture. The priests were impressed and slightly amazed by her activities, not because she was a woman, but because she was a '*gaijin-san*': a now politically incorrect term for foreigner that implicates non-Japanese as 'outsiders' in a mono-ethnic Japanese society. This is softened by the suffix *san* (Mr/Mrs/Ms); and while '*gaijin*' is rude, '*gaijin-san*' gives the person in question a role within Japanese society, as Mr. or Ms. foreigner. Although when most people use this term they probably have no intention of being offensive, it is still an outdated term of 'otherness'. The correct term is *gaikokujin* (literally: *outside country's* person i.e. foreigner) and perhaps more politically correct is '*gaikoku no hito*' (a person from an outside country).

has been through university and takes *tokudo*. I went to the headquarters at Miyazaki city to check the deeds and to see if I really am listed on the official documents. What is it they say: 'just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're out to get you'? (She laughs). Anyway, I'm listed as the representative, and my husband is listed as the head priest of the temple. My husband thinks my brother-in-law and sister-in-law just want to 'help out with the temple'– make sure it runs well for the sake of the family – but I think he's being naïve. You have to be a good businessman to be a successful priest, and my husband is way too nice. My brother and sisiter-in-law see it that we're making lots of money here at the temple – even though we're not and we're always in the red – and they want a bite out of it. That's why they resigned from their jobs in Miyazaki (the husband was high up at the city hall), in order to take the ordination for the priesthood, and take the reigns at the town branch of the temple.

I'm not sure I completely understand everything about Jōdo Shinshū, but I like what I understand: there's no superstition, and it's not all about death in the books – it's about the here and now. The *monto* are really superstitious, like that place we went to at *obon* – all black cats and broomsticks – there's nothing like that in the sect teachings; but that's how they see things here, so there's not much we can do about it. After *tokudo* I realised that I'm here now, so if I can inspire people or have an affect on the children I teach, my husband and children, then that is what I can do here. I realised that other foreign wives married to Japanese men don't have the same opportunities that I have marrying into a temple, so I wanted to take advantage of being here, and you have to be committed or you wouldn't be able to stay here. I like teaching, and would rather spend time with kids who are more fun than the adults. I like doing the rituals and giving speeches and organising events as well; I wanted to do PR as a job in England – so it's pretty much the same thing really. Even if the

temple wives appear passive on the surface they have to be tough: not everyone could cook and go shopping for three hundred people. You have to be able to make decisions, and be a good manager. It's all about organisation and also the finances. That's a really big issue.

At the priests' meeting we went to the other day, most of the women there were also priests, although they don't wear the robes or draw attention to the fact. They just let their husbands (the head priests) get on with it, and then they do the preparation and serve tea and do everything as if they're only temple wives, and don't get involved in the ritual side. They're like 'paper drivers': they have the license but they don't take part. Most of the wives of priests are ordained as priests as well. When I ask them why they don't more involved, they play themselves down, it's like a form of self-censorship – they don't want to stand out. At the meetings there are two of us temple wives who also wear the robes and take part actively; the rest are at the back, serving tea and getting things ready, but they're probably all ordained as well.

If we have a big event in the temple the *fujinkai* come and help, and there's meetings at the local Takachiho level; the prefectural level in Miyazaki; and the headquarters in Kyoto. The *fujinkai* are the life-blood of the temple, they do all the work. The men just sit around and don't even bother to offer and help out. Even when I'm shifting heavy objects around on my own they just watch. I'm carrying all this stuff into the temple while they look at me struggling, making the odd joke (she rolls her eyes). Once, we got into big trouble with our *fujinkai's* because we were all going down together to Kagoshima for a meeting, but Priest Iwao and I decided to go down the night before so we could turn it into a trip, stay the night in a hotel, have an

onsen,[227] eat in a nice restaurant. The *fujinkai* didn't want to do that so they got up at the crack of dawn to travel down on the day. They weren't happy that we'd gone down separately, either. They said we were being selfish, doing our own thing, and not being part of the group.

I wouldn't have got involved with anything like this back in England; the Western image of Buddhism is the long-haired American couch-surfer's view. But Pure Land Buddhism isn't like that. Sometimes I find that the more I know, the more I study, the less I understand; I worry I don't do things the right way sometimes, the other priests have been brought up in the temple environment so it's second nature to them, but I have to learn as I go along, and ask more questions. I have to study a lot from the sect-based literature as well.

Figure 6 Clerical meeting

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[227] Hot spring bath.

6.1 Temple women

Interview with the previous bōmori and temple grandmother:

What are the basic and fundamental responsibilites of the bōmori?

"Responsibility" she replied firmly. "To help the head priest and protect the temple. Correctly *mamoru,* (preserve, protect, care for). It means that if anything happens you have to tell someone and help. Also, to listen to people, or give advice."

Following from this she tells me that the main function of the temple wife is to support the *jūshoku* in his work as the temple's main priest. The *bōmori* also needs to have a good relationship with the *danka* and talk at length with them on a personal level.

The temple grandfather (and previous *jūshoku*):

"The *bōmori* is the contact point with the *danka,* and connects and cements relationships and ties within the temple system. She also needs to be somebody the head priest can consult with over issues: somebody that he can take advice from, and who can support him in his role. In effect, the priest's assistant and confidante in difficult and private matters concerning the *monto* families."

I ask the current head priest if, in his opinion, the *bōmori* had a difficult job:

"Yes. Seventy percent of the reason for a successful temple is the *bōmori* – they meet and greet guests and are closer to the congregation than the *jūshoku*. People in the *monto* look at the figure of the *jūshoku* and the *bōmori* – and if they don't like us they can just leave. If you're not seen to be a good person in their eyes, they can leave

the temple or the sect. It has become easier to switch and change temples for the current generation. Also, the *bōmori* has to cook for ceremonial events and organise the temple schedule and calendar. If they don't do it very well, or properly – then the temple simply doesn't run."

I ask him if young people find the idea of marrying into a priestly household appealing: "No. Because the *bōmori* has to talk to everyone – she needs to be there and be available all the time. You can't just take the day off if you're tired, or don't respond, because it's a temple and you're always on call."

In an interview with priest Iwao I ask her: *why did you decide to become a priest alongside your role as bōmori (temple wife)?*

"The *bōmori* has to be in the house to receive guests, but a priest is more proactive and goes out to people's houses, like at *omairi*, and we can talk with people in their homes and the connection we have with them deepens. If you are just waiting for people to come to the temple as a *bōmori*, there's not much you can do; but at *omairi* you can meet the other relatives, talk to everyone and develop relationships."

Why did you take the ordination for the priesthood?

"Well, I had finished raising my children. If I became a priest I could manage the temple with my husband. I wanted to do this, so I summoned my self-confidence and told myself to go for it. In order for the temple to thrive, I wanted to try."

Extract from an interview with the Kumamoto (substitute) *bōmori:*

"People are always calling and they announce themselves by saying: 'It's Tanaka'. There are hundreds of Tanaka's in this area, and I'm supposed to guess which one! When they come to the temple I have to be there to serve tea. I have to lower myself, because you cannot let the *monto* think you believe you're above them. We are dependent upon them for support and the continuance of temple – and we have to show that. It must be worse in Takachiho, it's the countryside and there are all these small local rules and customs to observe, as well as the ritual etiquette in the temple."

You didn't want to become ordained yourself?

"No. If the Buddha is in your heart, that's enough… I have my own work to do as well as temple work, doing the accounts for my Uncle's business as well as the temple's finances. I do that from home, so I can combine both and be here to answer the phone."

Extract from an interview with a temple employee:

"The role of the *bōmori* is to protect the family and the temple. Now we're in an era where both men and women go out to work; but what eldest sons in Takachiho really want is a wife who is going to look after his family well, especially by taking on a caring role for them when they get older. It's difficult for any young wife to join a different household and adapt to their habits, but even more difficult for a wife from another country, who doesn't have the same customs. That's why it's so tough for the current *bōmori*… The temple *bōmori* has a specific role: to be the protector of the children, her husband, and all the people in the surrounding temple area. That's her main job. And as well, all different types of people are constantly coming to the temple, and you have to manage everyone and anyone: make sure they don't

complain or become upset. That's why it's a difficult job, and perhaps why people don't want to do it and won't marry into a temple these days."

Interview with a local woman who works as a sales clerk:

Being a *bōmori* must be a very hard job. The most difficult thing is interpersonal relationships, the telephone is always ringing and you have to be available for people all the time. Temple work is hard too – it's physical. Young people don't want to do temple work. It's very traditional and strict, and there are so many rules. You have to be strong. I don't know if it's more difficult here because it's the countryside, but it might be.

<center>***</center>

Figure 6.1 The Women's Association meeting at the Miyazaki branch

In her oral narrative, the *bōmori* draws attention to several issues that she negotiates both within the temple setting as a priest, and as a member of the clerical family. The *bōmori* can be regarded as having multiple roles and identities, that are layers on top

of one another: initially as a wife marrying into a temple family; becoming ordained as a priest; with the added dimension of being non-Japanese. This creates a great deal of complexity, and her narrative raises many issues. However, the ones to which she returned over formal and informal conversations can be categorised as: the position of women in the temple setting; negotiating her role as wife and mother; the difficulties inherent in extended family relationships; and the desire for change in the temple along sect-based, rather than localised discourses. Throughout conflicts and difficulties that arose within these categories, the *bōmori* was concerned over maintaining her own position in the clerical family, and the perception that the *monto* holds about her is inextricably linked to her role in the temple itself.

The position of women in the temple context is always underscored by their role as wife and mother. As Kawahashi (2003), has observed, the role of the temple wife is to produce a further generation of the temple, and this role was keenly felt by the *bōmori,* who felt that her position had been fulfilled once she had produced an 'heir and spare', and was now largely expendable to the wider context of the extended household that manages the temple. However occupation after the fulfilment of duty is overlooked, and as the *bōmori* notes, she was expected to gain self-fulfilment from bringing up children and by staying at home. What Kawahashi terms: 'the cult of motherhood', emanates from the strong bond in evidence between mother and child, by virtue of the role invested in motherhood in Japanese society (Lebra, 1984, 161-66). Indeed, women enjoy a high status in domestic life, as long as they fufil the mother and wife role well (Kawahashi, 2003, 167). As Lebra (1984), has argued, and Kawahashi (2003), has echoed, a domestic matriarch and an on-stage patriarch are common roles performed within Japanese society and are played out in the temple setting as shown in chapter five.

The *bōmori* shows that a decision to train for the priesthood was undertaken in order to have more than one ascribed role in the temple, and it appears that being ordained allowed her to have a broader stake in the temple and local society. Lebra argues that the 'Japanese mother' has been seen as embodying 'self-denial for the sake of her children' and a source of nostalgia; contrarily she has also been depicted as a figure that pushes her children to study in order to fulfill her own abilities, that have been denied to her in the public sphere (Lebra, 1984, x). The 'good wife, wise mother' ideal model cannot be seen simply in terms of Western influences upon Japanese modernity during the Meiji period (which established a strong, centralised government), but is also found rooted within Chinese ideas, and was appropriated during the Tokugawa period while gender norms were changing. According to Daniels, there was an idealised, gendered division between home and work in the modern Meiji State, and this continued policy constructed the myth that Japan is a 'homogenous society' where men work, and women are 'keepers of tradition' (2001, 26-7).

The concept of women as 'preservers of tradition' is especially important in the temple setting, in the emphasis upon the temple wife as a protector of her family and the people in the area. Starling notes that between 1603-1867 the concept of the *bōmori* was regarded as one 'inside the home', as 'inside help' for their husbands. According to Starling (2013, 281), the scholar priests of the eighteenth and nineteenth century describe the temple wife as an ideal wife and mother, and privileged religious figure. As a welcoming presence, she was available at the temple at all times, to create relationships between temple and laity and embody a teaching role. This was important in assisting her husband the priest, who would often be away from the temple itself. Covell (2005) notes that the ideal type of 'good wife, wise mother'

embodies qualities of the traditional Japanese housewife, which temple wives are expected to perform in their religious role, principally in order to set an example to the parishioners (2005, 138).

Regarding the oral narrative above, the clerical family and temple members considered that as the informant was young at the time of her marriage, there would be time to 'mould' her into the position of temple wife that embodies the gender specific norms of protection, producing an heir, and supporting the *jūshoku*. The division of labour between men and women in Japanese society, and the construction of a masculine identity through this division, has been explored by Kondo (1990).[228] Kondo argues that the women in downtown industrial workspaces acted as a crucial backdrop for the centrality of the male artisans, and in this way were both peripheral and central to the main action on-stage. Furthermore, in play, and the appropriation of gendered identities, women participated in the construction of the gendered female role, and inevitably facilitated their own subordination. In the *bōmori*'s narrative, this theme is echoed, as she comments on the women ordained as priests who act in a peripheral capacity, and leave the public activity to the male priests – in order to avoid the scrutiny that on-stage roles afford.

