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## The afterlife

In: Malá, Zuzana. *Religious practices in the Japanese mountains : from fleeing the hells towards the healthy, sustainable and spiritual practices of the consumer society*. First published Brno: Filozofická fakulta, Masarykova univerzita, 2019, pp. 19-39

ISBN 978-80-210-9197-9; ISBN 978-80-210-9198-6 (online : pdf)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/139113>

Access Date: 01. 12. 2024

Version: 20220831

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## CHAPTER I: THE AFTERLIFE

In my research on present-day religious practices in the mountains, which in the Japanese academic world falls under the category of *sangaku shinkō* 山岳信仰 ‘mountain veneration’ or ‘mountain cult’,<sup>1</sup> the idea of rebirth appeared as an important concept. In the rituals that I observed and participated in during my fieldwork, I came across the idea of rebirth associated with this life. However, since much earlier times the idea of rebirth has been connected to the afterlife. This chapter examines such early historical notions of the afterlife. More specifically, it focuses on the ways they manifest in textual and visual works, as well as in religious practices.

When tracing the history of Japanese concepts of the afterlife, studies in the area distinguish between pre-Buddhist and Buddhist concepts. Based on such distinction, the undifferentiated notions of the afterlife have been viewed as characteristic for pre-Buddhist concepts. In this view the afterlife does not depend on individual actions during one’s lifetime. In contrast to such concepts, the systematized notions of the afterlife, rebirth and the doctrine of karmic causality, introduced from the continent, included post-mortem retribution or reward tied to individual conduct. At the same time, however, there were rituals and practices of merit transference offering a hope for salvific rebirth or at least some ease to the sufferings of those who were condemned to an unpleasant rebirth. It seems, then, that in spite of the karmic laws, the afterlife condition of sinful humans has not been seen as so hopeless. Studies in the area of karmic causality and merit transference have pointed out its contradictory logic (Stone and Walter, 2009; Formanek and LaFleur, 2004).<sup>2</sup> This contradiction however, does not seem to have bothered the practitioners.

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1 I will continue to use the term ‘cult’ in this work in this sense of worship or veneration and the associated practices or institutions.

2 On the doctrine of karmic causality and merit transfer, see LaFleur (1983). On this topic in the Chinese environment, see Teiser (1994).

## Early textual traces

Interpretations of pre-Buddhist concepts of the afterlife have usually been based on textual sources such as *Kojiki* 古事記, *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 dated to the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>3</sup> or texts compiled between the late Nara period (710 – 784) and the early Heian period (794 – 1192)<sup>4</sup> known as *Nihon kokugenpō zenaku ryōiki* 日本国現報善悪霊異記 (from now on abbreviated to the *Nihon ryōiki* 日本霊異記).<sup>5</sup> These textual sources refer to various realms of the dead such as the lands *Yomi no kuni* 黄泉の国 (also *Yomotsu kuni* 黄泉国), *Ne no Kuni* 根の国 or *Tokoyo no kuni* 常世の国 (also just *Tokoyo*).<sup>6</sup> However, there are no known detailed descriptions of these afterlife realms.

Based on a variety of practices connected to notions of the afterlife in pre-Buddhist Japan, researchers are warned to be careful with possible assumptions about views of the afterlife as being homogenous or separately practiced traditions. Based on analysis of the tales in *Honchō shinsen den* 本朝神仙伝<sup>7</sup>, Kleine (2004) has, for instance, suggested that a concept of immortality should be considered an important view of the afterlife. He has also questioned the Japanese origins of the realms (or lands) of the dead. He notes that such concepts are probably modified adaptations of their continental versions (Kleine, 2004: 63).

Yet another perspective on early ideas of the afterlife has been offered by Naumann (2004), who in her study interprets disposal of the dead in burial practices during the Jōmon (12000 – 2000 BCE) and Yayoi periods (500 BCE – 400 CE). She argues that other types of burials co-existed with the practice of abandonment of the corpse or the second burial practice. These were the flexed type of burials (thought to mirror the position of the embryo) and jar burials of infants (the jar resembles the placenta and the shape of the bottom seems to be related

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3 The texts are dated to the years 712 and 720 respectively and the *Nihon shoki* can be abbreviated to *Nihongi* 日本記.

4 The Heian period is sometimes dated to the years 794 – 1185.

5 The texts were compiled around the year 787, and the currently available version of *Nihon ryōiki* probably dates from the year 822. The author is the monk Keikai (also Kyōkai) 景戒, according to *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (1975). Moerman (2005: 50) adds that Kyōkai was a priest from Kōfukuji.

6 The expression *no kuni* may be translated as ‘the land of’. *Yomi no kuni* is sometimes translated as ‘Land of the yellow springs’ and *Ne no kuni* as ‘Land of Roots’. On pre-Buddhist realms of the afterlife: *Ne no kuni*, *Yomi no kuni*, *Tokoyo (no kuni)* see, for example, Blacker (1975) and Senda (1995). For these lands and the concept of Immortals or Eternal land, see Kleine (2004). For *Yomi no kuni* see Kawamura (2000: 37–46). On *Yomi no kuni* and notions about the afterlife in the collection of poems *Manyōshū* 万葉集, see also Naumann (2004, 1996) and Matsunaga and Matsunaga (1974). On *Tokoyo* see also Moerman (2007: 285–287).

7 A collection of stories compiled probably in the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Ōe no Masafusa (Mara, 1986).

to the idea of rebirth) (Naumann, 2004: 52). According to Naumann such a position of the body may suggest a hope for rebirth.

## Buddhist hells

While admitting the gaps in our knowledge of pre-Buddhist notions of the after-life, scholars have argued that these merged with Buddhist concepts of the after-life (Stone and Walter, 2009; Formanek and LaFleur, 2004). Buddhist cosmology introduced to Japan a complex and systematized view of the world. One of the new concepts was the idea of the eight Great Hells. The early textual and visual materials that survived suggest that notions of hells captured Japanese interest.

Hells and the names under which they appear in the later Buddhist tradition can be found already in the ‘Texts of Manu’ or the ‘Laws of Manu’ (*Manusmṛti*), compilation of which is dated between the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE (Berounský, 2012: 22). However, the work which according to scholars became one of the authoritative sources of concepts of the Buddhist hells came from the Abhidharma tradition, and it is known as *Abhidharmakośha*. The text contains systematic descriptions of the hells (Matsunaga and Matsunaga, 1972; Berounský, 2007, 2012; Sadakata, 1997). It was probably composed around the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries by a Gandhara scholar named Vasubandhu (Berounský, 2007, 2012; Hirasawa, 2008, 2013). Vasubandhu later wrote a commentary on *Abhidharmakośa*, which is known as *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Berounský, 2012: 26). This commentary is of particular significance as an important source of the Japanese notions of hells (Hirasawa, 2008, 2013; Gutiérrez, 1967; De Antoni, 2009; Takasu, 2001). It appears under its Japanese name as *Abidatsuma kusharon* 阿毘達磨俱舍論 (abbreviated to *Kusha ron* or *Gusha ron* 俱舍論). In addition to the cosmology of the eight Great Hells, *Kusha ron* also mentions the eight Cold hells together with their names (Hirasawa, 2008; Takasu, 2001).<sup>8</sup> Hirasawa (2008) further informs about a second-century text *Dhīga nikāya* related to the hells, in Japanese known as *Jōagon gyō* 長阿含經. She notes that both texts *Kusha ron* and *Jōagon gyō* describe the eight Great Hells and the sixteen satellite or small hells. However, while *Kusha ron* describes the hells vertically *Jōagon gyō* describes them horizontally.

