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**The Tateyama cult**

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# CHAPTER III: **THE TATEYAMA CULT**

This chapter will look at religious practices that aim to affect people's fate in the afterlife, and more narrowly at some religious practices intrinsic to the Tateyama cult. The case of this pilgrimage site will serve as an example of how such rituals and ideas have spread around the country. Furthermore, as the current work views religious practices also as a means of financial support for pilgrimage sites, this section introduces religious practices as linked to the conditions under which the Tateyama cult was sustained, declined and finally vanished.

## Aspirations for rebirth in Heavens

One of the highly influential works in the context of concepts of the afterlife and ways of influencing the inexorable karmic doctrine is Genshin's *Ōjō yōshū*. Genshin completed this work in 985. His treatise on *ōjō* 'rebirth' influenced not only the imagination of hells but also the way of dying itself. This was because in his work Genshin included instructions for rituals enacted at the last moments before death which could have an impact on rebirth. They are known as deathbed practices. Moreover, *Ōjō yōshū* had its role in popularizing devotion to the belief that one could be re-born in 'the Pure land of Utmost Bliss in the west' (Horton, 2009; Stone, 2009).

Genshin was a leader of a society called *Nijūgo zanmai-e* the 'Twenty-five Samādhi society' on Mount Hiei. This society began a dramatic performance of *mukaekō* 迎え講 rituals. These were rituals during which a deathbed practice was enacted. Such rituals are strongly related to the idea of the Pure Land. Participants enact the scene of *raigō* 来迎 where a buddha descends from the heavens to welcome a deceased person and escort her to a paradise. It is very important

to perform such deathbed practice in the right way in order to achieve a pleasant rebirth in one of the paradises (Stone, 2009, 2007; Horton, 2009).[1]

Such a *raigō* scene depicting the descent of Buddha Amida with Bodhisattva Kannon and Bodhisattva Seishi, or of Amida accompanied by a retinue of twenty-five bodhisattvas, became a typical motif in the Tateyama Mandala.[2] Therefore this concept deserves some explanation.

According to studies by Horton (2009) and Ten Grotenhuis (1983), the concept of *raigō* has its origin in Central Asia and China and developed from an earlier idea of Buddha appearing to a person. This idea is known in Japanese as *genzen* 現前. The first text that used the term *raigō* was 'Sūtra of contemplating the Buddha of immeasurable life' *Kanmuryōju kyō* 観無量寿経 (Horton, 2009: 29; Ten Grotenhuis, 1983: 61).[3] This text seems to be relevant to the development of *raigō* because its commentary was quoted by Genshin in his instructions on deathbed ritual (Horton, 2009: 32). This sutra contains a story of an Indian prince who imprisoned and attempted to murder his parents. When his mother begged Buddha Śākyamuni for a hope for salvation, she had a vision of the paradises of the ten directions and she expressed her wish to be born in the Western Paradise. The Buddha revealed to her a practice of sixteen meditations (or contemplations) which would lead to a birth in the Pure Land.[4]

The main commentator on this sutra was Shandao, a Chinese patriarch, who lived in the 7th century. He explains a series of meditations (also contemplations) which lead to nine various degrees of birth in the Pure Land. Each of these degrees is associated with an image of *raigō* (Buddha coming to welcome and escort the deceased). However, in each of the births the image of *raigō* differs.

*Ōjō yōshū*, Horton (2009) argues, was the first text to focus on the *raigō* scene. The scenes of *raigō* were produced as painted images and were used in deathbed rituals. According to a description of one such ritual in *Ōjō yōshū*, the dying person would hold threads attached to an image of the Buddha at the moment of death (Horton, 2009:41).[5] Horton also notes that performing the *raigō* scene in

1 For more details about the practice of deathbed rituals and *mukaekō* rituals, see studies written by Stone (2009, 2007) and Horton (2009).

2 Sanskrit equivalents for the triad of Amida, Kannon and Seishi are: Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta.