According to Kawahashi, Japanese society is known for its support of role polarisation between the two genders. The principle division of labour normally assigns the public sphere *omote* (the front), to men and the domestic sphere *ura* (the back), to women (2003, 170). Kawahashi argues that although these roles are regarded as complementary, they are not equal in status. In this hierarchically

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[228] In Kondo's 1990 ethnography of a downtown workplace, gendered identities were crafted on the work floor and female co-workers found themselves structurally excluded from central masculine identity of the artisan, marginalised in their position in the labour force in terms of discourses surrounding inherent gender characteristics. Kondo argues that by performing gendered identities on the shop floor women marginalised themselves on the one hand and strongly asserted themselves on the other. They were indispensible to informal social relations, and provided critical challenges to machismo performances.

structured discourse, women are implied as more inferior, submissive and more 'backstaged' than men (Kawahashi, 2003, 170; Lebra 1984, 301). Women are thus integral to the temple setting; but yet their roles are confirmed to the off-stage, organisational ones, while men perform rituals and speeches on-stage. This scenario has been confirmed by the *bōmori*, as she notes that the *fujinaki* are the 'life-blood' of the temple, and that many of the temple wives are ordained – and yet both groups remain marginal within the socio-ritual hierarchy. This echoes Kondo's argument that women are peripheral-yet-central to the workspace, and reflects Kawahashi's acknowledgement that women's roles are back-stage in the temple setting. As Starling notes: 'Because *bōmori* as religious professionals are ultimately gendered— their status at the temple contingent upon their family relationships to current, past, or future priests—the public articulation of their role has taken place within the broader discussion of the proper role of women in Japanese society' (Starling, 2013, 297-8).

However, it is important to note that the category of women in the temple setting is not one homogenous category with a single agenda in practice. Lebra (1984) observes that Japanese women have been portrayed through a myriad of lenses. On the one hand they have been considered as complicit in domestic drudgery, deprived in status, and submissive in manner. On the other hand, behind the surface is the woman who runs her husband and dictates the family sphere, exercising power in the household. In the case study, both the *bōmori* and Priest Iwao have consciously acted outside the dominant group of temple wives, and have distinguished themselves as priests as well as *bōmori*. This may contribute to the conflicts found between the temple wives and their *bōmori* (and possibly why their actions are closely adjudicated), and between the current *bōmori* and previous *bōmori*.

The previous *bōmori* utilises the public temple setting in order to undermine

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her daughter-in-law's on-stage role, by directing and influencing opinions of her audiences, almost inaudibly. In whispers and a formidable presence that is felt, with or without words, disapproval and instruction on how the actors on stage should be received is embodied in her gaze. The *bōmori* is especially aware of this when she gives a public, on-stage speech about how Buddhism is becoming popular outside Japan, where the innovation in practice and management that she desires for the temple is taking place. Her speech in public is a thinly veiled message to the clerial family in order to promote the benefits of a more flexible and changing Buddhist practice that she envisions for the temple (endorsed by an international community of which she is part.)

The *bōmori* is concerned that her speech will be ill received by her mother-in-law and extended family. Aware that they regard her as 'a bad wife and mother' by family standards, any suggestion that she makes towards issues over temple management (she believes) will be derided. However, although nothing was said openly on the day of her speech by her mother-in-law, her approval (or lack of) hangs over proceedings, and shapes their contents: there is power in this disapproving silence. Although the *bōmori* is ranked higher in official records and via ritual licenses, her mother-in-law shapes the dynamics of the clerical family, and this spills over into temple life, her weight and presence behind the scenes, silently directing the actors' on-stage performances.

Covell has noted that men in the temple context regard Buddhist nuns as the 'office ladies' of the temple world (2005, 136). Yet in the temple of the case study, women are perceived as dominant actors by their menfolk. As the *jūshoku* openly notes, the success of the temple lies in the hands of women; and as the case study demonstrates, women act as directors and producers behind the scenes. They affect

the ways in which their husbands as on-stage actors are received, and shape opinion both within the clerical family and temple setting.[229] If power over the imagination and opinions of others lies predominantly behind the scenes, shaping the action on stage, the performances of patriarchy are counteracted by the direction of women behind-the-scenes. In this reverse dynamic, men are concerned over the opinions of their womenfolk in the temple space and clerical family. This echoes the argument that Cook (2014), puts forward in improving anthropological methodology: that when researching the opinions of male respondents, it is important to understand that their opinions are often shaped by interactions with wives and girlfriends. This suggests that while masculinity is an expected performance in the public sphere, in private, men are concerned about, and conscious of, the opinions of women. In this reversal, it could be argued that the previous generations of women (who did not embody on-stage roles), *allowed* men to perform roles that signify their status of power *outside* the house; and contributed to the ways in which their husbands were perceived in public through female endorsements. From this perspective, it can be argued that in Japan, women are perceived to have the necessary skills to control the *inner* lives of men, in the same ways that men have been attributed historically to control the *outer* lives of women.

To summarise, the category of women in the temple scenario is not a unified one, and within this category is the jostle for power and status between actors. There is a generational tension that can be felt between the older and younger women in

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[229] The *bōmori*'s praise of her husband as a good speaker and charismatic teacher add to the positive perception of the *jūshoku* in the public realm. In contrast, the low opinion that the previous *bōmori* holds of her own husband appears to transfer to the public setting which leaves him with little audience. This dynamic is demonstrated as the parishioners totally ignore the previous head priest during non-ritual temple events. When he talks during a break in proceedings, people pay little attention to him at the lectern. However, eyes are always directed at the previous mother-in-law during post-ritual gatherings when her opinions and approval are sought and regarded as a bench-mark of judgment.

both the temple and household setting, mirrored by the elderly parishioners. In the temple scenario, the main source of conflict is between the mother in law and *bōmori:* because this is where the action and struggle over power lies, and where dynamics in the temple are generated and shaped, as women instigate and form the decisions made in the temple clerical family household. In this analysis, there is inconsistency and ambiguity that is not concurrent with simple subordination. Women are regarded as peripheral, and behind the scenes; but at the same time they are central, the life-blood of the temple, and the main opinion formers on the clerical family stage. In this way, women can be considered the least – and most powerful – in the temple space.

6.1 Adaptation

Extract from an interview with the temple grandmother:

"I understand that she has a lot of pressures here, and that she is from another country and culture, but when she entered this temple as a bride, she made the decision on doing things *this* way. We kept asking them if they knew what they were doing when they proposed marriage. She just kept saying, '*ganbarimasu, ganbarimasu*: I'll do my best, I'll do my best', whenever we asked her how she would deal with the difficulties of temple life. I begin to wonder if it was the only phrase she knew; it was never going to be that easy."

This short extract above raises many issues about life in an extended family household, that holds the added pressures of being a temple, and prominent in the public sphere. Furthermore, in the *bōmori's* narrative at the beginning of the chapter, it appears that there is a distinction, not only between the differences in 'cultural' values between the expectations of the *bōmori* and her extended family, but also

between public and private spheres. Before entering the temple as a wife, the *bōmori* viewed the temple from an outside perspective as a place of activity, with parties and festivals, and a space for young people. However, after entering the temple the inside realities of being part of a priestly household did not match outward appearances. It soon became clear that in crossing the invisible line from outsider to insider circumstances and dynamics changed; and this echoes Matsunaga's experience, who notes that she had been treated with courtesy and distance as a 'guest', but this changed after she had 'married in', giving her greater access as an anthropologist, and shaping her understanding of the country as a whole (Matsunaga, L. 2000a, 168).

In the *bōmori*'s experience, a whole host of demands of behaviour, and a change of attitudes would be expected from any temple wife – irrespective of nationality and previous experiences. Concessions were not made because of her nationality; instead she was expected to conform to the role. Her mother-in-law's position evokes the dominant expectations of their new daughter-in-law: the *yome* had to adapt to the norms of the household, and a two-way process of mutual exchange and compromise was never going to be an option on the table. The *bōmori* also conceded that over time, she was forced to adapt. After ordination, through the analysis of relationships in the family – including a mother-in-law and father-in-law who were against her initially – she came to the realisation that: "they were not going to change I realised… so I had to." It became clear that in a battle of wills, through strength of numbers, the *bōmori* was in a marginal position, and had to admit that she would be the one forced to change; and she adapted accordingly, as she was amalgamated into the dominant structure – rigidly patriarchal on the outside, and domineeringly matriarchal within. This set of circumstances paradoxically exists within the broader discourse that the temple's sect affiliation promotes; and is not in

tandem with core principles of egalitarianism, interconnectedness, and equality for all people regardless of status. Instead, it reflects the reality that the temple has to portray itself as a representative of the neighbourhood's most unforgiving, and conservative elements, in order to curry favour with the core parishioners, and specifically, the temple Elders.

In the narratives and interviews, it appears that adaptation and amalgamation is an instrumental strategy that allows the temple to remain, and co-exist comfortably in the wider neighbourhood. In order to keep the temple within the family, the outside form (*kata*) can only remain through continued tactical negotiations within; and as an example of this, the clerical family reluctantly incorporated an outside element, in order to keep the outside form. Even with concession to necessary (and sometimes unwanted) adaptations, the ethnography shows that the structure is prioritised – in the sense that the individual self will be to some extent sacrificed, or at least enculturated into the priorities of the wider whole[230] – in order to reproduce the temple along family lines; and this echoes the observations of Ariga writing sixty years' ago about the household, when he observed that, 'personal freedom has little room' (1954, 358). The discourse of incorporating the self into the wider whole as a core responsibility and obligation, means that the *bōmori* was discouraged from asserting her own priorities, and instead encouraged (coerced) to think about the family as an extended whole from the outset. In this way the outside element (a British *yome*) was expected to adapt in order to play by the dominant rules: in fact she did not have much choice in the matter.

However, instead of complying submissively with wider norms of gender

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[230] Which includes subordinating her own wishes in terms of childrearing, personal agency in the temple setting as a priest as well as temple wife, and compliance within the temple to the demands of the Elders and core parishioners as a strategy to keep the temple patrons happy.

specific behaviour in the temple setting, the *bōmori* has managed to raise her status tactically in the household. In studying for the *kyōshi* teaching license, the *bōmori* was afforded more status, and was more valuable to the temple as a result. Additionally, she could command a high price for the speeches that gave at other temples, and also raise the profile of the temple to a wider audience. Yet her position in the clerical family was never truly stable or given, even after 'marrying in' and producing heirs, and the *bōmori* is in a constant process of working to raise a profile that affords her place both within and outside the temple, in order to be indispensible even after she had produced the desired next generation, or in the event of her husband's passing in the future. She is critically aware that her position in the household is affected by her position in the temple; and her narrative illustrates how she attempted to gain more power by improving her position within the temple hierarchy, earning a stronger voice in the clerical family in the process.

Although the narrative is specific to a non-Japanese temple wife, difficulties with the *yome* role is not unique but one that is experienced by Japanese *yome* who leave their natal homes to 'go as wives', to other households, and who have to negotiate their position within the family as initial outsiders. During a conversation with a female official at the town hall, I was told that the biggest change in Takachiho postwar was the changing roles of *yome*, *chōnan* (eldest son) and mother-in-law. This interview offers an outside view of the temple situation, from the perspective of a government official in Takachiho, who understands both the local norms and the particularities of the case study due to her relationship with the *bōmori* as a colleague.

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The mother-in-law trains the *yome* in the "dos and dont's" of the household, so the *yome* will fit in and be brought into line with the household. Anyway, that was how people used to think; but now, well, it's not really like that anymore. They would tell her what to do, and say her role was to protect the household. Prewar *yome* couldn't voice their opinions in the household, but when they got older they could do what they wanted. It was just the natural order of things to teach *yome* the rules of the house – it was customary. But postwar it was different. As a *yome* of my generation – well we wouldn't listen, and we'd voice our own opinions. In this way I think things have changed. I guess education changed postwar towards independent thinking. Individuals were able to give their opinions, and women and girls became stronger. It was a time of growing strength for women; but also, even while saying that, there was still a persistent idea of '*danshi chūnō*' [男子中脳] … it means that the kitchen was out of bounds for the men, because women do all the housework.[231]

So it must have caused a rift if the mother-in-law had these prewar expectations and the yome had received new ideas through education?