Chinese translations and commentaries on the texts of the Mahāyāna tradition inherited from the Indian sources were among the early works dealing with Buddhist cosmology in Japan.<sup>9</sup> One of the influential texts in the Mahāyāna

8 Hirasawa (2012) names an additional text of Great commentary on the Abhidharma (*Abidatsuma daibibasha ron* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論, *Abhidharmamahāvibhāsāśāstra*) edited around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

9 See, for example, Hirasawa (2008: 2–4).

tradition was *Saddharmasmṛtiupasthāna*. This sutra is known under its Japanese title *Shōbōnenjo kyō* 正法念處經, and it has been translated to English as ‘Sutra of the remembrance of the true law’ (Matsunaga and Matsunaga, 1972) or ‘Sutra on proper vows for the true dharma’ (Yamamoto, 2010). Known translations are of Tibetan and Chinese origins (Matsunaga and Matsunaga, 1972; Berounský, 2007; Bělka, 2009).<sup>10</sup> This comprehensive text contains complex descriptions of hells and it is likely that it reached Japan by the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Yamamoto, 2010: 85). Moreover, as Yamamoto (2010) demonstrates in her study, the sutra also discusses composition of the body and origin of illnesses. The cosmology of *Shōbōnenjo kyō*, similarly to *Jōagon gyō*, describes the hells as horizontally layered with the sixteen satellite hells for each of the main eight hells (De Antoni, 2009: 19). Yet what makes the text unique is that each of the hells surrounding the eight Great Hells is considered a specific hell (Berounský, 2012: 29). Names of the eight Great Hells in accordance with *Shōbōnenjo kyō* are as follows:<sup>11</sup>

The Hell of Revival: *Tōkatsu jigoku* 等活地獄<sup>12</sup>

The Hell of Black Ropes: *Kokujiō jigoku* 黑繩地獄<sup>13</sup>

The Hell of Assembly: *Shugō jigoku* 衆合地獄<sup>14</sup>

The Hell of Screams: *Kyōkan jigoku* 叫喚地獄<sup>15</sup>

The Hell of Great Screams: *Daikyōkan jigoku* 大叫喚地獄<sup>16</sup>

The Hell of Incineration: *Ennetsu jigoku* 炎熱地獄<sup>17</sup>

The Great Hell of Incineration: *Daiennetsu jigoku* 大炎熱地獄<sup>18</sup>

The Hell of No Interval: *Muken jigoku* 無間地獄 or *Abi kyōkan* 阿鼻叫喚<sup>19</sup>

10 The author of the Sanskrit version, which is no longer extant, is considered to be Aśvaghoṣa, who lived between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries (Berounský, 2007; Bělka, 2009). According to Matsunaga and Matsunaga (1972) it was probably composed between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries by Gautama Prajñāruci. Yamamoto (2010) notes that it was probably translated into Chinese during the Northern Wei period (386 – 534).

11 I am following Japanese names and their translations as given in Hirasawa (2008). However, I am also including the English translation of the hells as they are given in Matsunaga and Matsunaga (1972) and Wakabayashi (2009), respectively, in the notes.

12 The Hell of Repetition, the Hell of Repeated Resuscitation.

13 The Black-roped Hell, the Hell of Black Cords.

14 The Crowded Hell, the Crushing Hell.

15 The Screaming Hell, the Hell of Screams.

16 The Great Screaming Hell, the Hell of Great Screams.

17 The Hell of Burning Heat, the Flaming Hot Hell.

18 The Hell of Great Burning Heat, the Hell of Extreme Heat.

19 The Hell of No Interval, the Hell of No Respite.

Japanese translations for names of the hells deriving from *Abhidharmakośa* differ for:

The Hell of Screams: *Gōkyō jigoku* 号叫地獄

The Hell of Great Screams: *Daikyō jigoku* 大叫地獄

The Great Hell of Incineration: *Dainetsu jigoku* 大熱地獄

*Kusha ron* lists also the eight Cold hells:

頹部陀 *Abuda*, 尼刺部陀 *Nirabuda*, 頹嘶吒 *Ansetta*, 臚臚婆 *Kakaba*, 虎虎婆 *Kokoba*, 嚙鉢羅 *Uhara*, 鉢特摩 *Hadoma*, 摩訶鉢特摩 *Makahadoma*.<sup>20</sup>

Translations of the Sanskrit names for the hells into Japanese were based either on their pronunciation or their meaning (Hirasawa, 2008: 3). Under this rule, the Avici hell might be transcribed based on the pronunciation as *Abi* 阿鼻 or translated based on the meaning as *Muken* 無間 ‘The Hell of No Interval’. In a similar way, the term for hell would be transcribed based on pronunciation as *naraka* 奈落迦 (also 奈落) or translated as *jigoku* 地獄, where 地 stands for ground/land/earth and 獄 stands for prison/jail (Hirasawa, 2008: 3). Japanese names for the above-mentioned Cold hells are an example of those that were based on the pronunciation.<sup>21</sup>

A later text from the 10th century, titled *Ōjō yōshū* 往生要集 the ‘Essentials of salvation’ or ‘Essentials of Pure Land birth’, composed by the monk Genshin (942 – 1017), lists the eight Great Hells, the sixteen satellite hells and the eight Cold hells. However, in this text the names of the eight Cold hells do not appear. The names for the Hell of Incineration and the Great Hell of Incineration – *Shōnetsu jigoku* 焦熱地獄 and *Daishōnetsu jigoku* 大焦熱地獄 – that appear in this text are different from the previous translations. Hirasawa has suggested that various sources of the text are likely to be the reason why the names for these hells differ from the previous translations (Hirasawa, 2008: 10).

A great deal of scholarship has considered the *Ōjō yōshū* to be a text that had special influence on notions of the afterlife in Japan and the main source of inspiration for the visual representations of the hells in Japan. However, there is a disagreement regarding the original texts that Genshin used for his compilation.<sup>22</sup> This text is of particular importance not only because of Genshin’s treatise

<sup>20</sup> The names of the Cold hells are listed as given in Takasu (2001).

<sup>21</sup> Their respective Sanskrit names are: Arbuda, Nirarbuda, Aṭaṭa, Hahava, Huhuva, Utpala, Padma and Mahāpadma (Berounský, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> While Matsunaga and Matsunaga argue that Genshin’s text is an abbreviated version of the sutra *Shōbōnenjō kyō* (1972: 76), Wakabayashi names two sutras *Kise kyō* 起世經 (Sutra of the World

on the hells, but also because it contains instructions for deathbed rituals leading a practitioner to the Pure Land. These types of rites will be discussed later in Chapter 3.

## Returners from death in the *Nihon ryōiki*

The early influence of Buddhist concepts on the local knowledge might be traced within the texts of Japanese origin, dated to the late Nara period and early Heian period,<sup>23</sup> known as the *Nihon ryōiki* 日本霊異記. The *Nihon ryōiki* portrays the afterlife world with a ruler King Enma 閻魔王. His Indian counterpart is Yama raja – who is a ruler of the land of the dead in the Indian Vedas (dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) (Mao, 1997; Teiser, 1994). The character of Yama raja was adapted to Buddhist cosmology and he became a deity called Yama Ten (also known by his Japanese name, Enma Ten), dwelling in one of the eight heavens. Later, as the ruler of the underworld, he assimilated the role of the judge of the dead (Mao, 1997). Such notions of Enma spread through China to Japan and later merged with the cult of the Ten Kings (Mao, 1997).<sup>24</sup>

Among other texts this compilation contains specific narrations about people who once died but came back to life. Interestingly, similar stories of returning to life after death have been preserved in other countries with the Mahāyāna tradition. In Tibet, for example, such stories of people witnessing the afterlife belong to the *delog* genre and in China they belong to the genre of *zhiguai* or ‘accounts of strange’ (see Berounský, 2012: 43–76). Berounský (2012), considering the Tibetan and Chinese stories of the returners from death, points out the striking proximity of their storylines. The following Japanese stories might be viewed as their counterparts.