3 Studies date the composition of this sutra to around the 5th century in Central Asia (Horton, 2009: 29; Ten Grotenhuis, 1983: 61). The concept of Amida appearing to or welcoming the deceased also appears in *Muryōju kyō* 無量寿経 (Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra) and *Amida kyō* 阿弥陀経 (the Smaller Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra), but not as the whole concept including escorting to the Pure Land (Horton, 2009: 29).

4 For images known as the *Taima mandala* depicting iconographic rendering of *raigō* based on this sutra, see Ten Grotenhuis (1983).

5 According to the Diary of Fujiwara no Munetada (12th century), a *Gōshō mandala* 迎接曼荼羅 (*gōshō* are mandalas depicting a *raigō* scene) was used during the *gyakushu sai* rite, while the Diary of

*mukaekō* rituals had moved from the original place of the society *Nijūgo zanmai-e* at Mount Hiei to Kyoto (between 966 – 1027) and to locations associated with death. Meanwhile, the rituals gradually took on various forms.

It is here, where we can observe a link between these rituals and the Tateyama cult – a locality associated with death and with a ritual known as the Cloth Bridge Consecration rite, specific for the village of Ashikuraji. The Cloth Bridge Consecration rite *Nunobashi* (or *Nunohashi*) *kanjō e* 布橋灌頂会[6], an important motif in the Tateyama Mandala, shares some characteristics of ritual enactments of Buddha Amida accompanied by the bodhisattvas welcoming a dead person who is reborn into a paradise.

Before turning to a further explication of the Cloth Bridge Consecration rite, some other rituals for women, aware of the blood pollution they cause and the terrifying fate assigned to such sin, will be discussed here.

## Unblessed women

Because the female supporters were unable to take part in the ritual ascent of the mountain, the representatives from Tateyama distributed to them texts of the Blood-bowl Sutra (Fukue, 2005: 8; Kodate, 2004: 133). Women were not able to perform the mountain pilgrimage because they were not allowed to enter the mountains. This restriction called *nyonin kinsei* 女人禁制 or *nyonin kekkai* 女人結界 was not only the case in Tateyama but also for other worshipped mountains around Japan.[7]

Women turned to the Blood-bowl Sutra for help because they were worried about their afterlife. Formanek mentions that those who climbed Tateyama could help their female relatives by throwing a copy of the Blood-bowl Sutra into the Blood Pool at the top of the mountain[8] to save them from sufferings in the Blood Pool Hell (Formanek, 1998: 171). Moreover, Tateyama offered to women

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Taira Nobunori mentions *Amida Butsu jukkai mandala* 阿弥陀仏十界曼荼羅 (associated with the concept of the Ten worlds) as part of the rite (Kajitani, 1974: 85–86). For more information on deathbed practice inspired by *Ōjō yōshū*, see Stone (2009).

6 Also *Nunob(h)ashi daikanjō hōe* 布橋大灌頂法会.

7 In these expressions, *nyonin* stands for 'women', *kinsei* has the meaning of 'prohibited' and *kekkai* can be translated as 'enclosed world'. For information about the restriction, see Ushiyama (1996). He gives two reasons for such restriction: one was based on the idea of ritual purity – in this case, men also had to observe purification, for example at Mount Kinpusen in Kumano, by fasting before entering the mountain. Another reason was aimed at maintaining the monastic precepts. For restriction in Kumano see also Moerman (2005), and for Tateyama see Fukue (2005). Similarly, Ambros (2008) mentions the prohibition in Ōyama.

8 It is located at Murōdō, around 2500 metres above sea level.

the possibility to participate in purification rituals at the foot of the mountains and rituals such as *nagare kanjō* (flowing consecration) or the 'Cloth Bridge Consecration rite'.