Yes, yes, it must have been bad. I think so. All kinds of things that I have suffered under my mother-in-law I won't do to my daughter-in-law. The older generation thought different values were right when compared to the younger people of today. That was how it was for their generation. Before, a *yome* couldn't even open her mouth. "No! It's not like that! Don't you dare do that!" the mother-in-law would say. It was *that* bad. In the past, all the *yome* could do was say 'yes' and get on with it. I feel sorry for the current generation of grandmothers. In the past they received this harsh treatment, but can't say anything to their *yome's* now. They've had the worst of

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[231] Indeed, for married women in their fifties with careers, nothing much has changed apart from the fact that they now have two jobs: one inside, and one outside the home.

both worlds. They're worried that the *yome* will leave if they say anything. Especially at the temple, it must be really hard: the nationalities are different – the cultures are different. It must also be difficult to tell her things from their point of view. Overall, it must be a very difficult situation for everyone.

On the whole, Japanese women say what they want to say, and do what they want to do, but the idea of deferring to the mother-in-law idea remains, even if they are annoyed inside. Somewhere in the corner of their minds, vaguely, they have this sense of deference. But it's changing now, the *yome* of my children's generation (twenties and thirties) wouldn't think like this *at all*. They would want to live separately from the beginning, and they would say so. I would never tell them that they have to live with me. Of course, it all depends on the circumstances and the household: farming households need more members, but children are now are more likely to say and do what they want. My children would say: "isn't it right for me to do what *I* want?" and tell me directly. But people up to the age of the *bōmori's* generation are still a little bit traditional. They still think they need to 'protect' the household. If we compare the *bōmori* situation, well she's at a temple, so it's really a different set-up entirely. When you say *'tera o mamoru'* (protect the temple) you mean that you are protecting the *chiiki* (local area), as well as the household. During the war, men would leave and women would be there to defend the homestead. Then this concept of 'protecting' was often used. It's kind of symbolic that the word *mamoru* (to protect) is used in this instance in the present day.

Are local people aware of the difficulties between the mother-in-law at the temple and bōmori?

You can find these kinds of difficulties everywhere in the town; everyone has experience with this kind of thing, that's why it's not such a big deal. In Takachiho lots of people live in extended families, so they know what it's like. Even if your mother-in-law is a good person you might have a hard time living with her – and in an argument there's always two sides. People fight, but also laugh together. All of this is seen as natural and normal, the good and bad of life".

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

This extended interview above reveals generation change over time and posits the *bōmori's* discourse within the last generation in which conflicts between mother in law and extended family living is the norm; although as chapter four has shown, the extended family still has a pull on the young from afar. From the above interview it can be understood that *yome*/mother-in-law relations are still characterised within a set of understood hierarchical norms and behaviours, even if they are becoming more fluid and less expected at the same time. Such customary behaviour demanded of *yome* at the temple, explains why women are unlikely to enter a clerical – as well as farming – household from the outset. With such a weight of expectations, not only to the locality as a whole, but also specific to the temple, it seems unsurprising that the *bōmori* was forced to adapt and concede some of her opinions and values in order to at least appear on the *surface* to adopt the expected behaviour of a temple wife, determined by structural hierarchies demanded in the setting, that mirror local concerns. This demonstrates the paradox at the heart of the temple: as an egalitarian concept in *theory*, embedded within a highly Confucian structure that dictates circumstances in *practice*.

As the temple relies on its appeal to the *danka*, who depend upon its capacity to fulfill a protective function in the area, the figure of the *bōmori* is pivotal. Because of this, an 'ideal' *bōmori* is sought to enter a temple household, which is why the British *bōmori* was rejected initially, as it was questioned if she would be able to perform such a role that depended on local customs and etiquette (underscored by patriarchy), far removed from her previous experiences. Protecting the temple and the area, on guidelines that have been honed and reproduced along the lines of prewar pre-requisites, seemed an unlikely goal from the beginning; and although the *bōmori* has adapted in order to reconcile with her extended family in daily life, struggles inevitably remain. In a broader view, it is also the case that she is localised through her interactions in daily life: with local friends as supporters; through conflicts with members of the clerical family in the temple setting; and through status achievements. Moving from outsider to insider in a continual process, where the boundary lines of identifiable 'cultures' (Japanese and British) blur, and are replaced by thinly concealed motivations of increasing power and autonomous action, which cannot be described as unique to either nationality, but are part of the human condition.

According to Matsunaga's experience of being a foreign wife of a Japanese national, and *yome* in the early 1990s, foreign wives married to Japanese lived in a way not markedly different from all-Japanese couples (Matsunaga, L. 2000a, 172). A priority for non-Japanese wives, was fitting in to Japanese society, so children would be accepted as full members of the community, while maintaining links to the mother's 'culture' and language (Matsunaga, L. 2000a, 172-3). The behaviour befitting a wife was stressed mostly by the author's mother-in-law, who reinforced the importance of learning the 'ways of the household', and how to bring up a child in the approved way (Matsunaga, L. 2000a, 170).

Faier (2009), notes that Filipina *yome* married into Japanese households had to perform their roles as 'good wives', in order to challenge negative stereotypes of the Philippines. Furthermore, being accepted and seen as exceptional wives in the community differentiated them from other women in their ethnic group. In addition, they were expected to forget parts of their lives in the Philippines. Thus, in their tactics and performances, and through misunderstandings with their new families, Philippine women often came to become seen as ideal, traditional *yome*: a post that younger Japanese women are now leaving. However, the Filipina wives' context must be seen in broader geo-political-economic terms, as these women relied on their Japanese husbands for sustaining families back in the Phillippines, and were disadvantaged by the perception held of Filipina working as hostesses in rural areas (2009, 183). This can be compared to the more favourable image of non-Japanese from the West, when compared with individuals from South East Asian countries, as Matsunaga (2000a) has shown.

Although there is overlap with Faier's account and this case study, in terms of having to perform a role of 'good wife and wise mother' to overcompensate for the fact of not being ethnically Japanese; and the omission of parts of identity in order to survive in the new setting; on the other hand, the *bōmori*'s situation is very different. As a Western woman, and 'relatively privileged type of foreigner' (Matsunaga, L. 2000a, 172), she has been seen positively in terms of nationality; and she was also thought to produce more attractive, taller, and stronger children (according to her mother-in-law and staunchest critic). Furthermore, her situation is more precarious in the fact that she is not part of a community of other women in a similar situation locally, and does not shift between face-to-face performances of host and home identities on a daily basis in the physical area. She does not have the option to escape

to other spaces easily, in the same way as the women in Faier's ethnography, who had regular opportunities to be Filipina together, eat Philippine food, and behave in ways unacceptable to their Japanese families (2009, 185).

In the temple setting, the marriage was opposed from the outset, and a whole set of negotiations – beginning with the temple household and culminating in a meeting with the temple Elders – was facilitated. Although both the clerical family and parishioners were against the union, the liberal discourse of the sect was mobilised; and the *jūshoku* argued that the sect viewed everyone as equal, including women and foreigners. However, the unspoken feelings of the opposition reflected local sentiment towards foreigners, due in part to war memories held by the older generation, and the fear of social change that may be brought by a temple wife who would not know the correct way to do things within the temple (i.e. observe the habitus of the local community). Subsequent further generations would be of Japanese-British mixed heritage, and this presumably threatened the idea that for the parishioners at least, Jōdo Shinshū was an expression of Japanese household ritual and religiosity. This example shows the extent to which the parishioners have power over the temple and clerical family, as argued in the previous chapter. Ultimately, as a member of a temple household, it is difficult to make personal decisions by choosing whom you want to marry, without everyone – including the entire community – having their say.

The Elders argued publicly from a rational perspective that it was an incredible challenge for a stranger to the temple system to enter the temple household, due to its known difficulties and socio-ritual complexities (nationality and 'culture' were only a subtext). Privately, they speculated what would happen to the status of a temple with a 'mixed-race' future generation, as the children may be born disabled or

deformed in some way, due to local discourses about blood and race *at that time*.

However, twenty years hence, things have moved on: the status of, and the children themselves are accepted, and they are regarded as the natural heirs to the household and temple: they were born in the area and therefore products of its locality. In this way, discourses of 'culture' (or more specifically the temple children as subjects of the locality) have triumphed over those of 'race' and 'blood' that concerned previous generations. Furthermore, the most opposed members and the temple Elders who held these opinions at the time were the prewar generation; and the most vocal critics are now deceased.

However, the status of the *bōmori* herself is still ambiguous, even though she also acts as a priest with a *kyōshi* license, and as a representative of the temple. Her status is in a constant process of negotiation within the extended family that was actively against the marriage, as well as among some factions of the *danka*. Although she is popular with some *danka*, and people in town who welcome the difference and are interested in her experiences, there is still divided opinion. However this is not based purely on ideas of 'cultural' difference (a catchall phrase that describes a multitude of behaviours and discourses according to agenda and purpose of the speaker). At this stage, she is well known in the community, and no longer perceived solely as a marginal outsider. She is now firmly part of Takachiho life in her roles as priest, teacher, and committee member, and has a great deal of experience and influence in local affairs. Furthermore, she has been localised – while retaining links transnationally – as part of the enculturation process. Therefore, personal preferences, personality, and opinions are more likely to affect her image in the town, rather than regard her as an unknown Other. Yet perhaps to some extent, ideas of liminality

remain and her status is betwixt and between, being slippery to define in terms of role, dominance, marginality, culture and power.

6.2 Transnationalism

To illuminate some of the effects that the *bōmori* as a non-Japanese actor and the transnational temple household has had on the area, an interview with the town hall official (and a colleague and friend of the *bōmori*) continues below.

Has international exchange via the JET programme had an influence on Takachiho?
Yes, it has. The first ALT came around thirty years ago, and now people who can really speak English as a native language live here. Takachiho is in the middle of the mountains – it's not the city. So I think these people are really valuable, and because of them people can go and learn English – real English. Of course there are Japanese people who might have lived and studied abroad and they can speak English, but the foreign-born wives have a different culture and a different way of thinking. This can be felt and has an influence in society. Japanese people have only really had experience of gazing at people before, but to be with somebody who isn't always like them is beneficial. Especially with the British priest… people have got to know her in this capacity and also she has entered the home. This is a very different experience from the norm because she has become part of the clerical household. Others might have never been into their neighbours' houses either, but as a priest she can enter the private home of people in the area as well, and this connects her to everyone in the community.

Has everyone recognised and accepted her now?

In the beginning it must have been terrible, but now she has the priest license so everyone was surprised.

Did lots of people oppose the marriage with the heir to the temple?

In the beginning yes, the *danka* wasn't so keen – didn't they all have different ideas about it? There must have been some disbelief but gradually she has got used to the neighbourhood area, and the people… and as her children will get older they also have to enter the area. So in this way they become included as a given. Everyone becomes at ease with it, including the people who opposed it originally.

As for the children being both English and Japanese – is this an issue?

I think they're seen as the next generation of the temple.

Are they discriminated against in anyway?

(Thinks for while), no… I don't think so, no. With the *bōmori* entering the temple this kind of thing came to an end. Maybe some people who have a really old-fashioned way of thinking discriminate…but as for the children, I don't think they would think to discriminate, as they were born here. Some people may see it that the mother is not born in Japan. However, living here, bringing up the children, as they grow up… and then just by getting older – their presence becomes just the way things are and accepted. Also, from the point of view of a temple, theirs is the most '*genki*' (lively, strong) in Takachiho. They have lots of *danka* and also the priests are really involved in activities in the town: the PTA, the town committees, and the board of education.

The above interview shows how socialisation and enculturation has trumped any other dynamic, and the transnational, mixed-heritage children are accepted as belonging to the society and the temple first and foremost, before any 'racial' or 'ethnic' affiliations are considered. This also reflects what is happening elsewhere in Japan within the broader social spectrum – where mixed marriages and a blending of identities are becoming increasingly normalised (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008). Therefore, although unusual because of the temple setting, the case study is also an illustrative example of broader flows happening in both Japan and elsewhere. [232]

In the interview, identity according to ethnicity seems less important that identity afforded by experience within the locality. According to Martinez (2004), identity is considered to be part of a process in rural Japan and not simply predetermined. A person is judged by how well she or he manages conflicts between selfish desires and social expectations. There is no end product, only a continuous process of 'becoming' in which people attempt to orchestrate a variety of social roles (2004, 206). Also, identity changes as the actor moves through time. People were surprised by the fact that the non-Japanese wife entered the priesthood, and as the children 'enter the area' their family presence also becomes naturalised. In such a discourse, the longer her presence is felt, she slowly becomes part of the fabric of life in Takachiho as she acts in a variety of roles: a process of 'becoming'; not as a fixed identity as an 'outsider'.

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[232] This situation has evolved through the increasing movement of people for work and study, and in this case through the government implemented programme to 'internationalise' Japan through the JET programme, of which the *bōmori* was part as an early intake.