Some of the stories about revenants from the *Nihon ryōiki* offer details not only about the Japanese concerns with the afterlife but also about procedures for treating the corpses after death. Kawamura, in his book *Jigoku meguri* (2000), gives examples of such tales. A distinctive trait of the Japanese narrations, which Kawamura points out, is a custom of treating the dead called *mogari*. After a person in a story is considered dead, the corpse is neither burned nor buried but

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Arising) and *Shōbōnenjo kyō* (2009: 329) as sources of Genshin’s inspiration, and Gutiérrez argues that descriptions of the hells in *Ōjō yōshū* are based on a sutra called *Kanmuryōju kyō* 観無量寿經 (1967: 280). De Antoni adds other sutras, yet agrees on the great influence of *Shōbōnenjo kyō* (2009: 36). See also Rhodes (2000: 22–23).

<sup>23</sup> Although the original texts were probably compiled in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the extant version dates from about the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>24</sup> The cult of the Ten Kings will be discussed later in this chapter.

placed in a special location while other death rituals are being observed. Meanwhile the deceased person visits the afterlife world and after a certain time – three, five, or nine days – the person comes back to life.

The stories of the revenants in the *Nihon ryōiki* have a similar structure: after a person dies, he or she finds herself in a field, where there is a steep hill. When the deceased climbs to the top of the hill, from this point either the ruler of the afterlife (Enma) or his palace is already visible. In the narratives there is a reappearing element of a bridge leading from the hilltop over a river. Another recurring element of these accounts is a motif of three pathways.<sup>25</sup> The unfortunate person walks on one of the three pathways to places where he or she has to undergo suffering. The punishments are various, but the common torture is carrying an iron or a copper pillar on one's back.<sup>26</sup> After the torture, the revenant is informed by the personnel of hell about the bad deed he or she committed and thereby has atoned for. At the end of the narratives the deceased person returns to life.

The following narrations are selected tales from the *Nihon ryōiki*, also given as examples by Kawamura (2000):

### The story of Ebisu<sup>27</sup>

Ebisu, who earns his living from levying money and rice at a high interest rate, suddenly dies one day. However, on the seventh day he comes back to life. During these seven days his family decides (based on the year in which he was born) not to burn his body but to install it in a special place and to observe the *mogari* ritual.

While dead, Ebisu, accompanied by four envoys, sets out on a journey to the hells. On his journey, he first arrives at a field and a steep hill. He climbs the hill and comes across a road and a bridge leading over a wide river to the golden palace of King Enma. Ebisu observes many people cleaning the road with brooms and repairing the bridge. He is informed that they are doing this for those who copied the Lotus Sutra, so that they can pass to the other side. Near the bridge there are the three pathways.<sup>28</sup>

The first pathway is wide and flat, while the second pathway is covered with a little

25 According to Kawamura (2000), these are the pathways of bad existence, in Japanese known as *akudō* 悪道.

26 In his comparative study on king Enma in China and Japan, Mao (1997) describes additional punishments in the *Nihon ryōiki* such as fastening iron nails into one's body or being beaten with an iron stick. According to this text, the deeds that brought people to Enma are various such as killing, stealing, cheating in business or selfish wasting of a temple's property.

27 Lower scroll (下巻) of the *Nihon ryōiki* number 22. The titles of the stories are not original. I am using simple titles for better orientation.

28 Kawamura explains that the three pathways '*sanzu*' are the three realms of animals, Hungry Ghosts and the hells. The river is not yet designated with the name *Sanzu no kawa* and the notions of separated realms of Hungry Ghosts and animals are also not clear yet.



grass. The third one is overgrown with grass to such a height that it is no longer visible. One of the envoys visits Enma and explains that because Ebisu copied the Lotus Sutra during his lifetime, he is going to be taken to the second pathway. There he stays for six days. For the first three days and three nights, he is forced to carry a hot iron pillar on his back. For the following three days and three nights he is forced to carry a hot copper pillar on his back. On the sixth day three monks appear telling him that this was a punishment for his sin of cheating by using a lighter counterweight on his scale. They also inform him that he is released from the place and allowed to return. When he crosses the bridge, he returns to human life.

Another tale from the *Nihon ryōiki* tells the story of a bonze named Oshikatsu, who was murdered.

#### The story of Oshikatsu <sup>29</sup>

People close to Oshikatsu observed the *mogari* ritual and he came back to life after five days. While dead, Oshikatsu encounters a King at the crossroads.<sup>30</sup> Contrary to the previous narration, in this story there is no bridge leading to his palace and the three pathways are accessible right from the hilltop. Oshikatsu is led to the first pathway which is wide and flat. At the moment when a loud noise like a thunder rumbles, he is thrown into a big cauldron with hot boiling water and steam like flames. At that very moment the cauldron cools and breaks into four parts. Oshikatsu is then approached by three monks who explain to him that what happened was a punishment for the misuse of temple wares. After that, he is brought back to the three pathways, he climbs down the hill and comes back to life.

The last story is of a bonze named Chikō who was brought back to life after encountering Enma and suffering in the hells.

#### The story of Chikō <sup>31</sup>

After speaking ill of a transformed bodhisattva out of jealousy, Chikō was taken to hell. First, he underwent the suffering of boiling in the hot air of hell. After that, accompanied by the hell envoys, they reached a place with the hot iron pillar. Forced to carry the hot iron pillar on his back for three days, Chikō's flesh melted and only his skeleton was left. Fortunately, on the third day Chikō's flesh re-appeared after the hell envoys stroked the pillar with a broom, reciting the words 'revive'. The same

29 Lower scroll (下巻) of the *Nihon ryōiki*, number 23. See also Kawamura (2000: 28).

30 The text of the *Nihon ryōiki* does not mention 'Enma', just the 'King' 〇王 (Based on the original text from the *Nihon ryōiki* in *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, 1975: 305).

31 Middle scroll (中巻) of the *Nihon ryōiki*, number 7.

happened with the copper pillar in the subsequent three days. Finally, Chikō was condemned to the Abi hell located in the North. There, he was baked and roasted for another three days. After that the envoys hit the hell bank and recited words to ‘revive’ again. Chikō was then escorted to the gate of the hell. He was warned not to eat *Yomotsu he mono* ヨモツヘモノ<sup>32</sup> and in the end was brought to life.

In Chikō’s story Kawamura identifies a distinctive motif of a taboo connected to food. In addition, the body, as Kawamura notes, was not burned but it was handled in a similar way to that in the *mogari* rite from the previous stories of the *Nihon ryōiki*. Chikō was dead for nine days which is the longest period of time among the stories related here. Interestingly, a further analysis of the text<sup>33</sup> revealed that while in the previous tales the decisions about procedures related to the corpse are made by the bereaved, in this story the arrangement was made by Chikō himself. Chikō was a Buddhist monk and before he died, he asked his student not to burn his body but to keep it in a closed room. He instructed him as well to tell those who would ask about him that he had gone outside the temple. The way Chikō acted indicates that he expected to be revived.

Accounts of journeys to the afterlife in the *Nihon ryōiki* are marked by a unique topography including a field, a hill and a wide river. An important motif for the purposes of this study is the reoccurring element of a hill. It is likely to indicate a strong relationship between mountains and the afterlife in the Japanese context. Studies have described such a motif of a hill (or a mountain) as a border between this world and the other world (Takasu, 2000; Kawamura, 2000; Fukue, 2005). The first scroll of *Kojiki*, for example, describes a hill dividing this world from the Land of *Yomotsu* (*Yomi*). The name of the hill is *Yomotsu saka* or *Yomotsu hira saka* ‘the Hill of *Yomotsu*’. Indeed, in the *Nihon shoki* also, the god Izanagi escapes from the Land of *Yomi* across the mountain pass and closes it from the world of the living. However, as Moerman (2005) notes, although the site of the goddess Izanami’s corpse was identified with the village of Arima in the Kumano mountains in the province of Kii, the text of *Nihon shoki* also adds that ‘some say that the mountain pass of *yomi* is not any place in particular, but means only the space of time when the breath fails on the approach of death’ (Moerman, 2005: 45). Thus it may refer to both the world of the dead and the time of death.