In the ritual of *nagare kanjō* a wooden memorial stake was placed into the river on behalf of a woman who died in childbirth. It stayed in the river until the flowing water washed away its writing and the woman was then believed to be saved (Hirasawa, 2012: 138–139). In his description of *nagare kanjō,* Glassman (2009: 185) mentions some varieties in this practice such as floating banners, which were floated out to sea and rivers; standing short wooden slat-stūpas; and hanging a rope from the side of a bridge. The most common practice was the suspension of cloth on two or four poles above a river or along a roadside. This custom is also described by Kodate (2004) who notes that this ritual was performed in many variations. An example given by Kodate adds some details of the materials used in *nagare kanjō* such as the red colour of the cloth and the poles made from bamboo (Kodate, 2004: 133).[9] The practice of *nagare kanjō* can be also identified in the images of the Tateyama Mandala.[10]

## The Cloth Bridge Consecration rite

The Cloth Bridge Consecration rite appears on the mandalas of the Ashikuraji filiation. Based on the mandalas and contemporary period documents, it is known that the rite took place in Ashikuraji, at the foot of the mountains, between the Enma Hall (the hall of King Enma) and the Uba Hall (the Hall of the mountain goddess Uba). The rite started in the Enma Hall with a ritual expiation of sins and continued by crossing the bridge, covered with a white cloth, between the Enma Hall and the Uba Hall. On their way to cross the bridge, the participants were guided by an escort group *indō shū* 引導衆. At the bridge, the participants met with a welcoming group *raigō shū* 来迎衆 and then both groups proceeded to the Uba Hall. After the participants reached the Uba Hall, a ritual was performed inside the hall. Then, the participants walked out from the Uba Hall, and accompanied by the priests, walked back via the Cloth Bridge towards the Enma Hall.

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9 Kodate explains that the ritual is also performed for the sake of the people who drowned or for those who have no living relatives to commemorate them (Kodate, 2004: 133).

10 The version of the Tateyama Mandala from the pilgrim lodge Nikkōbō日光坊 – Nikkōbō A – consists of a sole part depicting the wooden slats used in *nagare kanjō* and the Cloth Bridge rite. The wooden slats are also visible in the renderings of the Tateyama Mandala from: Tsuboi-ke B 坪井家, Saeki-ke 在伯家, Sōshinbō A 相真坊, Hōsenbō 宝泉坊, Kisshōbō 吉祥坊, Ryūkōji 龍光寺, Etchū Tateyama kaizan engi dai mandala 越中立山開山縁起大曼荼羅, Senzōbō 泉蔵坊, and Tateyama machi 立山町.

The origins of the rite are not clear. The documented history of the rite on the bridge dates to the year 1614. Documents from 1806 and 1614 both mention that the wife of Maeda Toshiie with the wife of Maeda Toshinaga paid a visit to the Uba Hall Middle Shrine at Ashikuraji and participated in a rite during which they crossed the 'bridge covered with white cloth' in 1614.[11] The circumstances of the observance of the rite at the bridge are not known. According to the Tateyama Museum of Toyama (2009: 46), it is possible that the wives came to perform a rite for the sake of the deceased Maeda Toshinaga, just as it is possible that they performed the rite for themselves as a pre-emptive act to avoid an unwanted rebirth, or to pursue a policy of appeasement regarding the priests from Ashikuraji.[12] Nevertheless, this is the first reference to a ritual covering of the bridge with cloth during a rite. The bridge appears in the documents simply as 'the bridge in front of the Uba Hall' or 'Ubadō Middle Shrine bridge', and also as *Ama no Ukihashi* 天の浮橋[13] (Fukue, 2006: 17; Hirasawa, 2012: 150). The name *Ama no Ukihashi* suggests an association with Shintō, however, the bridge was known under this name even at the time when the content of the rite points to its Buddhist character; only later on was the bridge referred to as 'the Cloth Bridge' (Fukue, 2006: 17). Fukue has also explained that although a reference to 'the Cloth Bridge in front of the Uba Hall' appears in a document from 1760, it was not until 1820, which was the year when the bridge was rebuilt, that the name 'Cloth Bridge' was established.