Additionally, concepts of Cosmopolitanism have usually inferred a metropole with urban elites, who tend to be more mobile, and connected to new spaces and ideas through mediascapes, financescapes, and the emergence of travel and technologies that mean it is now increasingly possible to live across national boundaries transnationally (Appadurai, 2003; Appiah, 2006). Yet increasingly, scholars are developing an understanding about what is happening within Japan as it becomes engaged with other spaces, places, and processes. Willis and Murphy-Shigemastu (2008), argue that with the inclusion of non-Japanese, transnational families, and ethnic Koreans and Chinese with citizenship rights: 'The dividing lines between Japanese and Others, including conceptions of "pure" and "impure" are no longer so clear as they were once assumed to be' (2008, 5). They also note increasing international marriages aside from the stereotype of 'white American man and Japanese woman', particularly in the case of Japanese men marrying other Asian women (2008, 30), and note hybrid cultures and transcultural mixing – that could be regarded as a creolisation now occurring outside the Caribbean (2008, 309).

In the last few years, urban Japan is increasingly being interpreted as part of globally integrated networks conceptualised as flows; leaving rural Japan in the feudal past[233]. However, this idea is compromised by this case study, where local societies may show more meaningful signs of significant interaction with Cosmopolitan transnational actors and minorities, demonstrating inclusion into a territorially bounded community. As a ritual actor, Buddhist teacher, school-teacher, and member of the community, the British *bōmori* probably has more contact with the local society than Western, urban, Others (who tend to live in Dejima enclaves, as

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[233] As already mentioned at the beginning of this thesis flows: 'have flooded the landscapes in certain parts of Japan while others have been reduced to a trickle, leaving local areas high, dry and brittle, not far from the feudal landscape of much of Japanese history' (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008, 312).

Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008 have noted). Although more transient Western non-Japanese may appear more frequently on the surface of urban society, they may not be as embedded within in the community, at least not to the same extent. A feature of rural life is found in such embedded relationships, and people live in greater proximity to each other's worlds. When a non-Japanese lives in rural Japan, they are subsumed into a community as part of its boundaries; partly because there are no other options and the assemblages are smaller, and more immediate.

Therefore, this case study shows an alternative discourse from the dominant one of Cosmopolitan minorities at the centre, with the periphery left 'untouched' and 'feudal'. This case study shows that *despite* initial opposition; postwar memories; legacies of prewar blood and race discourses; expectations of the 'traditional' *yome*; patriarchal norms; the association of priests with national 'Japaneseness'; inner power struggles at the level of the clerical family and sect hierarchy – and more quotidian personality clashes between the *bōmori* and temple actors – there is a parallel discourse and dynamic at play. The *bōmori* has been ordained as a priest; accepted into the temple; and supported by the majority factions of the *danka* who do *not* oppose the inclusion of women, or even '*foreign*' priests in the contemporary era. Furthermore, the marriage has produced a further mixed-heritage generation who are considered members of the Takachiho locality by local people, and considered the natural heirs to the temple. Therefore, as a person with a ritual, social, and personal role, played out in the lives of thousands of local people, she is accepted her more as one of 'their own'; and they no longer associate her as an exotic cosmopolitan Other, or a member of a larger ethnic minority primarily. Instead she is regarded first and foremost as an individual, and secondly, as a representative of the temple.

This shows that *despite* the dominant discourse of elite Cosmopolitans and

blending of identity at the centre – where global effects are arguably felt more – where rural integration lies, is in the more quieter, nuanced, scenarios demonstrated in this case study. Between local people who accept a transnational actor as she adapts, and as the process of localisation works through constant enculturation of local codes that eventually leads her to be seen as a *full* member of the community – and no longer a 'foreign' outsider.[234] Goodman (2008) notes that minorities cannot be equated with marginality, and that some minorities have been powerful historically. Furthermore, if minorities (which could include women, labourers, homosexuals and the disabled, if the vision of the mainstream is unchallenged as white collar and male) continue to be treated in isolation, there are salient problems: as it is necessary to understand how the groups are formed, operate internally, and how they relate to (whatever they define as) the Japanese state and mainstream society, as well as keeping in contact with "home" and other "minority" groups (Goodman, 2008, 328).

Consequently, the status of such transnational individuals within the rural sphere as minorities is yet to be explored fully. Ostensibly, it appears that although it is more difficult to gain a foothold into such communities, the interactions and sense of belonging within them is more profound, and less transient and ambiguous than at the urban level. Although non-Japanese people can be seen as minorities, they are not always marginal and lacking in power, but often at the very (visible) centre of society. As a consequence of transnational actors, people in Takachiho are used to seeing, engaging, and living with people who are not like them; something which seems incongruous with the previous literature that portrays rural areas as arid, mono-ethnic landscapes. The adjustment and conflicts that arise in the process may be deeper, but

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[234] This is reflected in the ways in which she is not treated as a guest, but treated the same as everyone else. In one sense, her situation is much easier than the narrative of the childcare manager in chapter four, who is less easily forgiven for transgressions.

so, too, is the relationship to that community. Therefore some of the issues that this Takachiho case study raises problematises not only the way that *rural* Japan is viewed, but also the discourses of dominant, mainstream Japan as the *only* place in which global flows affect the social—and moreover ritual—landscape.

Figure 6.2 Participants at the annual 'International Cooking Class'

6.3 Gender in succession

Interview with Priest Iwao:

Do you have children?

"Yes, four girls: 25, 23, 18 and 14 years old. The eldest has returned home to be a Junior high school teacher and has also become ordained, so she came back and helped at *obon*."

Was it difficult deciding who would become the next priest?

"Japanese people say the next in line should be a boy, and we have girls. Any one of them is fine, but we need one of them to inherit the temple as the next generation, this encompasses the idea of a blood relation (*ketsuen*). So the eldest daughter ought to do it. She really wanted to go to teaching college and asked us if she could go – she was crying. We let her, and in the end she decided that she would come back for us, as we had let her do what she wanted initially. So she studied Buddhism for a further year and came back. I don't know if she felt pressure to come back as the eldest, but she did so voluntarily in the end. Still, I feel sorry for her. If she finds someone she really likes and wanted to go there, as a bride, there's nothing we can do about it. We wouldn't force her to marry someone she doesn't want for the sake of the temple. This is a really old-fashioned way... and I don't want to be a horrible parent. I've been talking about it with my husband and we decided we shouldn't be selfish. If she wants to work as a junior high school teacher – that's fine with us.

Would it be difficult to adopt her husband as a son?

Yes, that's the most difficult thing. We want her to marry somebody she loves. That's so important, we don't want her married off to someone she doesn't want to be with.

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Her partner doesn't have to be a priest, but as long as it's somebody who's willing to take on the temple. If he isn't willing to protect the temple… just somebody she likes, then he couldn't manage it here, that's the really difficult thing. So without an introduction to somebody… it might be tough.

What kind of young men marry into temples?
Usually second sons of a temple…but I have a friend, and her daughter met an ordinary office worker and he became ordained and entered the household temple.

<center>***</center>

In the above interview, Priest Iwao concedes that the eldest daughter is obligated through birth order, reiterating the importance of primogeniture even when not patrilineal. In this way, a situation as close as possible to the ideal is sought. In her narrative, Priest Iwao appears to be torn in allowing her daughter to marry for love, and concerned about the qualities of a potential husband who may not be willing to 'protect' the temple. A potential husband has to be willing to manage the considerable obligations that are entailed in temple life, and possibly become ordained so that he could share the burden of ritual responsibility with his wife. In order to arrive at a solution, a great deal is being invested on the hope and desire that the eldest daughter can find a husband that she both loves, and who is willing to adopt the unenviable position of adopted son-in-law to a temple. [235] One of the important functions of the temple, embodied in the role of the *bōmori,* is to protect the surrounding community. However, in the contemporary era, this too, can be viewed

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[235] This pattern reflects the case where women are increasingly reluctant to marry into a temple, especially if they are not from a temple family themselves.

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similarly to other dimensions in society that are changing: as an *ideal* rather than a realistic possibility.[236] According to Covell (2005), before World War Two, women were expected to remain hidden from view in the temple enivironment, and their roles were restricted to supporting the head priest and producing an heir. In 1916, the Honganji branch of the Jōdo Shinshū sect officially recognised temples within sect bylaws (2005, 114). During World War Two, temple women had increasing responsibilities and were allowed to become priests, but not head priests until 1914, and in 1944 were permitted to become doctrinal instructors. In the contemporary picture, in the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji branch, 2.5 percent of head priests are women and 23.9 percent of total priests are women. Soto and Tendai sects have half this figure, with the Shingon-Chizan sect at 1.3 percent (Covell, 2005, 130).

Covell (2005) also notes that becoming a priest does not guarantee that the temple wife can take over her husband's temple, as the *danka* members prefer a male priest, and are resistant to women taking over the role as head priest. Covell quotes a court case in 2002 where *danka* members refused the ordained daughter of a temple priest to succeed as head priest *despite* the backing of the sect itself. Accordingly, the *danka* will often take a role in searching for a husband (on behalf of a temple daughter) who can be adopted into the sect and household (2005, 131). Despite such cases described above, technical legalities concerning which actor should preside officially over a temple, appear almost redundant when it is considered that the broader, interpersonal local level shapes temple life and allows it to function. Without a supportive *danka* (as co-owners of the temple) the priority placed on which actor is regarded as the *official* ritual specialist in the clerical family becomes diminished, as

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[236] In reality, most temple wives take on the additional role as priests themselves or are working to support their husbands as priests. Such factors means that it is difficult for women to fulfill the role of being constantly available for people in the area, at home, 'guarding' the temple and its environs, and as a source of constantly available support any longer as shown in the previous chapter.

without *danka* support the temple is impossible to maintain anyway. Also, clerical families must be regarded in terms of the unit of the household, irrespective of who is afforded the title of 'head priest'; and this priest must make sure the temple stays afloat to finance the clerical family as a household unit, to continue the family namesake, and serve the surrounding *danka* neighbourhood households. The temple is a financial business based on a group collaborative model with clients, patrons, shareholders, relative-employees, and *danka* labour; part of a conglomeration of temples – not a one-man show.

More broadly, the issue appears to be that the temple system in its entirety is based on structures from the Tokugawa feudal system (in which it was conceived) for politico-economic purposes of the governing system, which leaves little room for flexibility and no longer functions effectively for the clerical family and its members. As society changes around the temple, issues of individual liberties are incompatible with the core of the temple system, and this produces frictions between the inherited structures, and the reality of life in the contemporary picture. Within this backdrop, individuals are forced to manoeuver in order to assert their legitimacy and agency. However, under the restraints of such a system, clerical families such as Priest Iwao's are faced with the reality of living with this inflexible, closed system in a contemporary context, searching for their own solutions to a problem inherent in all temple sects throughout Japan.

Although Priest Iwao wants her daughter to live according to the desires and norms of her generation, pursue her own dreams, and marry for love, the daughters in the family are forced to adapt under the constraints of the inflexible *jūshoku* system. In this balance, they have to either hope for circumstances to 'naturally evolve' to their advantage, or submit to the wider structure. It is important to note that this

structure is not a doctrinally driven one, but a local one that conforms to patriarchal patterns previously referred to at the local and middle level of the sect. There is no room for the egalitarian premise of the sect in this conservative local structure. [237]

In the above case, the family effectively has to relinquish some of their power to an incoming son, passed down not by direct family affiliation (*ketsuen*) but by utilising the adoption system that is a flexible feature of the household system (Moon, 1989; Ochiai, 1994). Furthermore, adoption is also currently the only way the contemporary clerical family can keep the temple within its juristiction for future generations. This case neatly demonstrates the limitations and restrictions that clerical families are under to reproduce the patriarchal structures according to local norms, reflected at all levels of the sect hierarchy. It also demonstrates how the current generation of young women is compromised in choosing between their own desires or the maintenance of their family heritage.

6.4 Sexual identity and succession

The urban city of Kumamoto is a two-hour drive from Takachiho, and a world away in terms of economics, consumption, lifestyles and attitudes. During fieldwork I spent a few days with a Jōdo Shinshū temple household on the suburban outskirts. This temple also demonstrates problems of succession, this time via male heirs. In this case, the eldest son has recently announced his homosexuality to the household and wider community. In the following ethnographic depiction, the issues that have arisen for the household in terms of automatic temple succession to the eldest son will be explored.

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[237] However, this is also reflected in the upper level of the sect, which is also based on the same transfer of power from father to son.

Several of us were gathered at a party with members of the temple household in their home. The *yome* at the temple clears away the debris from the evening, and begins talking with another temple priest from a neighbouring area (and family friend) the 'coming out' story of the *chōnan* and temple heir. She does little to hide her annoyance as she retells recent events. The priest from a nearby temple speaks just as bluntly about his own reaction to the gossip he has heard over the last few weeks.

"I couldn't believe it… I really couldn't believe it when I heard he was gay and living in Fukuoka with his partner", he tells the *yome*.