These early texts also suggest notions about a ruler in the afterlife world, as well as the concept of three alternative fates signified by the three paths. Another interesting part of the Japanese stories is that the dead person who is damned to

32 *Yomotsu he mono* seems to be a similar expression to *Yomotsu gui* that appears in the story of Izanami and Izanagi, in the first scroll of *Kojiki*. The expression refers to the food of *Yomi* (*Yomotsu*) *no kuni*.

33 Based on the original text from *Nihon Ryōiki* in *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (1975: 140).

hell not only witnesses the pain and suffering but goes through his own bodily experience of hell.

The narratives portray King Enma as the only ruler in the afterlife. The character of King Enma became one of the Ten judges in the afterlife – a new concept which was introduced to Japan from the continent. The idea of the one ruler in the *Nihon ryōiki* suggests that the tales of *Nihon ryōiki* had originated before the idea of the Ten Kings was introduced to Japan (Mao, 1997).<sup>34</sup>

## The Scripture on Jizō and the Ten Kings

A mountain which by its name manifestly suggests a border with the afterlife is known in Japan as *Shi de no yama* 死出の山 the ‘Mountain of death’ (死 death or die, 出 go out or depart, 山 mountain). A mountain with such a name appears for the first time in the Scripture on Bodhisattva Jizō and the Ten Kings *Jizō jūō kyō* 地藏十王經.<sup>35</sup> This text is of particular importance here because it contains references to a new concept of the afterlife introduced to Japan from the continent – the cult of the Ten Kings. The Ten Kings became a popular concept among Japanese people between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Wakabayashi, 2009: 346; Kajitani, 1974: 87).

The cult of the Ten Kings was associated with the memorial rites for the deceased. The idea of the afterlife was portrayed by means of the courts in charge of which were the Ten Kings as their respective judges. This cult enriched the doctrine of karmic causality and the concept of transmigration through the Six Realms of existence that had already been known in Japan. Suffering in hell was part of the process of transmigration within the Six Realms. These realms are known in Japanese as *Roku dō* 六道. The quality of the realm into which a person would be reborn is determined by actions during his past life. The Six Realms are hierarchically ordered into six levels from the lowest to the highest realm: Hell *jigoku dō* 地獄道, Hungry Ghosts *gaki dō* 餓鬼道, Animals *chikushō*

34 Wakabayashi (2009) has recognized a similar development in the case of narratives from the Muromachi period *Chikurinji engi* (*emaki*) 竹林寺縁起(絵巻). (The Muromachi period is dated to 1336 – 1573. Alternatively, when the years 1336 – 1392 are designated as the Nanbokuchō period, then the Muromachi period is dated to 1392 – 1573). The older scroll of the narrations depicts only Enma while the later scroll places Enma among the Ten Kings.

35 For more information on the mountain as a special border, see Takasu (2000: 11–19), and Kawamura (2000: 69–71). The term was also used by Fukue (2005). According to Takasu, it appears in *Jizō jūō kyō* for the first time in the cosmological context. This scripture had immense influence on the development of the visualization of the Six Realms and the Ten Kings. It also contains the notion of *Shi ten san* 死天山 (‘*Shi*’ means death, ‘*ten*’ refers to heaven, and ‘*san*’ stands for mountain). The notion of *Shi ten san* was later developed in the text *Jūō kyō santanshō* 十王経贊嘆鈔 which was composed in the Kamakura period and was based on the text of *Jizō jūō kyō*.

*dō* 畜生道, Humans *ningen dō* 人間道, Asura *ashura dō* 阿修羅道 and Heaven *ten dō* 天道.<sup>36</sup>

The novelty of the cult of the Ten Kings consists in the assimilation of the concept of bureaucratic courts, along with the system of rites for the deceased that were observed for 49 days after the death, with notions of the afterlife rebirth in one of the Six Realms of existence. According to this view, after a person dies there is a period of 49 days until that person is reborn in another form. During this time the future rebirth is decided in a process of judgement administered by the Ten Kings (Teiser, 1994).

The textual base for the cult is considered to be the Scripture on the Ten Kings *Jūō kyō* 十王經 which was probably composed in China. The scripture depicts the journey that a deceased person undergoes after death. Seven times on every seventh day the deceased is brought in front of one of the Ten Kings, who figure as judges. Meanwhile, the rites performed by the bereaved provide a way to transfer merit to the deceased and help him or her to ease or avoid hell sufferings, as well as an unpleasant rebirth.

Such rites consisted of the observances which were held seven times on every seventh day after death,<sup>37</sup> and on an additional three days – the 100<sup>th</sup> day, one year and three years after death.<sup>38</sup> However, before the figures of the Ten Kings were assigned to each of these ten observation days, the rites were held without recognition of any established deity for the respective days (Kajitani, 1974: 85–86).<sup>39</sup>

The composition of the Japanese version, known as the Scripture on Jizō and the Ten Kings *Jizō jūō kyō* or *gyō* 地藏十王經 (also known by its longer name as *Bussetsu Jizō bosatsu hosshinn innen jūō kyō* 仏説地藏菩薩発心因縁十王經),<sup>40</sup>

36 *Dō* 道 is a suffix signifying the ‘realm’.

37 These ritual observations, known as *shichishichi sai* 七七齋 (seven-seven observation rites), were held for the sake of the deceased. In addition, studies also mention rites which were held for one’s own sake. These were known as *gyakushu sai* 逆修齋 (Moerman, 2005: 135; Wakabayashi, 2009: 340; Tateyama Museum of Toyama, 2009: 46) or *shōshichi sai* 生七齋 (Hirasawa, 2008). Hirasawa argues that the practice of *gyakushu* rites, which she suggests originated in China, developed into the *shichishichi sai* rites and later mingled with the cult of the Ten Kings (Hirasawa, 2012: 155).

38 Teiser demonstrates that designations for the last three rites are of Confucian origin (Teiser, 1994: 26).

39 Kajitani demonstrates this, based on his analysis of the Diary of Taira Nobunori (12<sup>th</sup> century) and the Diary of Fujiwara no Munetada (11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century). *Shichishichi sai* and *gyakushu sai* described in these texts mention respective deities for each day of observance, however, they were not yet formalized.

40 The information is taken from Teiser (1994), who also gives the English translation of the title: ‘The Scripture spoken by the Buddha on the causes of Bodhisattva Jizō’. Kawamura (2000: 85) refers to the original Chinese version as *Bussetsu yoshu jūō shōshichi kyō* 仏説預修十王生七經 (abbreviated title: *Yoshu jūō kyō*) and its Japanese compilation abbreviated to *Jizō jūō kyō*. Kajitani (1974) refers to the same Chinese text and mentions its alternative long title *Enma(ra)ō jukishishū gyakushu shōshichi jō jō kyō* 閻羅王授記四衆逆修生七往生淨土經 as the fundamental text of the cult of the Ten Kings in Japan.

was probably completed by the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> It was partially based on the Chinese Scripture on the Ten Kings and partially on texts of different origins.<sup>42</sup> Teiser's complex study on the cult of the Ten Kings (1994) traces the changes between the two versions of the script. He explains that the Japanese scripture extends the parts portraying the suffering of the deceased and elaborates the fifth court. There the deceased can encounter not only Enma, but also the Bodhisattva Jizō. The text continues with descriptions of 'the prospects for salvation offered by Jizō' (Teiser, 1994: 59). Bodhisattva Jizō, as is evident also from the title of the Japanese version, complements the figures of the Ten Kings and therefore deserves further attention.