As already mentioned, the earliest reference to the rite is restricted to its name 'the Cloth Bridge in front of the Uba Hall'. There are no known details of the content of the rite until the year 1827. An analysis of twenty documents related to the rite within the time range of 1722 to 1859, made by Fukue (2006), revealed only that the rite was held during the autumn equinox and the documents also state that in 1840 the rite was accompanied by music.

Given the gaps in the records of the rite, it is difficult to claim any certain assessment of the influences on its enactment. Studies have noted that the name of the bridge, the name of the rite, as well as the content of the rite changed over time (Fukue, 2006; Hirasawa, 2012: 150; Averbuch, 2011: 16).[14] Analyses of the historical documents related to the rite revealed various associations such as its salvation aspect or ideas of pure lands, as well as practices of blood lineage linked

11 Fukue (2006: 16–17). See also Tateyama Museum of Toyama (2009: 46), Hirasawa (2012: 149) and Averbuch (2011: 16).

12 This was related to the historical military character of the Ashikuraji priests.

13 *Ama no ukihashi* is a mythological bridge that connects earth and heaven. By this name the bridge appears in the documents from 1722, 1795 and 1805 (Fukue, 2006: 16). The earlier document from 1674 mentions reconstruction of the bridge – Uba Hall Middle Shrine dated from the year 1590 (Fukue, 2006: 16; Hirasawa, 2012: 149).

14 For details, see Fukue (2006) and the Tateyama museum of Toyama (2009: 47–49).

to the Shingon tradition.[15] Furthermore, the rite was classified as a *gyakushu* rite (also known as a pre-emptive funeral).[16] Such rites, as was mentioned above, were associated with the afterlife but performed while the recipients of the merits were still alive (Gorai, 1991: 153–154; Hirasawa, 2012: 155). Practices of ritual death and rebirth indicate yet another influence – that of mountain veneration and the tradition of mountain asceticism known as Shugendō 修験道.[17] Moreover, the rite's connection to the worship of the local mountain goddess Uba provides an example of the mingling of local and Buddhist concepts.

Details from the historical documents analysed by Fukue demonstrate the heterogeneous aspects of the rite. The documents from 1842, for example, reflect the combination of Tendai Buddhist tradition and the esoteric Shingon tradition in the ritual (Fukue, 2006: 22). On the other hand, 'The Legend of the origin of the Uba of Tateyama' *Tateyama o Ubason ryaku yurai* 立山御うば尊略由来 suggests a role of the rite in protection of crops and also illustrates a combined Shintō and Buddhist character of the rite (Tateyama Museum of Toyama, 2009: 33–36). Fukue (2006) has suggested that the terminology used in the documents describing the rite indicates a Buddhist character of the ritual, specifically terms such as: *jōbutsu* 成仏 'become a buddha' or 'attain Buddhahood', *sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏 'become a buddha in this body' or 'to attain Buddhahood in this life' (1827), *kanjō shugyō* 灌頂修行 'consecration practice' (1827, 1832),[18] *gokuraku jōdo* 極楽浄土 western Paradise of Amida and *raigō* (1820, 1831).

The idea of *jōbutsu* emphasizes an association with the idea of rebirth. As expressed by Williams (2009: 217), it implies an escape from suffering in the hells and this world to a higher realm, often imagined as a Buddhist heaven or the Pure Land. Furthermore, according to one possible interpretation, the bridge represents a connection between this and the other world. The participants dressed in white attire are dead on a symbolic level and the group coming to guide them across the bridge represents Amida and his entourage escorting the deceased to the Pure Land. Such an understanding indicates a similarity with the *mukaekō* rituals described earlier.[19]

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15 Esoteric Buddhist tradition.

16 Translated as 'pre-emptive funeral' by Tanabe (1988: 40). Also referred to as a prophylactic rite (Glassman, 2009: 180).