She asks how he knew about the situation and the priest says he had heard about it on the grapevine, but still could not contain his amazement at the open nature of the announcement.

"Yes well, he's either in Fukuoka or away somewhere else. He's always going to Tokyo", she says.

"Going out and having a good time?" asks the priest, eyes wide.

"Yes, having fun. He's hardly ever here, always off somewhere. We had no idea, no idea – and then suddenly everyone knows, and now we have to deal with it".

"Weren't you surprised? I was so surprised, I still can't believe it!!" the priest laughs, his eyebrows raised as he spreads out on the cushions. He is now lying along the tatami floor, far too drunk to remain seated.

"Of course we were surprised, but what are we supposed to do about it?" she remarks.

"When did you find out? Does everyone know?" asks the priest, reveling in the gossip.

"Yes, it's common knowledge now" she replies, visibly fuming.

However these feelings were concealed in an informal interview that took place the next day. In an interview she tells me that:

"This temple is busy because of the kindergarten, so there are always things going on. Before I entered the temple I was really worried about it (she points to her heart as if it were jumping), but then I thought it was safe because the man I was marrying was the second son. The *chōnan* wants to be the next *jūshoku* – so it will go to him, not my husband." I ask about her only child, a five-year-old daughter. "She doesn't have to do priest's work when she's older, only if she wants. There's no pressure on her to do so", she tells me.

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Despite the above narrative, the current *chōnan* (eldest son) – although willing to become the next *jūshoku* – has announced that he will not be marrying due to his sexual orientation. This means that all of the roles afforded to the wife of the *chōnan* (including looking after his parents and producing a male heir) will fall to the second son and his wife. In her narrative, it appears that the *yome* approached marrying into the temple household strategically, and believed that she was effectively 'out of danger' as the wife of the second son. Presumably, unless she produces a son in the future, her daughter will be searching not only for a husband – but someone who is willing to marry into a temple as an adoptive son and possible future head priest. In effect, all these duties ascribed to the *chōnan* will be shifted to the second son and *yome*, yet without the according official status of *jūshoku*. Despite the official version I was given by the *yome* as I interviewed her, the unofficial version I was privy to the night before was at odds with her rehearsed palatable overview of the situation performed in the public realm.

Conversely, the *chōnan* is treating the issue entirely differently, and appears to be unwilling to bow to pressure. He subverts norms by refusing to conform to the pressures of remaining silent in order to appease the household in public, and openly refers to his homosexual status. At the time of our visit it is his birthday, and a large group, including priests, friends, and members of the wider family gather to celebrate at a nearby restaurant. When called to make a short speech as we raise our glasses in *'kanpai'* (a toast), he announces unselfconsciously and with a reflexive irony: "Here's to another year, without getting married". The silence and pointed looks of the assembled party demonstrated how people were dealing with the issue on the surface: by ignoring it. However, in the private sphere, the situation is obviously not met with the same indifference, and it is broadly regarded that through his open admission of sexual orientation the *chōnan* has sidestepped his obligations to the household and in the process has alienated members who resent his abdication of responsibility. Although the *chōnan* has not been rejected by the household, or disinherited, his father is visibly uncomfortable by the fact that he clearly wishes to be transparent in his gay identity, while refusing to show any qualms over transgressing boundaries of filial expectation, in the prioritisation of his own narrative of individual choice over household and priestly duty to marry, and produce heirs.

The *chōnan* is engaging and very popular (particularly with younger members of the *danka*). In his capacity of priest and heir to the temple, he has created a lively, young membership (contradicting the usually elderly membership). In fact, his success has been especially noted by the *jūshoku* in Takachiho, who recounted his achievements to me in admiration. Yet despite successful techniques in attracting a *danka* membership, the main role of the *jūshoku* must be fulfilled as father and husband first and foremost, revealing that the role of priest is a reproductive one

firstly, and a ritual one secondly; and this is compounded by the fact that many eldest sons have no desire to enter the priesthood in the first place. Sect practices are more in accordance with ideas that are in keeping with the extended household pattern of the *ie* than as a prerequisite for any kind of ability as a successful priest and teacher. The small window into the world of this household made me wonder how temple families would negotiate similar situations in the future. Although Jōdo Shinshū itself does not discriminate against homosexuality, and although Kumamoto is an urban area, and less conservative in comparison to Takachiho, an outward public expression of homosexuality is widely uncommon, particularly in the role of priest.

McLelland (2000), argues that a 'gay identity' in terms of a Western understanding (contextualised in terms of lifestyle choice or sexual rights) is rare, and rejects that this is something that Japanese men who desire other men lack, by not utilising the same terms and identities expressed in the broader global discourse. McLelland has problematised the category of a gay identity that can be applied to Japan, and has also observed that preferring men as sexual partners has not proved an obstacle to marriage (which is not necessarily regarded within a discourse of 'being in love') historically, or in the contemporary picture. Furthermore, men have been unwilling to co-habit with other men due to the fact that they may be seen as inhabiting a 'gay category', which is not compatible with wider Japanese norms. However, in this example, the clerical priest can be seen perhaps as uncharacteristic in his open and public refusal of marriage, and the open admission that he is living with his partner, and has no plans to perform multiple identities, conceal his status, or remain ambiguous about his sexual identity, in the way in which men have done historically in the Japanese context, as McLelland shows.

However, by refusing to hide his homosexual status, the household is consequently both embarrassed in public, and concerned with the legacy in private. Interestingly, although the role of the *bōmori* assumes the image of a temple wife supporting her husband as head priest, the role is actually one of support and does not presuppose gender or marital status: it is literally an assistant role to the head priest, that could also be performed by a male. However, the situation where the partner of a priest acts in this role of *bōmori* appears a long way off, and even if this situation was accepted, the reproduction of another generation requires further negotiation. In the example of the heir to the priesthood in Kumamoto, the eldest son and heir is negotiating unfamiliar territory and going against expectation. In doing so, he is purposefully ignoring the separation between *uchi* and *soto* (inside and outside) *omote* and *ura* (surface and reverse), by transgressing such distinctions; and instead, presents a unified sense of self that remains consistent throughout interactions with others. In applying this to a broader discourse of scholarship on the 'Japanese self' (Lebra, 2004; Rosenberger, 1992), it appears that several boundaries of *uchi*/*soto* (inside/outside) had been blurred by the *chōnan's* approach.

Although concerns over the presentation of the self is a feature of all societies, scholars such as Lebra (2004) and Rosenberger (1992), have described an example of an interactional and presentational self as an aspect of Japanese personhood that cannot be separated from the group. In the interactional self, there is awareness that the self is defined or blemished through social interaction, and the self is socially contextualised through this process with a high degree of the awareness of others. In the presentational self, the surface layer of the self is metaphorically localised as a person's face: '*kao*'. The *kao* is upheld by the presenter's performance in etiquette and conformity to norms. In the performance of the self, the Other is significant as an

actual or potential audience. Indeed, there is a continuous reflexivity between performance of the self, and sanctions by the audience. Indeed, self in this context consists of a continuous reflexivity between the performance by the self and the sanctions of the audience that exists as a 'jury' surrounding the self. In this analysis, the self is simultaneously an actor in a social theatre, while needing other members of a supporting cast that can protect or harm the self in a co-presentational role (Lebra, 2004, 107).

In consciously subverting this discourse of a self that is engaged in the approval of others as a supporting cast, the priest has knowingly transgressed discourses about the way he should present his *self* in public. By doing so, he appears to be integrating his various identities in promoting a sense of self that does not depend on shifting contexts, or the consumption and approval of others (and could be considered closer to a 'Western' sense of self, or a more Westernised 'gay identity'). In transgressing boundaries of inside/outside in particular contexts, the priest is subverting expected norms of behaviour in the representation of the self. In this example, it appears that it is not primarily in his homosexual status that he is transgressing boundaries (the *yome* bluntly stated: 'what can we do about it'), but essentially in the fact that he is unwilling to hide his identity in the public realm, that is causing the most problems for the household. In this way, his sexuality is not the issue either morally or ethically, but his lack of willingness to sacrifice his *self,* or at least his performative identity for the whole, is.

This situation appears to support more statistical findings that parishioners and ordained priests in the Jōdo Shinshū sect are less likely to discriminate against homosexuality than the Japanese average (Dessì, 2010, 355). The problem appears not to be the fact that he is gay and performing a gay identity, but the fact that it is the

only identity he is willing to perform in both public and private. While this may have been the 'done-thing' for previous generations, society is in a transitional process, and the priest is negotiating a difficult arena of which there is little precedent. In the above, the current *chōnan* is not prepared to conform to previous standards, where men who sexually preferred men have married women in order to raise a family and avoid inhabiting a 'gay identity' as a category. Indeed in this case, the *chōnan* openly asserts his identity. Furthermore, the *chōnan's* status as a priest has made these issues more apparent, and brought tensions to light, because he has a widely visible role in the public domain. Whether this will have an impact on the expression of self and identity of the younger *danka* who attend the temple is a question for the future.

However, as in the previous examples (where a non-Japanese woman enters the temple, and a search for a son-in-law in order to conform to patrilineal norms is in evidence), the role of producing heirs is crucial, and will now go to the second son in order for the form of the temple structure to be maintained. If the ideal of an eldest son taking over a temple with a supporting *bōmori* is not possible, the closest to an ideal will be sought. In this way, the temple is kept within the same clerical family, while inner adaptations in the private sphere ensure that it is judiciously maintained. In this way, changes are quietly adapted to, as the temple adopts a discourse of continuity on the wider, public stage. However, in all three examples, the actors who are most compromised by conforming to this outer form have adopted their own tactics of resistance: including adopting a more powerful public stance, or simply ignoring the scrutiny of the public eye. Essentially, although the temple retains its clerical family by adapting its inner dynamics, conflict during adaptation means that nobody is happy with the compromises *everyone* in the setting is required to make. There is no suitable, sustainable conclusion or solution within the rigid system.

In the transnational temple, mother and daughter-in-law remain enmeshed in a difficult relationship they are bound into. In Priest Iwao's temple there is a sense of sacrifice for the whole, as the daughter moves back home to take on the temple, which thwarts the daughter's happiness, and leaves the parents feeling compromised. In the last example, the *chōnan* faces the consequences of a family who begrudge the responsibilities of reproducing a temple without the recognition of being head priest and temple wife. In all of the examples, a contemporary solution is sought that can be compared to putting a sticking plaster over a greater wound. In reality, core issues are not addressed, and discontent characterises everyone's experience within the temple family; as they ignore issues, adapt, fight – yet ultimately collude in reproducing the outer form. Furthermore, these experiences also reflect similar issues that local families face in reproducing inherited structures that remain the idealised norm in the locality.

In the temple cases specifically, although the teachings are inherently egalitarian, the clerical household still attempts to conform to a morality, ethical system, and attitudes engendered by discourses of a previous era, in order to appease parishioners who are the sponsors of the temple; instead of acting in accordance with Buddhist teachings, or in taking a leadership role and responding to the very real fears of change that the community is experiencing head on. Instead, in this case study, clerical families appease and capitulate in order to secure their dynasty. Despite changes at the individual and household level, and an accommodating religious framework, the temple adheres to old patterns unfailingly. In this process, there is increasing tension between the old and the new, as the temple struggles to reproduce the old, while new generations challenge established norms and boundaries. These involve individualistic narratives of personal freedoms and love supplanting arranged

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partnerships – found in the three examples in this chapter. Such narratives may flout conventions and pose problems for the inheritance of the *ie* household system. However, individuals are currently negotiating rapid changes at the personal level while living under the constraints of institutions and social norms that often resist such transitions.

The ethnography and narratives reveal that the neighbourhood temple is negotiating dual forces: between 'traditional' roles of protection, and modern narratives of individual choice; between maintaining local norms, while being impacted by broader, global discourses; and between public, and private performances. These negotiations are complex, multi-layered, fragmented, and hybrid as actors within the temple setting oscillate between reproducing the temple structures inherited with the intention to assure their legacy and family businesses, while directly engaging with change at the everyday level.

However, even while its inner life of changing clerical circumstances no longer matches outer temple discourses of 'continuity without change', the temple acts as an agent of reproduction in the community, negating change in order to perform a discourse of unchanging repetition. And it is this discrepancy between reality and performance, alongside the motivations underlying these discourses (i.e. finances and legacy) that the three cases reveal. Furthermore, it is at the most intimate and personal level that real changes in opinion and ideas are made, and this can be seen in the ethnography, where changes are being negotiated one step at a time within the inner sphere of temple life. This results in adaptations, accommodations, amalgamations and negotiations internally, while deflecting problems and ultimately keeping things the same. This has been a key strategy that has served the temple

throughout its history; and in the contemporary local context, not much seems to be changing.