Studies discussing the development and spread of the cult of the Ten Kings around Japan (Kajitani, 1974; Hirasawa, 2008; Kiyomizu, 1993; Teiser, 1994) have stressed the associations between the cult of the Ten Kings and an older cult of the Bodhisattva Jizō.<sup>43</sup>

Early texts related to Jizō were in circulation already around the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup> Judging from the findings of sculptures of Jizō, it is thought that this bodhisattva became popular in Japan around the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Kiyomizu, 1993). Texts from around the 10<sup>th</sup> century present Jizō primarily as a saviour from the hells (Hirasawa, 2008; Hayami, 1975; Kajitani, 1974). Indeed, Jizō figures in the stories from a later compilation *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (dated to the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century), where he appears in the hells or at the trial of the King Enma (Kajitani, 1974: 85).<sup>45</sup>

41 Teiser states it was completed sometime between 1000 and 1300 (Teiser, 1997: 58). Wakabayashi claims that it was composed sometime between 1100 and 1300 (Wakabayashi, 2009: 339). For more on the cult of the Ten Kings and the scripture in China and Japan, see Teiser (1997: 57–62); for the information from the Tibetan environment, see Berounský (2012); for more information about the cult of the Ten Kings in Japan, see Motoi (2004). See also Hirasawa (2008), Wakabayashi (2009), Takasu (2001), Nishiki (2003) and Kawamura (2000). For visual works portraying hell scenes of the Ten Kings, see Ledderose (1998: 163–185) and Tateyama museum of Toyama (2001).

42 According to Hirasawa (2008: 15), the Korean version of the scripture contains verses identical to the Japanese version, which are missing in their Chinese counterpart from Dunhuang.

43 In Sanskrit Kṣitigarbha. On the role of this Bodhisattva in the Cult of the Ten Kings in China and Japan, see Teiser (1994: 6–11, 34–48).

44 Kajitani (1974: 85) considers the Jizō cult to be known in the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Tenbyō period, 710–794). Among early texts originating on the continent that influenced the cult of Jizō were the sutras *Daihōkō jūrin kyō* 大方広十輪經, *Daijōdaishū Jizō jūrin kyō* 大乘大集地藏十輪經 and *Jizō bosatsu hongan kyō* 地藏菩薩本願經. Hirasawa (2008) and Kiyomizu (1993) list texts of Indian origin *Jūrin kyō* 十輪經 (dated to sometime around the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century), together with *Jizō bosatsu hongan kyō* 地藏菩薩本願經, as influential texts on Jizō during the Nara period (8<sup>th</sup> century). In this early time he was not coupled with Enma but with another bodhisattva – Kokūzō 虛空藏 in esoteric type of prayers. Analyses of these texts revealed that his cult was closely related to the Pure Land belief (Kajitani, 1974; Hirasawa, 2008).

45 The 11<sup>th</sup> century stories collection *Reigenki* (also known by its longer title *Jizō bosatsu reigenki* 地藏菩薩靈驗記) is considered to be among the oldest Japanese texts which mention Jizō. It has been stated that the texts of *Reigenki* were influenced by the older Chinese collection of texts *Jizō bosatsu*

The notion of a connection between King Enma and Bodhisattva Jizō can already be found in a story from the *Nihon ryōiki* (9<sup>th</sup> century), in which Enma explains to a visitor to the hells that he is also known as the Bodhisattva Jizō.<sup>46</sup> Paintings of hells depicting Enma as a judge in the hells and Jizō as a saviour reflect the popularity that Bodhisattva Jizō, together with King Enma had gained in Japan. However, the association that developed between them is to be found in the later text of the Scripture on Jizō and the Ten Kings (Kajitani, 1974).<sup>47</sup>

As has been noted by Teiser, the Japanese version of the Scripture on the Ten Kings, in which these two characters appear, is an interesting assimilation of local deities with Buddhist deities (Teiser, 1994: 60). This form of assimilation is known as *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合. This relationship between deities was expressed in the concept of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹<sup>48</sup> which literally means ‘original ground – manifested trace’. It indicates the idea that Buddhist deities, in their effort to save sentient beings from suffering, manifest themselves in the form of local deities.<sup>49</sup> By this logic, the pre-Buddhist deities were combined with the introduced Buddhist deities. Each of the Ten Kings was, for example, coupled with a Buddhist deity, as follows:

Shinkō – ō 秦広王 with Fudō 不動, Shokō – ō 初江王 with Shaka 釈迦, Sōtei – ō 宋帝王 with Monju 文殊, Gokan – ō 五官王 with Fugen 普賢, Enma – ō 閻魔王 with Jizō 地藏, Henjō – ō 變成王 with Miroku 弥勒, Taizan – ō 太山王 with Yakushi 薬師, Byōdō – ō 平等王 with Kannon 観音, Toshi – ō 都市王 with Ashuku 阿閼, Gōdō Tenrin – ō 五道転輪王 with Amida 阿弥陀.

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*ōgenki* (Hirasawa, 2008; Kiyomizu, 1993). According to Hirasawa (2008: 19), the texts of *Jizō bosatsu ōgenki* were compiled by Changjin in 989. Kiyomizu (1993: 48) dates the texts to 986. The texts of *Reigenki* consisted of 31 scrolls. However out of these, three scrolls (the 8<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>) are no longer extant. Although the texts of *Reigenki* have been discussed as the oldest texts to mention Jizō, because only revisions dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century have survived of the original texts (Kiyomizu, 1993), the 17<sup>th</sup> scroll of *Konjaku monogatari shū* actually seems to bear the oldest notions of Jizō (Hirasawa, 2008; Kiyomizu, 1993).

46 Lower scroll (下巻) of the *Nihon ryōiki*, number 9. This story is mentioned also in Hirasawa (2008) and Kajitani (1974).

47 Teiser notes that although Jizō is not mentioned in the Chinese version of the text, he appears in the illustrations to the sutra (Teiser, 1994: 6).

48 This idea became widespread around the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries (Hirasawa, 2008).

49 This idea of manifestations of buddhas is not a Japanese invention, it was known in India and spread through Central Asia to China, Korea and Japan (Smith, 1974: 12). In China, *hon* 本 and *jaku* 跡 were used already in the 4<sup>th</sup> century to indicate the relationship between Buddhist deities and their historical appearances (Hirasawa, 2008: 23; Smith, 1974: 12–13). More on *honji suijaku* can be found in: Itō (2011). On this topic see also Sueki (2003). In English, see for example Arichi (2006), who illustrates the concept on *Sannō* 山王 system at Mount Hiei.

Evidence of this pairing can also be traced in the visual works portraying the Ten Kings and their respective buddha or bodhisattva identity.<sup>50</sup>

This Chapter has so far introduced some of the early texts of continental and Japanese origins bearing various cosmological concepts. These texts reflect not only ideas but also practices such as those of transmitting merits for others, but also on one's own behalf.<sup>51</sup> The first story of Ebisu from the *Nihon ryōiki* illustrates how the punishment of Ebisu was eased because he had copied the Lotus Sutra. In a similar way the copying of manuscripts was practiced in order to transfer merits for the deceased. Besides being sources of knowledge, texts might also serve as ritual tools. The objects of re-production were not limited to texts of manuscripts and sutras, but also included paintings. Such visual images will be the focus of the next section.