17 For information about Shugendō in general, see for example books published in the edition of *Sangaku shinkō shi kenkyū saisho*, Sekiguchi (2009), Miyake (2001b, 2011), Miyake and Earhart (2001), Gorai (1989, 2008) and Lobetti (2014). The relation to the cult of mountains can be found in Hori (1966). See also Swanson (1981), whose study pays particular attention to the Yoshino-Kumano pilgrimage.

18 *Kanjō* is an expression used in Esoteric Buddhism (Fukue, 2006: 20).

19 The similarity with *mukaekō* rituals was noted by Hirasawa (2012: 152) and Averbuch (2011: 15). Both authors mention in this context a *mukaekō* ritual in Taima dera. The Cloth Bridge ritual has also been

However, the rite also seems to be related to the practice of ritual leading of the deceased to the other world known as *indō* 引導. Walter (2009) has stated that *indō* rites probably evolved in China and began as a Zen funeral practice in Japan. Later they were appropriated by other Japanese Buddhist traditions. In the Shingon tradition, such rites consist of an esoteric consecration rite called *kanjō* 灌頂.[20] Rituals of *kanjō*, which were originally performed to consecrate Indian kings, were adopted by Esoteric Buddhism and developed into rites of initiation, transmitting the dharma or ritual establishment of a connection with the Buddha. According to Walter, they became the most important aspect of the Shingon funeral rites, and Japanese Buddhist funeral rites in general (Walter, 2009: 267–268). Indeed, in the case of the Cloth Bridge Consecration rite the participants ritually established a connection with a deity. Moreover, according to Fukue, the rite served as a means of awareness of the Buddhahood innate to all people (Fukue, 2005: 113).

Besides the aforementioned similarities between the Cloth Bridge rite and *mukaekō* and *indō* rituals, the Cloth Bridge rite shows a characteristic of the Shingon *kechien* 血縁 (karma binding) rituals. This is because the rite has also been an opportunity to gain a promise of salvation by tying a karmic knot and establishing a blood tie *kechien* with Amida, Dainichi[21] or Uba (Averbuch, 2011: 13; Hirasawa, 2012: 178; Fukue, 2006: 15). To certify such a karmic knot, certificates of a blood lineage *kechimyaku* 血脈 were issued for the pilgrims to Tateyama. No certificates issued for the participants in the Cloth Bridge rite have survived, but woodblocks and envelopes for such occasions were preserved. Furthermore, documents of the Tateyama cult mention a distribution of the lineage certificates at the rite (Hirasawa, 2012: 156–157; Fukue, 2005: 109).

Fukue characterizes a *kechimyaku* as a charm which certifies an initiation into the proper way of a religious mystery (Fukue, 2005: 109). In his description of an Edo period Cloth Bridge rite, Fukue (2005) states that the charm was in a shape of a foldout bag imprinted with the words *kechimyaku* and *hennnyotennan* 変女転男 'transformation of a woman into a man'.[22] Inside the bag were 136 scrolls of the Blood-bowl Sutra. [23] Such a charm promised that a woman would

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compared to the *Ōkagura jōdo iri ritual* of the year-end festival *Hanamatsuri* in Okumikawa (Averbuch, 2011; Hirasawa, 2012; Gorai, 1991). Averbuch claims that the similarity is based on the element of purifying the path to the other world, while Hirasawa argues it is the term *Jōdō iri* (entering the Pure Land).

20 Sanskrit *abhiṣeka*. Some authors (Stone, 2009) have used the term 'esoteric initiation'.

21 In Sanskrit Mahāvairocana. The main Buddha of the Shingon tradition. This deity embodies the universe and is linked to the thought of the Mandala of the Two Worlds.

22 As was mentioned earlier, the idea of the transformation into a man was linked to the 'Sutra of Women Transforming and Achieving Buddhahood'. Averbuch suggested that this signified their spiritual male body (Averbuch, 2011: 16).