Figure 6.3 The newly built temple in town (opposite Takachiho shrine)

6.5 Temple Buddhism

Below is an interview with Priest Iwao that illustrates some of the issues in managing a temple, reflecting the concerns found in the wider, national sphere about funerary Buddhism.

Is it difficult to make a living from a temple?

Yes, it's difficult, *mizumono* (uncertain thing, affair). It's a matter of chance: nothing is decided. Regarding income, if you do the work properly in the rural area there's still a limit to the amount of money you can make. If you weren't serious about the job, and thought only about how to make money… if you had shady dealings, well

that's dubious, especially for religious organisations. In the city, this type of thing gets on people's nerves. They have an image of this style of management by the temple, that they're just trying to make money, and people begin to become afraid of religion. We definitely can't do that kind of thing here.

When you talk about not doing the job seriously, do you mean mainly offering funerals and charging a lot for them?

Yes, I expect the temples in the city are associated with funeral halls. After the death, the undertaker advises the bereaved to go to a particular priest and they can both earn a lot of money this way, with these kinds of connections in place between the priest and funeral halls. The funeral halls tell the bereaved: 'you should go to this particular temple', it seems like they pressure the bereaved family. We can't just say this only happens in the city, but it goes on a lot there.

But in Takachiho, people don't have much money, so isn't it difficult to charge for funerals?

Sometimes the *monto* need to ask about what to do about funeral costs and we say – what you can afford, give what you can, '*sei ippai*'. If they ask about how many *man* (tens of thousands) if they can afford it, that's fine, but if they can't – then we just ask them to do what they can.

Do people think if they give more money they'll get a better chant?

(Laughs) Perhaps… some people do think that, it's not the case though.

In the future, will people in the cities stop having Buddhist funerals? There seems to be a discussion about performing your own service for the family, and also not having a butsudan – maybe a pendant or vase that contain the ashes of the deceased instead.

Yes, it seems like not having a proper Buddhist funeral and memorial is increasing, but that's a really sad thing I think. The priest knows how to help heal the grief and sadness. If a person important to you dies, there is really so much grief. Without someone talking to you about it, you can feel really isolated and it's really sad. That's why together we chant: we share the time together with the Buddha amongst the grief. I really think that if people have someone to talk to, it makes a real difference. If you think strictly and rationally about it too much, you think you don't need a priest or a religious service, but people in grief have a heavy heart, and I really believe it helps them.

If Buddhist funerals decrease will the number of temples also be affected?

I think there still remains a Japanese feeling about treating the temple with regard. Maybe there will be people who may leave the temple, and have alternative services – but it won't be everybody. I expect that the *real* religion will always remain. Especially in Takachiho, temples will exist. The numbers of parishioners will reduce but it won't fade out completely. I think everyone knows that they have to value the temple and treat it with importance deep down. I want the temple to always be valued and respected. It has to remain in people's hearts and minds… If temples didn't exist in the countryside, *nihon wa owatteshimau.* Japan would be over and done.

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This interview touches on the issues that have come to light in contemporary public discussion such as: the wealth of temples; the resentment over tax exemptions; and

the huge amounts of money exchanged for both funerary services and material objects such as the *ihai* ancestral tablets. The downturn of temple fortunes has been covered and challenged by Rowe who asks how the 'death of Buddhism' can be prevented, and questions the contemporary role of Buddhism in a modernising world (2004, 447). He notes that the 'death' of Buddhism has three strands: the relationship between temples and death rites; the negative attributes of funerary Buddhism; and the idea that the temple is becoming extinct (Rowe, 2004, 454). Moon found that in the 1980s, despite expense, memorial rites increased, and not just among those who could afford to do them. Expensive tombstones and tablets reflected the status of the deceased and ability of descendants to pay for them (Moon, 1989, 130). However currently, preferences are growing for the scattering of ashes and more simple forms of memorialisation nationwide and it appears that funeral trends appear to wax and wane alongside economic and social trends.

From a broader, temple perspective there are problems as Rowe has noted; sect research centres are not acquainted with local temple life, and the challenges of teaching Buddhism within the realities of a syncretic system (2004, 179-219).[238] Furthermore, the temples are constrained by a *jūshoku* system which means priests often have no interest in inheriting a temple, compounded with the need to generate temple funds and a support a clerical family in any venture of innovation. The dominant problem is that the temple-*danka* system depends on a demographic of aging householders who are literally dying out, and unless the temple can adapt to the needs of younger, returning members – or members from outside the *danka* system – addressing their current social and ritual needs, it seems logical to everyone

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[238] When the head of the sect toured the country in order to understand realities on the ground further, many local temples built new facilities for his visit (such as toilet blocks for his use) and smoothed over any difficulties they were having.

(including the priests) that the temple will die out alongside the community if rural decline continues.

Figure 6.4 The *Jūshoku* and local children at the temple's summer camp

6.6 Local futures

Interview with the *jūshoku:*

What do you think what will happen to the temple in the future?

You don't think about death, or why we're here, until you get sick in your forties or fifties and start to wonder about it, you think about when you will die, and people start considering religion then. If you don't get old, you don't even start to think about these things. But even young people can accept the teachings – they don't go in and out of fashion. When someone dies, people think they have to show thanks so they go to the funeral and a temple: then there's the image of connecting Buddhism with death. In some of the city temples they have attracted a younger congregation,

but in Takachiho it is mainly the older generation who attend. It's a challenge to make the temple relevant to younger people. We're thinking about this now and often have meetings with other priests to discuss issues like this. What do you think about the situation – do you have any ideas how to attract a younger generation? Is it the same in the UK?"

Interview with the previous *bōmori* (temple grandmother):

"As for the temple, my grandson will make a good priest. I have no concerns at all for him. But the *monto* is decreasing, everyone is worried for the temple, and it will have to change also. The temple will find a new level and adapt to the new era. I think it will find a place amongst the new society. Nowadays, society changes in the blink of an eye – it's so accelerated – but the temple will find its own direction and place in society. Jōdo Shinshū has a history of seven hundred and fifty years; there were problems in the past but they were overcome, as they will be overcome again in the future. As long as we can meet the challenges of a new era it should be possible".

Such interviews show an awareness of change, and a need to adapt to the contemporary context in order to survive, as a theme that runs through the generational divide. To some extent, small measures have been put in place in order to subvert the course of decline and reliance on the elderly.[239] Yet a lack of coherent framework, at either the local or national level, has not emerged as yet. However the temple attempts to make itself more appealing, and opens the temple for summer camps, hosting the Children's Association and neighbourhood parties, and thus

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[239] The *bōmori* has discussed the possibility of utilising the temple in the outskirts as a retreat centre that teaches Buddhism. As the eldest son and heir to the temple hopes to combine kindergarten teaching with temple work she envisions amalgamating with another temple with a kindergarten in its grounds, but no heir.

affording more influence in the social and community sphere, outside from its ritual guise. Activities undertaken have an aim of attracting new people as patrons of the temple and raising the temple profile; yet they are constrained in this activity by core temple parishioners who expect them to be available for their needs. In short, the temple tends to capitulate to their core sponsors, rather than address the needs of wider households who do not attend the temple regularly and have shifting and complex needs.

The *danka*-temple system, previously the temple's biggest advantage, is now its biggest liability (Rowe, 2004). However, in a broader context, the priests regard that the temple has fluctuated in the past and can be regenerated for the future. Is this false optimism or an accurate reading informed by a historical analysis? The temple has a legacy of adapting to the contemporary social situation and accommodating other practices, and has been continually shaped by political and economic agendas as we have seen. The advantages that the temple holds, both at the rural and urban level currently, is that despite people having more choice in service providers and funerary practices in the last few years, which encourage the simplification of rituals (Rowe, 2003; 2004), the majority feel more assured in engaging services of a temple that they believe are less likely to go bankrupt than other secular funerary service providers, ensuring that their family graves will be continually looked after well into the future and beyond (Rowe, 2004, 146).

Finally, as the *jūshoku* has argued, at the core of the sect's teachings is a universal message that does not 'go in and out of fashion'. Yet at the local level, while the temple remains primarily a vehicle for *ie* ancestor rites in the neighbourhood, and obligated to the core Elders and sponsors within the temple, it capitulates to a conservative discourse based on the past. Yet by relying on the

temple-*danka* system, it ignores what is now becoming the reality of the present for the majority of *danka* households: an increasingly diversifying family, and no longer purely territorialised in the local, but spanning spatial boundaries and a hybridity of ideological temporalities.

6. 7 Global futures?

Another potential route for Buddhist temples lies with ideas of Engaged Buddhism originated with the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh, advocating Buddhism to counter various forms of social suffering including: war, injustice, and ecological crisis (culminating in the International Network of Engaged Buddhists in 1989: Dessì, 2013, 81). Dessì points out Engaged Buddhists are usually Western educated Buddhist thinkers and there is little connection with Japanese Buddhism. However, specifically after the Tsunami and Earthquake of 2011, Buddhist temples fulfilled social needs by counseling the bereaved, and utilised temples as refuges in times of evacuation and need.[240] In the contemporary period, younger generations have shown an interest in Buddhist techniques such as meditation, and temples are now used for techniques such as yoga, appealing to young women (Chunichi Shinbun, November 19th 2012).[241] Furthemore *Zazen* (seated meditation) is now being practiced in Jōdo Shinshū temples due to the influence of global Buddhism and demand (Dessì, 2013, 75).

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[240] Historically, the temple played a role as a safe space during times of war and the temple of the case study was a refuge for Okinawans during World War Two. Furthermore, it was considered an intermediary in disputes and an educational establishment. In the present day, temples still embody a counseling role and informal conversations after *omairi* rituals serve as a time for priests to listen to the problems of their *danka*. More direct actions are often taken and as the priest is often the only person who can enter a household (even close neighbours are unlikely to be invited in) priests are also responsible for alerting authorities to issues such as child and elder neglect.

[241] http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2012/11/24/national/temple-yoga-class-drawing-in-young-women/#.U4f4IZSSwsw accessed via Google, May 2014.

Additionally, in some cases, Buddhist monks are innovatively leaving the temple in order to talk and counsel young people in non-standard environments such as bars, in order to become relevant to younger people who are unlikely to approach an elderly priest. Temples offer outdoor cafés, beauty salons, and art galleries. A catwalk show of clerical silk robes has also been part of public relations exercises (The Guardian, January 10th, 2008). [242] As already noted, through the wider hierarchical structure of the sect, the temple is connected to the headquarters at Nishi Honganji in Kyoto, and the Women's Association is linked nationally and internationally through the International Division of the sect. In this capacity the *bōmori* has visited Hawai'i with the Women's Association*,* and temples in Taiwan via the sect's network. The *bōmori* is also a member of the *Gaikoku bōmori kai*, an organisation of non-Japanese temple wives, which meets for study groups throughout the year. This significant organisation caters for the small number of women who have married Japanese priests and taken ordination themselves. Such women are serving in temples in Japan or instigating transnational religious flows between Japan and their home country, where there may be no previous precedent for the religion.

As Buddhism takes root elsewhere, the International Division of the sect recognises the benefits for worldwide membership of Jōdo Shinshū, and promotes the religion through mediascapes such as YouTube, and there is now increasing interaction between national and global networks. Dessì (2013), notes how current global forces are shaping Japanese religions, both within the domestic sphere and in their connections with flows outside of Japan; consequently shaping local practices and altering the meaning of Buddhism in modern Japanese society. It is certainly clear that the temple system in the local sphere needs serious adaptation and creative

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[242] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jan/10/religion.japan accessed via Google, May 2014.

innovation to remain viable for future generations, and to provide needed services that reflect the complex mix of hybridity, and movement of people. A remodeling of the Buddhist temple may be based on a host of factors, in which larger national and global variables will inevitably play a role. In the future, with the onset of wider immigration, and changing practitioners and clients, temples may become centres for transnational Buddhist communities; and there may be a role to play according to new needs, dynamics, and globalising families that are currently in evidence, not least of all in the transnational temple itself.