## Picturing the damned

The Six Realms of existence, the Ten Kings and various hells or paradises became themes for images of the afterlife rendered as paintings, carvings or statues.<sup>52</sup> These images – partially based on the various Buddhist texts, sutras and scriptures – developed into a rich production. Such works include paintings of the Six Realms known as *Rokudō e* 六道絵, the Ten Kings *Jūō zu* 十王図, and the combination of both *Rokudō jūō zu* 六道十王図.<sup>53</sup> Related types of images are those depicting paradises known as *Gokuraku zu* 極楽図 and paintings of hells

50 For example, in *Hon jūō jigoku zu* 本十王地獄図 (14<sup>th</sup> century, 2 parts, stored in the Idemitsu Museum of Arts), *Hon rokudō jūō zu* 本六道十王図 (16<sup>th</sup> century, 9 parts, stored in Chōgakuji 長岳寺), *Hon jūō zu* 本十王図 also known as *Kenponchakushoku jūō zu* 絹本著色十王図 (15<sup>th</sup> century, 10 parts, kept in Nisonin 二尊院), *Meifu jūō shinzu* 冥府十王之図 (15<sup>th</sup> century, 10 parts, kept in Jōfukuji 淨福寺).

51 For example, the 'pre-emptive funerals' *gyakushu*, or *maikyō* 埋経 – sutra burials were performed, among other reasons, for one's future rebirth in the Pure Land (Moerman, 2005: 135). Hirasawa mentions rites called *shōshichi sai* 生七齋 performed by people pre-emptively for their own afterlife. On contrast, rites for the deceased were known as *shichishichi sai*. Similarly, Wakabayashi mentions *shichishichi sai*, the 'seven seven-day observance' held for the dead, as contrary to the *gyakushu* which were pre-mortem services held for a living person (Wakabayashi, 2009: 340). Moreover, Teiser argues that the rituals addressed to the Ten Kings were also performed during one's lifetime (Teiser, 1994: 26–30). He also describes the pre-mortem and post-mortem memorial rituals in China. Such development, he notes, can be found in both Taoist and Buddhist traditions.

52 The earliest iconography of hell is dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. For the development of the iconography of hell see, for example, Wakabayashi (2004: 285–318) and Hirasawa (2008).

53 According to Kawamura (2000), the inspiration for the motifs in the *Rokudō jūō zu*, in addition to *Ōjō yōshū* and *Jizō bosatsu hosshin innen jūō kyō* 地藏菩薩發心因緣十王經, also came from: *jūō santan shō* 十王贊嘆鈔, *jūō honseki santan shuzen shō* 十王本跡讚歎修善鈔 (abbreviated: *jūō santan shuzen shō* 十王讚歎修善鈔), *jūō santan shuzen shō zue* 十王讚歎修善鈔図会.



known as *Jigoku e* 地獄絵 and their combinations. I will briefly introduce some motifs manifested in such works of art. This will provide the foundation for examining some later works portraying Japanese ideas of the afterlife, which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

## Scenes from the Scripture on Jizō and the Ten Kings

Images depicting the Ten Kings portray the afterlife journey of deceased people through the courts of the Ten judges based on the text of the Scripture on Jizō and the Ten Kings. In their visual representations, the Ten Kings are portrayed as judges with a character for king 'Ō 王' on their headgear, sitting behind a desk in a court-like scene (Figure 1, Figure 2).

According to the scripture, the deceased arrive to the first judge Shinkō 秦広 at the end of the first week after death. In the second week, the way of the sinners leads to the second judge – the second King of hell, Shokō 初江. To reach the second court they have to cross the San zu river *San zu no gawa* 三途の川. The deceased can cross the river either by a bridge, or by a stream of water at a shallow part or at a deep part (Teiser, 1994: 33). The less wrong-doing one has done during his life helps to ease the crossing of the river (Fukue, 2005: 117). Besides the Kings, there are other figures described in *Jizō jūō kyō*. The Japanese version of the scripture mentions two beings waiting on the other side of the river. One is an old woman named Datsueba 奪衣婆 and another is an old man called Keneō 懸衣翁. Datsueba takes the clothes off the sinners who swim across the river and Keneō hangs them on the Eryōdzu tree 衣領樹. The weight of wrong-doing is measured based on how low the branches of the tree bend down (Teiser, 1994: 33; Fukue, 2005: 118; De Antoni, 2009: 46). Then the journey of the deceased continues via the trials in front of the Kings. Motifs from the portrayals of the scene from the second court reappear in the later pictorial representations of the afterlife.

Recurring motifs are also human heads (a woman's head and a man's head) responsible for the records of sinners' deeds. There are also frequent motifs of tools of justice which are used by the Kings in the process of judgement. One is the scale of karma in which sinners are weighed against a counterbalance, usually portrayed as a boulder. And the second tool is the karma mirror, in Japanese known as *jōhari no kagami* 浄玻璃鏡 (also 浄頗梨鏡), showing the deeds from the previous lives of sinners (Figure 2). Japanese, Tibetan and Chinese texts of the Scripture on the Ten Kings mention the scale in the fourth court of King Gokan 互官, while the karma mirror is mentioned in the fifth court of



**Fig. 1:** King Taizan. Detail from the Hon Jizō jūō zu (property of Dairakuji, Edo period 18<sup>th</sup> century, 8<sup>th</sup> of 11 parts) originally published in the Tateyama Museum of Toyama (2001). Image reproduced with permission from the Tateyama Museum of Toyama.





**Fig. 2:** Detail from the Hon rokudō jūō zu (kept in Shōzenji, 17th century, 3rd plate of 7) originally published in the Tateyama Museum of Toyama (2001). Image reproduced with permission from the Tateyama Museum of Toyama.

King Enma. In some representations, however, these tools can be found portrayed solely with Enma.<sup>54</sup>

## The Illustrated stories of Hell and the Stories of Hungry Ghosts

Illustrations known as *Jigoku zōshi* and *Gaki zōshi* are considered to be some of the earliest renderings of the hell images (Wakabayashi, 2009; Hirasawa, 2008). Two renderings of *Jigoku zōshi* 地獄草子 ‘the Illustrated stories of Hell’ or ‘the Hell Scrolls’ have survived and are dated to sometime between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. These two scrolls are kept in the Nara National Museum and the Tokyo National Museum.

The Nara Scroll (12<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>55</sup> contains illustrated stories of the hells consisting of seven painted scenes. The set shows illustrations from the sixteen satellite hells that surround the eight Great Hells.<sup>56</sup> Six of the seven paintings are supplemented by written text. The depicted scenes are believed to be based on *Kise kyō* 起世經 ‘Sutra of the world arising’,<sup>57</sup> which was translated into Chinese by Jnanagupta around the year 600.<sup>58</sup> According to the Nara National Museum, besides the sixteen satellite hells, this set includes a hell for monks, known as the *Shamon jigoku* 沙門地獄. This hell is described in the sutra *Batorasetsu kyō* 馬頭羅刹經, which is part of a voluminous text of *Butsumyō kyō* 仏名經.<sup>59</sup>

The Tokyo scroll is dated to sometime between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. This scroll was kept in the storehouse of Anjū-in Temple in Okayama Prefecture.<sup>60</sup> In this text, the sinners are tormented in the four subsidiary hells: the Current of

54 Such compression of motifs can be found, for example, in *Chikurinji engi*, *Kasuga gongen genki-e* 春日権現験記絵 (Wakabayashi, 2009: 328), as well as images of Kumano Mandala and Tateyama Mandala.

55 The Nara scroll is known as *Genkahon* (Gutiérrez, 1967: 283) and *Masuda-ke kō* (Hirasawa, 2008: 6). It was handed down by the Masuda family.