23 Gorai (1991) mentions that *henjōnanshi* 変成男子 (equivalent of *hennnyotennan*) and *ketsubon kyō charms* were given to pilgrims in Tateyama.

not fall into the Blood Pool Hell, and moreover, being reborn as a man, she could reach the Pure Land (Fukue, 2005: 109). Fukue (2005) has also argued that such practices indicate an association of the cult with the Shingon tradition. Similarly, Hirasawa (2012) associates the rite with the esoteric tradition, noting that the certificates contained a secret formula known as *hajigoku* (hell-sundering) and a magic formula used in Esoteric Buddhism, which eliminates sin or bad karma – *kōmyō shingon* 光明真言 (light mantra).[24]

Within the framework of rituals related to *kechimyaku* it should be mentioned that they have also been used in the Zen tradition of Buddhism as a special Zen lineage chart linking the newly ordinated precept to Śākyamuni Buddha. Through the Zen rituals of receiving *kechimyaku*, the participants were hoping for a magical transformation of karma (Williams, 2009: 217). Names of the participants were ritually connected to the Buddha by a red line symbol of the blood (and spirit) lineage. The *kechimyaku* were originally symbols of a lineage with the Buddha which was handed down from a master to a disciple. Later, however, (similarly to the *kōmyō shingon*) they became associated with the power of erasing evil karma and deliverance to a higher realm (Williams, 2009: 217).[25] Moreover, they too came to be used as magical talismans for participants in rituals. Because of such similarities, it is hard to specify the dominant tradition in the rite.

Scholars have also argued that the rite reflects a religious concept known as *niga biakudō* 二河百道 (two streams white path) (Gorai, 1991; Fukue, 2005).[26] The idea of *niga biakudō* is to be found in the sutra *Kangyōsho* 観経疏 (another name for *Kanmuryōju kyō*) in a section called *Sanzengi* 散善義 (Fukue, 2005: 115). The concept of *niga biakudō* uses an image of two river banks divided by a river as a metaphor for the Pure Land and this world. The northern stream of the river is filled with water and the southern stream with burning fire, yet there is a white path across the river, leading to the Pure Land. However, the pathway is thin as a string and those who look aside on their way might fall down. It was believed that those with heavy loads of sins would not be able to cross the bridge and would fall into the river below which was full of serpents, dragons and demons (Formanek, 1998: 172; Gorai, 1991: 182). Amida and Shaka, however, are calling

24 Also 'bright light mantra' (Walter, 2009: 250), 'the mantra of radiant light' (Stone, 2009: 66) or 'halo chant' (Williams, 2009: 214). It has also been used in death rites to empower sand and it is recited before and during the rite of sprinkling the sand on the body of the deceased person in the coffin, to ensure rebirth in the Pure Land (Walter, 2009: 253; Stone, 2009: 66).

25 According to Williams, this shift seems to have its beginning in Tokugawa Sōtō Buddhism.

26 Gorai refers to the same name of a bridge 'the Cloth Bridge' *Nuno hashi* at Mount Haku and stresses the similarity with *niga biakudō* rituals. An interpretation presented in an information pamphlet from the event in 2014 likewise introduced the ritual as related to the idea of rebirth in the Pure Land, *mukaekō* rites and the idea of *niga byakudō*.

on those who cross from the river banks. Only those with faith can pass. The faith in Amida and Shaka will help them to cross via the white pathway.[27]

Scholars have also viewed the rite as a journey to death, to paradise and back to this world based on similarities with Shugendō rituals (Gorai, 1991; Fukue, 2005; Tateyama Museum of Toyama, 2009; Hirasawa, 2012). The similarity is based on a classification of Shugendō rituals as *gishi saisei* 擬死再生 – rituals imitating death and rebirth, by Gorai Shigeru. Participants in Shugendō rituals enter a mountain area which is seen as the other world including hells and paradises. Entering a mountain area represents symbolic death. Austerities that are practiced on the mountains purify the practitioners and expiate their sins. When they leave the mountains they are re-born.[28] This symbolism has been actually enacted in embodied practices. In such a view, crossing the bridge, similarly to the ritual entering of a mountain area, is a symbolic passage from this world to death followed by a return to life.[29]

## Uba

Although the aforementioned classifications convey the impression that the Buddhist tradition acquired dominance over the ritual, it also seems there was not a unified way of enacting the rite. One characteristic of the ritual which cannot be overlooked is a mixture of traditions, among them a connection with the local mountain deity Uba. As mentioned above, the participants at the Cloth Bridge rite were establishing a 'blood tie' with Amida, Dainichi or Uba.