Summary

Buddhist rituals are the key source of finance for the temple, and in order to secure sponsorship, the clerical family capitulates to local norms and follows the sect-based *jūshoku* and *bōmori* system, even in difficult circumstances. The temple makes inner adaptations in order to maintain the outer form, even while non-conformist elements problematise and challenge the structure. However, even with adaptation and accommodation at play in the inner sphere of the clerical family, temple futures are uncertain, particularly in the local setting where ritual is bound up with household ideology and ancestral consciousness. The temple is reluctant to act beyond this, because it has relied on a strategy of sponsorship and patronage for survival into the present day. However, the priests recognise that marching along this route is the road to extinction, mostly due to demographic decline. Yet while temples remain bound to economic issues, crucially they have to please their clients – the *danka* – who can increasingly go elsewhere. Furthermore, after the death of the current elderly generation, there are concerns over how the temple will be able to make a living, although the priests do not yet have a strategy to solve this problem. Evoking the

cellist Yo-Yo Ma in regard to the sphere of music: "traditions only survive or remain through creative innovation".[243] If the local temples intend to sustain their religious traditions and avert the 'death of Buddhism' (Rowe, 2004), in a rural sphere that is aging, and with a younger generation who can perform rituals outside of religious institutions (using secular services), or dispense with them altogether, it seems that now is the time to innovate in order to remain. However, this is not an easy task. Currently, the surrounding households utilise the temple for reproduction, protection and succession of the *danka* household, underscored by an ancestral consciousness. This remains a pivotal technique in local syncretic practice sustained to this day as a way of negotiating previous, current, and future transitional worlds. Outside of this discourse, the temple's footing seems uncertain at best, and perilous at worst.

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[243] "In 1998, I founded the Silk Road Project to study the flow of ideas among the many cultures between the Mediterranean and the Pacific over several thousand years. When the Silk Road Ensemble performs, we try to bring much of the world together on one stage. Its members are a peer group of virtuosos, masters of living traditions, whether European, Arabic, Azeri, Armenian, Persian, Russian, Central Asian, Indian, Mongolian, Chinese, Korean or Japanese. They all generously share their knowledge and are curious and eager to learn about other forms of expression. Over the last several years, we have found that every tradition is the result of successful invention. One of the best ways to ensure the survival of traditions is by organic evolution, using all the tools available to us in the present day, from YouTube to the concert hall." (Yo-Yo Ma in an article for the Huffington Post, 01/21/2014, accessed August 15th 2014 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yoyo-ma/behind-the-cello_b_4603748.html.

Figure 6.5 Walking in winter

Chapter Seven: Looking outwards to the periphery

The original motivation for fieldwork began with the seeming contradiction between a Japanese Buddhist temple with a non-Japanese priest, and the narrative of Japanese religion as a property of belonging and Japaneseness. However, access to the inner spheres of *danka* households via fieldwork at the temple revealed that such disjunctures between expectation and reality were characteristic of the broader mosaic of rural life. The documented signs of decline in rural Japan were evident: suicides, depopulation, an aging society, exodus of the young; but so too were more regenerative effects that took longer to discover: non-Japanese women entering households, single daughters returning, innovations in household businesses that attracted national consumers to the rural sphere.[244] As local lives play out alongside a backdrop of broader national and global flows, key features emerged. Fieldwork revealed that local people move fluidly between local, national, and global worlds; non-Japanese enter the area and are absorbed; and while the territorialised rural household remains a feature (both in physical form and psychological consciousness) its borders become porous and stretched over national and global spheres. These examples reflect changes happening in rural society that are nuanced in comparison with the representation of the countryside as in a state of terminal decline, parallel to the discourse of nostalgia projected onto rural areas by the mainstream (Ivy, 1995; Creighton, 1997).

Both in public life and in scholarship that focuses on urban Japan, the rural tends to be seen as temporally and spatially behind and outside the rest of mainstream Japanese life. This reflects a wider theme in a framework of modernity, where the rural, traditional, and religious world becomes the binary opposite of the urban,

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[244] Unfortunately exploring this further was beyond the scope of this thesis.

modern and secular one. From this perspective, societies evolve in a linear direction; and in this conception, the rural is bound to move in direction towards the latter. However, as Asad (2003), has observed, modernity is not simply a historical epoch in which we have found ourselves during the natural process of social evolution, but a political-economic project that has been constructed under historical conditions. The 'disenchantment of the world', and the demise of institutional religion was assumed to be a parallel mechanism in this process, until sociologists such as Cox, H. (1990), and Berger (1999), reconfigured the secularisation thesis they had initially endorsed after noting the resurgence of religions and religious behaviour worldwide, irrespective of the official stance of modern nation states.[245] However, despite evidence to the contrary, as van Bremen (1995) noted, the legacy and assumptions of secularism remain as a legacy in both scholarship and public discourse, and continue to shape research frameworks and findings.[246]

Although it is impossible to ignore the impact that religion (most noticeably Islam) is having upon the twenty first century, the 'little religions' can easily pass under the radar, unnoticed. However, as Vásquez has noted, it is not always in the '*real* religion' (defined as powerful institutions, mosques, churches, temples, and in the analysis of scriptures and doctrine) where the majority of daily religiosity happens. Instead, in a transnational, and transitional world, religiosity is more fluid and imbued with more localised personal meaning than perhaps ever before, as it transmigrates, transforms, and finds new audiences (Vásquez, 2007).

One of the aims of this research was to learn something about the role that

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[245] Asad (2003) has also noted the divergences in Europe: secular states with religious citizens (US) or states tied to religion with secular citizens (UK).

[246] Berger argues that researchers assume secularism due to the fact that the academic elite tend to be secular, yet contrarily the world appears very religious on empirical grounds, even in cities where modernity is strongest (2006).

little religions play in local Japanese life, within a broader discourse where modernity

signals religious demise, as 'modern' people supposedly move from 'superstition' to

'rationality'. Rejecting the functionalist framework of Japanese religion as 'cultural

belonging' (due to equal amounts of conflict as Schnell (1995) and Smyers (1999)

have shown), and the dominant argument that Japanese people petition for 'this

worldly benefits' although they may not 'believe' (Reader and Tanabe 1998; Nelson

2000); this thesis sought to understand religiosity from the situated and local

perspective, in order to attempt an explorative, more nuanced analysis that can cope

with conflict, competing identities, the *unseen* and change.

At an early stage in fieldwork I observed a small, personal practice, as a lady

in her sixties or seventies cycled across the beach path in front of me. She stopped at

the centre of the arch of coastline, steadied her bicycle on its stand, stood and put her

hands together in a prayer position, her head bowed in front of the ocean for a minute

or so. There was no shrine or temple, no collection box, no statue of a deity, no

media-defined 'power spot' – and perhaps no possibility of petitioning for 'this

worldly benefits', as the most common form of religious practice.[247] Therefore, it

appeared – from my perspective as an observer – that she was praying to the ocean.[248]

Looking back on this episode, at the time it seemed that her actions were a

spontaneous expression that held meaning on that particular day, for purposes I will

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[247] This involves visiting a specific shrine or prayer temple that can help with your problem (exams, marriage, childbirth, sickness and so on), following a set ritual action which involves washing your hands in ablution, offering money to the collection box in front of the inner hall (where the deity or Buddha is housed) clapping hands twice, bowing, petitioning for your wish, bowing again, then departing, making sure not to upset the deity by turning your back, or not performing the ritual with the correct bodily postures or deference, or frame of mind. This practice is engaged in by people throughout Japan, irrespective of area and sect affiliation, as Reader and Tanabe (1998) have established.

[248] The ocean can be conceptualised as an embodiment and expression of the independent will of a *kami*. In the case of a tsunami, the deity/god – which is none other than the ocean itself – has created disturbance according to its own will, unconcerned with the fate of human beings (Bowring, 2014).

never know. However, it also reminds me of Priest Iwao's comment: that for people in the area, there is an inherent awe surrounding the power of nature. This awe appears to be such an important expression in Takachiho, that any contradictory orthodoxy that does not affirm it either does not take root in the first place, or is fashioned in order to accommodate it.[249] This sentiment has been variously labeled animist, primitive, and simplistic from the worldview of the priests in the sect-based hierarchy aligned with modernity; but it can also be conceptualised as an acknowledgment of *powerlessness* in a volatile natural and supernatural world: an awareness that also embodies a sense of gratitude.

From this cosmological perspective, ritual is the means and technique in which human beings assume some kind of control. In Takachiho, even without formalised practice and sanctioned ritual action by the community, and even without a religious institution (temple) and a religious specialist (priest) as a backdrop, this sentiment and expression is still possible and found at the individual, personal level. This is demonstrated by the woman praying at a roadside shrine while walking her dog in the ethnography, and the elderly lady in front of the ocean. As Priest Iwao noted, without even thinking about it, a sense of awe and gratitude towards the landscape shapes daily life in a way that is difficult to describe and quantify. It is therefore possibly impenetrable to outsiders (such as the temple priests, and participant observers) because it is something that needs to be experienced *directly* – not theoretically or conceptually. As local people suggested to priest Iwao in the beginning, her current level of perception was not enough to penetrate the layers of meaning found in the world; she was too young – one day she would grow to understand. And in that way, they accommodated her inexperience and religious

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[249] This research shows that in the contemporary period, sectarian Buddhism is fashioned to integrate with a wider belief system in the locality.

orthodoxy, as she in turn, accommodated their inability to cultivate faith in a single Buddha due to their superstitions, newly minted post-Meiji traditions, and local customs – which were considered largely irrelevant within a sectarian Buddhist doctrine.

In trying to interpret the above, it would be tempting to fall back on the assumption that local people will lose or outgrow beliefs in the unseen, as they move away from 'feudalism' and fully enter the 'modernity' to which they sometimes appear stubbornly opposed (Moon, 1989). However, it has already been observed that it should not be assumed that modernity and secularism (or decline in 'belief') dovetail neatly (Berger 1999; Asad, 2003; Vásquez 2007, Moore; 2011); and that religiosity in terms of institutions and practices are more likely to *transform* than decline with modernity (Douglas, 1982). Furthermore, modernity as a political-economic project in which secularism is situated (Asad 2003), can be seen to broadly marginalise the Japanese rural sphere in which the case study is situated (Kuwahara et al. 2007). From this perspective, further secularism embodied within modernity as led-from-the-centre could marginalise the periphery further, taking away any sense of autonomy and control that people in the local level have, in a state that prioritises the centre at the expense of the 'backward' periphery.

The fact that religiosity does not appear to be declining in the least in the case study, can illustrate just how keen local people are to stay in control of their own narrative for as long as they can. In a modernist framework, the rural becomes regarded as the past tense of urban, modern, secular Japan; and irrelevant to the global flows that characterise the centre. However, the aim of this thesis is to reflect an empirical reality that is much more complex than this assumption suggests. Firstly, this case study shows that there is *more* than one pattern occurring at once in the rural

sphere. Subsequently, the periphery can be considered in both specific and general terms: part of wider national and global flows, while exhibiting specific micro-currents to the area.[250] Furthermore, the borders of where the rural, the national and the global begins and ends are impossible to define; yet at the same time the core values, experiences, and beliefs of people who are bound to Takachiho as a particular locality have remained surprisingly constant. Therefore, in the reality of daily rural life there is both flux and stability; change and continuity; sacred and scientific; modern and traditional – an economic system based on money, as well as the exchange of produce and services – new technologies and old techniques; a single sectarian Buddhist doctrine, and a syncretic system of beliefs; a traditional neighbourhood temple, and a non-traditional non-Japanese temple wife; extended family consciousness, and people living alone; a territorialised local household, with members living globally; households based on patrilineal primogeniture, and single women who carry on their legacies. Rather than regarding these features of rural life as dichotomous, or as a point of contrast to the mainstream, fundamentally, they embody the contemporary empirical reality of life in the rural sphere. This case study shows that the periphery can therefore accommodate change, while finding continuity in ritual, the household, and local customs. In the future, in order to survive, this continuity of socio-ritual traditions could engender new forms, which would hopefully accommodate, instead of suppressing the agency of the individual within its contours.[251]

The multiple narratives or 'mixed temporalities' (Garcia Canclini, 1995)

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[250] Shown in the pattern of single mothers returning to Takachiho.

[251] There is always a possibility of change, because there is nothing inherent about local institutions of the household and the temple; as history shows us, they were both constructed at a certain point for political goals.

exhibited in Takachiho, at first appear contradictory because they do not reflect the dominant linear model of society that divides the rural, sacred and traditional from the urban, secular and modern. Instead, the multiple narratives reveal that in reality, life-on-the-ground is much more complex and fluid than this. Takachiho embodies pre-modern legacies, is part of wider modern narratives, new technologies and postmodern global networks. It is also territorialised and shaped by its remote geography, yet its borders are porous and its members are constantly in motion. At any one point the main actors in the case study could be classed as urban or rural, outsiders or insiders – part of a modernising or traditionalising discourse – at the point in which we consider, or enter, their narrative. Furthermore, these fieldwork examples can also be related to the ways in which Japan is changing as a whole.

Previous scholarship charted the evolution from the extended family to the nuclear family as a result of modernity, and predicted increasing individualisation and choice as a hallmark of the future (Ochiai, 1994; Nonoyama, 2000; Rindfuss et al 2004). However, parallel scholarship has shown that the increase of nuclearisation and individual units does not spell the demise of the extended household (Kurosu, 1992; Traphagan, 2000). This research shows that while transnational members and single mothers become an accepted part of the local landscape, the extended family consciousness remains in conjunction with changes. Therefore this research illustrates that instead of a movement from one clearly delineated stage to the next, the contemporary rural is characterised by flux and hybridity, in which contrary elements occur and co-exist concurrently. This particular moment of flux reflects broader hybridity in Japan as a whole, as people move from the extended family to form nuclear families in the city, or live individually, yet retain a household consciousness that continues to provide another option in a wider repertoire (Traphagan, 2007).