56 According to the Nara National Museum the sixteen satellite hells are: The Black Sand Cloud, Excrement, The Five Prongs, Starvation, Searing Thirst, Pus and Blood, The Single Bronze Cauldron, Many Bronze Cauldrons, The Iron Mortar, Measures, The Flaming Cock, The River of Ashes, The Grinder, Sword Leaves, Foxes and Wolves, and Freezing Ice. According to Gutiérrez (1967), six of the paintings are accompanied by a text describing the hells of Dung Pit, Place of Standards and Measures, Place of the Iron Mortar, The Cock’s Hell, Send of Black Clouds and Place of Pus and Blood. Translations of the texts accompanying the paintings are available at Gutiérrez (1967).

57 *Kise kyō* is also translated into English as ‘Sutra on the origin of the world’ (Yamamoto, 2010).

58 Information given by e-museum. The scroll with a commentary is available at: E-museum(a).

59 Source: E-museum. The *Butsumyō kyō* consists of sixteen volumes. Hirasawa (2008) notes that the hells for monks in Nara’s *Masuda-ke kō* version were based on the sutra *Daijōrenge hōtatsu mondō hōō shamonkyō* 大乘蓮華宝達問答報応沙門經 or its quotations in *Butsumyō kyō* (Hirasawa, 2008: 7)

60 Information available online at E-museum(b).

the Fiery Hair; the Worm of Fire Sparks; the Place of Clouds, Fire and Fog; and the Shower of Flames and Fire Stones. In the hell of the Shower of Flames and Fire Stones is a river called the River of Boiling Heat with current of copper, iron and hot blood (Gutiérrez, 1967: 285). According to Hirasawa (2008), the Tokyo scroll is based on descriptions from the Hell of Screams in the *Shōbōnenjo kyō* and the depicted sufferings are punishments for killing, stealing, sexual offences or selling alcohol mixed with water.

The Tokyo National Museum and Kyoto National museum preserve yet another set of illustrated scrolls from the late Heian period, the ‘Stories of Hungry Ghosts’ (also the ‘Scroll of Hungry Ghosts’) *Gaki zōshi* 餓鬼草子. The scrolls portray the sufferings of those doomed to one of the Six Realms – the Realm of the Hungry (and thirsty) Ghosts. The scenes of the scrolls are based on various textual sources.<sup>61</sup>

The Tokyo scroll consists of ten sheets of painted scenes. The scenes show the Hungry Ghosts with grey bodies, swollen bellies and ruffled hair as they consume human excrement, urine, blood, sweat, earwax, pus or as they feast on carcasses in cemeteries.<sup>62</sup> While the Tokyo scroll contains only paintings of torments, the Kyoto scroll also contains stories telling readers about the sufferings of the Hungry Ghosts and about the ways to save them from their pitiful condition.

The first section of the Kyoto narrative scroll introduces one of the types of Hungry Ghosts called *shokusui* 食水 ‘Eating water’. These creatures are troubled by extreme thirst. The scenes of the first and the second section depict them in their miserable condition as they try to slake their thirst. The second section depicts the ritual of pouring water over a memorial marker. The accompanying text explains how to make offerings for the deceased. Although the first section also includes a scene of a hell creature punishing a Hungry Ghost, both scenes place the Hungry Ghosts within the human world.

The third and fourth sections relate to the text of *Urabon kyō* 盂蘭盆經 sutra which introduces the story of Mokuren,<sup>63</sup> one of the disciples of Buddha Śākyamuni, in the realm of the Hungry Ghosts. Mokuren is trying to save his mother from this realm. Instructed by the Buddha, he offers food and drink to

61 Yamamoto (2010: 85) argues that the Hell Scrolls and the Scroll of Hungry Ghosts are both based on sutras such as *Kise kyō*, *Urabon kyō* and *Shōbōnenjo kyō*. Moreover, she shows that *Shōbōnenjo kyō* was an important source for the Scroll of Illnesses.

62 A view of the Tokyo scroll is available online at E-museum(c).

63 For information on Mokuren in Japan, see for example Maekawa (2000) and Kawamura (2000: 85). Stories about Mokuren were also popular in continental Asia, but there this character appears under a different name; for Chinese versions about Mulián, see for example Teiser (1994), and for Tibetan versions about Maudgalyāyana, see for example Berounský (2012).

dead monks and from the leftovers provides food for his mother. After portraying a way of relieving the sufferings of the Hungry Ghosts, the fifth section depicts an alternative hope for their salvation, which can be secured after they hear preaching of the Buddha, or due to his compassion. It is based on an unknown text.<sup>64</sup>

The last section retells the story of Ānanda, another of Buddha's disciples, who asked Buddha about the way to save a Hungry Ghost emitting flames from his mouth. Ānanda learns about an incantation and teaches this method first to the hungry ghost and in the next section to the monks. This became the basis for a ritual offering of food and drink to the Hungry Ghosts and spirits of the dead known as *segaki*.<sup>65</sup>

Yet another scroll seems to be related to the scrolls of the Hungry Ghosts and the Hell Scrolls based on a similar style of painting and calligraphy. In her study on the Scroll of Illnesses, Yamamoto (2010) demonstrates the association of the various scenes of this handscroll with passages from the sutra *Shōbōnenjo kyō*, the 'Sutra on proper vows for the True Dharma'. She argues interestingly that the illnesses in the handscroll were chosen because they were understood as the results of karmic retribution. However, the scenes from the handscroll are not of particular interest for the purposes of the current study and therefore they will not be analyzed here.

There were also places of suffering in hells reserved solely for women or children. Such development appears to be based on a concept of pollution connected to women, which intensified from the late Heian through the Kamakura periods (1185 – 1333). Specifically, it was a view of bodily pollution related to childbirth and menstruation. Such attitudes were reflected in visual images of the afterlife.

In some visual representations of the hells, Bodhisattva Jizō appears on the river bank known as *Sai no kawara* 賽の河原.<sup>66</sup> These paintings depict children as they try to pile pebbles into the shape of a stupa, but their efforts are marred by the hell wardens again and again (Figure 9). Their misery is caused by the suffering that the children caused to their mothers in child-birth and to both parents alike by their sudden death. Further, as they are dead, they are not able to compensate their parents for the love and care they received while they were alive (Fukue, 2005: 57–58; Hirasawa, 2012: 131).<sup>67</sup>

64 According to Gutiérrez (1967) and the Kyoto National Museum.

65 For information on the Scrolls of Hungry Ghosts, see Gutiérrez (1967). The Kyoto scroll is available online at E-museum(d).

66 The river is not depicted in some cases.

67 In her study, Barga (1992) explains the character of Jizō as related to the children. Under this understanding he is also known as *Mizuko Jizō* 水子地藏. The term *mizuko* refers to either an un-born

According to a 17<sup>th</sup> century hell-tour tale *Fuji no hitoana sōshi* 富士の人穴草紙 ‘The tale of the Fuji cave’,<sup>68</sup> the children at the *Sai no kawara* are burnt by flames and revived by demons in order to commence the suffering anew. They are rescued by the Bodhisattva Jizō as well as by the tears shed by their mothers in the hell that was exclusively for women: the Blood-Pool hell (Hirasawa, 2012: 131).<sup>69</sup>

Portrayals of the *Sai no kawara* showing Jizō as he protects the children are examples of his saviour character. An explanation given by Chamberlain (1893), who visited many Japanese pilgrimage sites in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, shows an interesting blending of the concept of *Sai no kawara* and the Sanzu River:

Jizō ‘is the superhuman helper of those that are in trouble, especially of dead children. His image is to be seen in every part of Japan, loaded with pebbles, which serve in the other world to relieve the labours of infants who have been robbed of their clothes by the hag named Shōzuka no Baba,<sup>70</sup> and have been set by her to perform the endless task of piling up stones on the Buddhist Styx (Chamberlain, 1893: 356).’