Worship of Uba[30] has been an integral part of religious practices in Ashikuraji. Uba – a local deity of Ashikuraji – has been categorized as a mountain deity (mountain goddess) *yama no kami* 山の神 (Fukue, 2005) or an old woman of the mountain *yamanba* 山姥 (Hirasawa, 2012). Fukue (2005: 102) has argued that the

27 This explanation can be found in Fukue (2005) and Gorai (1991). This idea was also depicted in the *niga byakudō* paintings. This type of image shows two bodhisattvas at the river banks standing on the sides of a bridge leading over the stream of water and fire. According to Gorai, it is Amida who will save those who have faith. Further, the river is full of dragons and the pathway is thin as a string (Gorai, 1991: 182). The dragons in the river are depicted in some images of the Tateyama Mandala.

28 On this kind of interpretation of practices in Tateyama, see for example Formanek (1993: 171). In the mounatins of Dewa Sanzan and Yoshino-Kumano area, during the period of seclusion in the mountains the participants proceed through the Ten Worlds (the Ten Realms of transmigration) including the three evil realms *akudō*: the Realm of Hell, Hungry Ghosts and the Realm of Animals. While being ritually dead and reborn, they pass through the past, present, future, and the symbolic worlds of the Womb and the Diamond mandala (Watanabe, 2015: 3).

29 The passage through mountains during the Shugendō rituals is not limited to one interpretation. The mountain also represents the mother of the participant who is reborn inside the mother's womb and grows into a newborn.

30 Also *Onba, Unba* or *Umba*.

worship of Uba in Ashikuraji connects two characters of this deity; as a mountain goddess, she was linked to the veneration of the mountain Dainichidake 大日岳 (one of the peaks in Tateyama), as a water deity *mizu no kami* 水の神 she figured in the veneration of mountain rivers. Sculptures of Uba that have survived in various localities around Japan suggest that this type of mountain deity was not worshipped solely in Ashikuraji.[31] However, there are no traces of Uba worship in Iwakuraji.

During the Edo period, sculptures of Uba were worshiped in the Uba Hall in Ashikuraji. The portrayal of the Uba Hall as one of the motifs on the Tateyama Mandala images reflects the importance of Uba in the cult of Tateyama. Uba is depicted as an old woman with wide open eyes, sagging breast, in a sitting position with one knee raised and one leg crossed under her body. In some of the mandalas the sculptures of Uba are visible inside the Uba Hall. However, the number, the size or the expression of the Uba sculptures in the paintings varies. In a similar manner, references to the sculptures differ in the surviving documents. The oldest of the extant sculptures, inscribed with the year 1375, is currently kept in the Tateyama Museum with other Uba sculptures from the Uba Hall. Because the Uba Hall was destroyed, some of the Uba sculptures are still kept in the Enma Hall, in Ashikuraji.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Fukue identifies an overlapping of the motifs from the stories of Mokuren and Ariyori in the scenes from the Avici hell depicted in the paintings of the Tateyama Mandala. Studies of the *Tateyama daiengi* foundation legends have demonstrated the same combination in the story of Ariyori (Jikō).[32] In these accounts Uba figures as the mother of Ariyori (Jikō) and falls into the Blood Pond Hell. After Ariyori (Jikō) performs a rite to save her from the hell, she transforms herself into Uba (in the earlier version) or Nyoirin Kannon (in the later version of the legend).[33]