It appears that within the case study, outside elements are shaped and adapted to the locality. Furthermore, they are absorbed primarily because they sustain the household and the wider area. However the inner changes at the household level require negotiation, as the interviews and oral narratives have shown, and there are examples of both resistance and accommodation. Actors from the outside, who enter or re-enter the area, slowly affect the situation, changing local opinions and norms over time. The acceptance of single mothers and a non-Japanese temple wife are illustrative of this.[252] Furthermore, in the suburban area of Kumamoto city, the ethnography of the heir to the temple reveals a movement back-and-forth between household duty and a lifestyle where the expression of individual identity is crucial. In the narratives of actors in the research, it becomes clear that there is no single pattern, and that people move between household structures and broader ideas that contradict its principles with adaptive fluidity, as they negotiate boundaries and resistances, and help shape the institutions and worlds of which they are part, slowly opening up conservative and inward-looking institutions that have grown stagnant and stale.

Furthermore, while it would be easier to leave these institutions behind them, young people continue to be engaged with concepts relating to the wider household, indicating both obligations to others, as well as a continued connection to the locale that they wish to sustain. Thirty years ago, research showed that people in the countryside never became completely reliant on the discourses of modernity[253] (Moon,

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[252] Although fewer transnationals may live in rural spaces, their presence may have more of an impact precisely because lives are lived in closer proximity to their neighbours. This can be compared with 'Dejima enclaves' towards which foreign nationals gravitate towards in urban Japan (as discussed in Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008). In this sense, rural Japan may have a more meaningful effect on the lives of local people as relationships are made with localised non-Japanese actors.

[253] Moon argues that although the political and co-operative system changed due to a cash-based economy postwar, basic elements in the structure of social relations and relationship to land remained

1989), and this still seems to be the case in Takachiho. The research shows that there is a remaining connection to territory, and to the specific identity embodied within its situated location, and a need to guard against its loss.[254] The future for the survival of local and temple households and the wider area will require continued adaptations to ongoing transitions and hybridity, rather than simple reproduction of a social life which is no longer possible, or desirable. However this cannot only be seen in future terms, it is also a process in which local people are *already* engaged, as this ethnography has shown.

Subsequently, this research contradicts the linear narrative that regards movement from one stage of social evolution to the next, in the sense that there is *nowhere* to move toward. In the case study, binary opposites (urban and rural, secular and sacred) co-exist. Yet despite the overlap and blurring of the boundaries between rural and urban, traditional and modern, sacred and secular (necessitated in part by media and technology, as well as through the movement of bodies), the local remains distinct in many ways. In an era of increasing homogenisation found throughout urban centres worldwide, the local is afforded a new value by way of its distinctiveness. In the current global context, where homogeneity has created a vacuum, the specific, the local, and the unique become regarded and adopted in new ways. Furthermore, place is no longer restrictive, or a barrier to innovation, due to increasing technologies, and the rural can now be connected to global trends that bypass the national sphere as Kuwahara et al. (2007) have demonstrated.

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the same. "Many people in the village think the material prosperity they are enjoying as a result of the economic growth of the country as a whole has already reached its peak. When hard times come, therefore, land is the only thing that they can rely on. For most people in Yamazaki, land is like life insurance. They would not give it up for cash, which might disappear" (1989, 37). Therefore the old system was not been replaced but adjusted to meet new needs (Moon, 1989, 150).

[254] There is still a value attached to land that is thought to be more immune to fluctuations and a conscious awareness that some things can be counted on better than others, irrespective of political and economic fluctuations in the wider sphere (Moon, 1989).

Furthermore, it is not only in the rural case that religiosity persists, but also in the national sphere. In the urban context, we can see that the main ritual provider moves from a religious institution to a secular one (Rowe, 2011), with changes in the material object of the *butsudan* from a sect-based altar to a personal one (Nelson, 2008); yet the concept that the deceased *continue* living as non-human persons persists throughout the urban and rural landscape. This is expressed, symbolised and negotiated through continuing *bonds* with the dead (Rowe, 2011).[255]

Accordingly, in answering the research question: Why do (Buddhist) rituals continue despite increasing modernity? This thesis answers: because ritual is a technique of negotiating social changes in a transitional world. Accordingly, this thesis argues that rituals remain significant in the case study as something more than a legacy of pre-modern practices. They remain because the rituals described in the ethnography give continuity and meaning; a sense of autonomy and control at a time of local, national and global flux and transition. Buddhist ritual is the vehicle for ancestral rites that connects the past to the present and future of the household, and the deceased members with the yet-to-be born (shown in the household *butsudan* rituals). Ritual connects people to one another and their local environment (shown in the memorial rituals at the *hōji)*; they also connect this world to another (shown as the ancestors are brought back from the grave to the household at *obon*), and recognise something *other*, beyond and parallel to the dictation of current circumstances. Additionally, they provide a narrative and a way of dealing with death and decline, and a ritual technique to negotiate these central human issues that have been relegated

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[255] This is exemplified in the contemporary context in the creation of '*kaze no denwa'* (phone-of-the-wind) therapy, where people who have lost loved ones in the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami of 2011 can visit special telephone booths in places of natural beauty, where they can talk to the deceased (now ancestors) and express their sadness, guilt (for surviving), and grief, as part of the healing process; as well as introduce the ancestors to the next generation who have been born after they went missing.

to the sidelines through the project of modernity.[256]

As ancestor ritual remains a technique for connection and negotiation, the extended household (which embodies an ancestor discourse) is a buffer against economic and political flux in the wider sphere – whose affects are felt keenly in the rural sphere. This becomes important in a peripheral place where local priorities are not the mainstream ones; and in these terms, ritual can be seen as a way of protecting a specific way of life, values, and beliefs that are often antithetical to the mainstream.

As Thompson (2004), has shown, pre-modern customs (such as the use of family household name plates) continue to exist in the contemporary context, with the understanding that going back to the past may provide a blueprint for dealing with the future (Thompson, 2004, 78). This argument can be applied to the ritual context as well. Indeed, a key feature of the *butsudan* ritual is that it is cyclical rather than linear. It connects the past with present and future, the already dead with those yet-to-be born in a continuum; and in doing so, it posits the individual within a wider cosmological time frame that transcends the contemporary and the present time. In this way, ritual can also be seen as a return to the past in order to seize socio-cultural autonomy, and offer a pathway into the future. This becomes an even more effective device at a time characterised by flux and transition, and where concerns of the present and anxieties over the future can make contemporary experience erratic and disorientating.

Finally, rituals continue to connect the family to one another in the more classic Durkhemian sense. As chapter three shows, young people travel back to Takachiho from urban centres to perform these rituals, and at a time where the household boundaries are spatially stretched, ritual is a connective thread that binds

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[256] This is perhaps more a facet of modernity in the UK, rather than Japan, which appears to be more comfortable in the discussion of death in the media and public discourse.

members together and brings them back to the central starting origin point of the household from which they move back-and-forth according to life stage and fluctuating political-economic circumstances experienced at the centre.

Therefore, despite modernity, the effects of global and national flows experienced at the local level, and changes in the inner household sphere, 'little religions'[257] embodied in the household and expressed through syncretic practices remain significant to local people both as a concept, a consciousness – and a technique that has efficacy. This broad backdrop of local religiosity (considered 'superstition' both by discourses of modernity and the 'rationality' evoked within the Jōdo Shinshū sect), reveals complex processes and a syncretic system in which the temple plays *only* a role. While syncretic practices themselves are performed concurrently without prioritising any one tradition by local people, attitudes towards the religious institutions (the temple), and their caretakers (the priests), are ambiguous in the local sphere, where the temple holds a liminal position as an 'outsider' – albeit central to techniques as the key provider of specific memorial rites related to the household ancestors. Indeed, the ancestor consciousness embodied in 'Buddhist rituals' are based upon concepts of connection and continuity for local households, and when combined with broader sycnretic techniques, are part of a seamless whole that makes up the cosmological view of local people in Takachiho.

These rituals and the consciousness that is embodied within them, engender reproduction, protection, and continuity in a transitional world that is constantly shapeshifting. Buddhist temples have been a key technique in this process up until now; however as the urban scholarship has shown, competing, secular service providers can replace them swiftly in the future (Rowe, 2011). In the local context, it

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[257] Which has been coined by Vásquez to indicate syncretic spiritual traditions outside of mainstream religious discourses (2006).

appears that rites remains largely unchanged, as shown by ethnographic research by Kim (2012), and also within this ethnography. On the other hand, in urban Japan, ritual modifies its form, and adapts to changing social circumstances, while the temple as a religious institution that provides services searches for new ways to adapt to the contemporary context (Rowe, 2011).

The *butsudan*, which previously symbolised the power of the temple in the community, and was made according to the requirements stipulated by the Buddhist sect, is now being replaced by new, aesthetic, non-denominational altars that have an effect upon the ways that people relate to the dead (Nelson, 2008). In urban areas, changes in service providers are affecting the forms and understanding of the ritual itself (Rowe, 2000).[258] However, in the countryside, concepts of pacification and spirit pollution connected with ancestorhood remain because they cannot simply be dissolved in a short space of time (Kim, 2012); and this thesis shares the view that the unseen is a *central* element that is all but overlooked – except for a brief cursory nod – in the dominant scholarship on Japanese Religion.

This research is primarily illustrative of the hybridised stage of the present, where instead of a linear progress from traditional to modern in Japan, there is movement back and forth between the transitional porous worlds: between rural and urban, the sacred and secular, the traditional and modern, the local and the global. This is not contradictory, or paradoxical, but the hallmark of the current experience for the people in this thesis. Therefore, in the contemporary context, binary oppositions within a paradigm of linear movement are becoming increasingly unhelpful frameworks for analysis. Conversely, instead, we can see that *synthesis* of

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[258] Rowe (2000) has shown that new service providers speed up the liminal time that it takes to become an ancestor, and that ideas of pacifying household spirits appear to have been replaced by memorialisation of the deceased.

binary opposites is characteristic of the contemporary context; in a world which people continually shape, fashion, adapt, and negotiate.

Transcending theoretical divides and configuring new models (such as transperipheral frameworks, Kuwahara et al. 2007) is important, because in an alternative framework, the local could begin to be seen as a new possibility – even at the forefront of the next stage of modernity. During fieldwork I came across several young people who were leaving urban centres to adopt ecological lifestyles in rural areas in Takachiho and in Kumamoto prefecture; and this movement is now being harnessed by local governments who are initiating projects that help people from urban areas rent farmhouses that have been left without successors. These local places are attractive not just to the retired middle class, but to freelancers, entrepreneurs and people who want to leave city life where they are employed as waitresses, salarymen, office ladies, and factory workers to learn agriculture, begin twenty-first century cottage industries, or work from a more spacious home; and the movement from the centre to the periphery is now being reported in the Japanese national media. These movements are significant not least in the fact that they contradict the notion of the linear as the path of progress. In this conception, the dominant movement of young people who left the countryside to find new lives in the city – a pattern which dominated the late twentieth century – could be reconfigured or supplemented by a movement outwards toward the periphery, as part of a broader model of more sustainable, ecological, and unifying futures.

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Appendix: Key Informants

1. Main Temple: Kamino hamlet
(Population: 1,969)

British *bōmori* (temple wife)
Jūshoku (head priest)
Previous *bōmori* (grandmother)
Previous *Jūshoku* (grandfather)

2. Temple in Takachiho town
(Population 13,276)

(Related to main temple through regional sect affiliation)
Priest Iwao

3.Temple in Gokase Town
(Population: 4,040)

(Related to main temple through regional sect affiliation)
Jūshoku

4. Temple in the suburbs of Kumamoto city
(Population: 731,286)

(*Related to main temple through national sect affiliation at Kyoto)*
Wife to the second priest (substitute *bōmori*)
Heir to the temple

5. Day-care manager
(Related to the main temple through friendship with the clerical family)

6. Government official at the local town hall
(Related to the temple as a colleage of the British *bōmori*)

7. Retired government official: Akimoto hamlet
(Related to the priests through the town hall and as another key figure in town decision-making bodies)

Iihoshi Atsushi:　Owner of Marōdo Minshuku, farm and cottage industry
Webpage：http://takachiho-muratabi.com/farm/

Key local figure who is promoting a sustainable, ecological capitalism that is employing people from local/national spheres by implementing a 'slow food' global model in the local area and developing a Takachiho 'brand'.