Jizō is not the only figure of a bodhisattva that appears in the role of saviour from hells. Another is the Bodhisattva Kannon *Kannon bosatsu* 観音菩薩,<sup>71</sup> a merciful bodhisattva who vowed to appear in transformations<sup>72</sup> in this world in order to save sentient beings. In one of his transformations, known as *Nyoirin Kannon* 如意輪観音, this bodhisattva became a motif of visual images of the Blood-Pool Hell.

Based on the explanation given in the Blood-bowl Sutra *Ketsu bon kyō* 血盆経,<sup>73</sup> women were tormented in a pool filled with blood (Figure 3, Figure 8 and Figure 9). They were condemned to such sufferings because of the parturition blood lost in delivery or because of menstrual blood, which were both viewed as polluting. The Blood-bowl Sutra tells the story of Mokuren who visited the hells.

child or to an infant. Bargaen notes that until the medieval period, the term *mizuko* included children under the age of seven (Bargaen, 1992: 339). On this topic see also LaFleur (1992).

68 More on the Muromachi period texts from around the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries discussing the hell-tour tales can be found in Keller (2006a, 2006b).

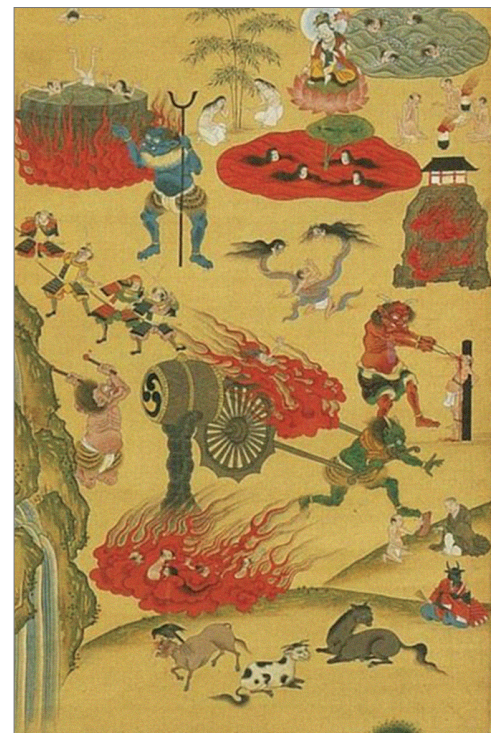
69 In Japanese *Chi no ike* 血の池. It has been translated also as ‘Blood Lake Hell’ (Hirasawa, 2012) or the ‘Hell of Blood Pond’ (Kodate, 2004).

70 *Shōzuka no Baba* is another name for Datsueba. The name comes from *Sanzu ka no baba* 三途河の婆 ‘Old woman of the Sanzu River’.

71 Bodhisattva Kannon or also *Kanzeon bosatsu* 観世音菩薩 is a Japanese name for Avalokiteśvara.

72 Bodhisattva Kannon is known in these transformations as *Henge Kannon* 変化観音.

73 This apocryphal scripture is of Chinese origin, under its longer name *Bussetsu daizō seikyō ket-subon kyō* 仏説大蔵正教血盆経 composed after the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Takemi, 1977). Glassman dates it to around the late 12<sup>th</sup> to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century (Glassman, 2009: 176). Kodate (2004) and Moerman (2005) date its arrival in Japan by the Muromachi period the latest. For translation of the *Ketsu bon kyō* see Takemi (1983).



**Fig. 3:** Detail from the Daisenbō A Tateyama Mandala originally published in the Tateyama Museum of Toyama (2011). Image reproduced with permission from the Tateyama Museum of Toyama.



There he saw many women including his mother suffering in the Blood-Pool Hell. With their bodies soaked in the pool, they are forced to drink the polluted blood which they lost in childbirth or during menstruation. Mokuren asked the ruler of the hell about a way to release women from such torment. He learned that by performing the Blood-bowl rite for three years, followed by a final rite, and by summoning priests to intone the Blood-bowl Sutra, women will be reborn in a Buddha land after a five-coloured lotus flower blooms in the Blood-Pool Hell (Hirasawa, 2012: 113).<sup>74</sup>

The Blood-bowl Sutra and rites associated with the sutra gave hope for salvation to women who, according to the teaching of a sutra called *Tennyō jōbutsu kyō* 転女成仏経,<sup>75</sup> might attain Buddhahood, but only under the condition of transformation into a man. Protection against pollution associated with blood became possible through a ritual transformation of a female into a male. As will be shown later, in the case of rituals in Tateyama the Blood-Pool Sutra played a role in such practices.

Another reason for the torments of women in the Blood-Pool Hell seems to be jealousy. Glassman (2009) mentions two texts from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries with reference to the jealousy of co-wives as a cause of such suffering: the hagiography of Prince Shōtoku, called *Taishiden* 太子伝 and a tale of a young woman killed by her lover's wife (Glassman, 2009: 186).

Jealousy and attachment to a man were considered 'sins' that opened up yet another hell related to women – the Hell of snake-women. Those who during their lifetimes acted possessively towards a man, versus a woman rival, would end up in this hell transformed into snakes (Fukue, 2005: 67; Hirasawa, 2012: 126–130; Kodate, 2004: 131; Kuroda, 2004: 112). The punishment is depicted as a male figure in the grip of two snakes with women's heads (Figure 3, Figure 9).

While the Blood-Pool was a hell destined for women who had children, the Hell of barren women *Umazume no jigoku* 石女地獄 was a place for women who were not able to give birth to children, or who intentionally avoided childbirth. Literally meaning 'the Hell of stone women', it reflects contemporary concerns about abortion and infanticide (*mabiki* 間引き).<sup>76</sup>

74 There are several versions of this sutra. This story is different from the above-mentioned apocryphal text *Urabon kyō* with the same main character, Mokuren – in this case saving his mother from the Hell of Hungry Ghosts and from the text of *Bussecu Mokuren kyūbo kyō* 仏説目連救母経, according to which Mokuren finds his mother in the deepest hell skewered over fire and burned (Fukue, 2005: 51).

75 The sutra spread in Japan from around the Kamakura period. The title 'Sutra of Women Transforming and Achieving Buddhahood' is listed among Japanese dedicatory prayers and vows as early as the late 9<sup>th</sup> century (Hirasawa, 2012: 111).

76 *Mabiki* refers to an induced abortion or infanticide; literally it means 'weeding' (Hirasawa, 2012) or 'thinning' (Glassman, 2009). Edicts issued by Tokugawa Tsunayoshi in 1685 – 1709, known as 'edicts on compassion for living beings', suggest that infanticide was practiced in Japan. So do

Illustrations of this hell portray women as kneeling near a bamboo plant and poking the ground (Figure 2, Figure 3). They are trying to find a bamboo seed. The bamboo sprout which represents a new life has been interpreted as a symbol of the child that they never had (Moerman, 2005; Fukue, 2005; Kuroda, 2004). It has been suggested that the tool which the women use to poke in the ground is a candlewick (Fukue, 2005; Moerman, 2005). In addition, Fukue states that candlewicks were in the past used as contraception methods.

Notions of rebirth in the afterlife were introduced here because they reappear in later visual imagery of holy mountains and also because they provide a foundation for later religious practices. As was mentioned before, early Japanese notions of the afterlife encompassing the idea of rebirth revealed that mountains figured as an important element in the spatial logic of these concepts. Not only textual, but also material culture that has survived suggests that mountains became the space where notions of the afterlife were imagined, practiced and lived. Moreover, concepts of mountains as places connected to death or the dead, various realms, mountain ascetics, hunters, various deities, religious and spatial restrictions, rituals or other embodied practices were echoed in legends and narratives about these spheres, as well as in their visual representations. The next chapter presents an example of visual objects in which such notions are reflected. These are images of holy mountains from the late Edo period known as Tateyama Mandala.

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the illustrations known as *mabiki-zu*. On *mabiki*, see for example Motoko (1997) and Watari (1999: 197–243).