When the cult of the Ten Kings spread in the area, the character of Datsueba blended with the character of Uba (Hirasawa, 2012; Fukue, 2005).[34] In the images of the Tateyama Mandala, Datsueba is portrayed close to the Uba Hall in a style similar to that typical of the renderings of Uba. Associations of these two characters

31 See for example Fukue (2005).

32 Texts of the legend from Issankai (the earlier version) and from Senzōbō (the later version) (Hirasawa, 2012).

33 Because she was a local deity of Ashikuraji, her identity as Ariyori's mother is missing in the texts of *Tebikigusa* from Iwakuraji. Moreover, Iwakuraji disputed some of Ashikuraji's interpretation of Uba. While Iwakuraji's document *Tateyama tebikigusa* agrees with Uba/Datsueba's location near the Sanzu River, it also claims that considering her to be the tutelary deity of *Tateyama daigongen* is a misstatement (Hirasawa, 2012: 172).

34 The first legends manifesting the influence of the Cult of the Ten Kings on the Tateyama cult are considered to be *Ubadō dai engi* うば堂大縁起 (1779) (Tateyama Museum of Toyama, 2009: 43).

are also reflected in some of the Tateyama legends. Examples of this can be seen in the records of the legends *On-Ubason engi* 御うば尊縁起, which introduce Uba as a tutelary deity of *Tateyama daigongen* 立山大権現[35] – Amida, Shaka and Dainichi. According to the legends, while a child is inside her mother's body, Uba becomes a grandmother of the child and lends the child 7 pieces of a 9 *shaku* (30.3 cm) long placenta. When the person encounters Uba again, at the time of death, this time she appears as Datsueba near the Sanzu River (*Sanzu no kawa*) and makes a claim on the placenta borrowed during the pregnancy.[36] This story is followed by a fable about Ashoka's daughter. After she died, she reached the Sanzu River where she encountered Datsueba (Uba), who threatened her by taking off her robe. After this, Ashoka's daughter was revived, observed a *Nunohashi kuyō* rite at *Iwahashi* and finally she was reborn in the Tusita heaven. The story from *Ubason engi* was retold by Ashikuraji *shūto* (representatives of the Tateyama cult) to motivate potential participants at the Cloth Bridge rite (Tateyama Museum of Toyama, 2009: 44).

This idea of meeting Datsueba in the afterlife near the Sanzu River appears in the Scripture on Jizō and the Ten Kings *Jizō jūō kyō* and its commentary *Jūō kyō santanshō*. Based on the belief that Datsueba will ask those who face her at the Sanzu River for their robes, some practices developed to be ready for this encounter. This belief was ritually expressed, for example, in the practice of wearing a robe with imprinted sutras and charms or of enclosing such a robe with the deceased. People from Ashikuraji produced robes known as *kyōkatabira* 経帷子 (sutra robe). These robes were sewn by women from Ashikuraji from the cloth used in the Cloth Bridge rite. After the robes were sewn, men from Ahsikuraji imprinted them with various sutras and charms and the Ashikuraji *shūto* were selling them on their rounds through the country during visits to supporters of the Tateyama cult. Wearing or having such robe at hand secured an easy encounter with Datsueba (Fukue, 2005: 117–119; Tateyama Museum of Toyama, 2009: 44).

The two characters of Datsueba and Uba also meet in a ritual performed in Ashikuraji on the ninth day of the second month – the day on which festivals for the mountain deity were held around Northern Japan (Hirasawa, 2012: 170).[37] This rite, called *meshikae* 召し替え, is a ritual change of garments worn by Uba

35 *Dai* stands for 'great' and *gongen* expresses the concept of *honji suijaku*, which was mentioned before. In this case the local deity Uba is a local appearance of the original Buddhist triad: Amida, Shaka and Dainichi.

36 The story is retold in Tateyama Museum of Toyama (2009: 44). In a similar way, legends known as *Tengu dairi*, dated to the early 16th century, describe Datsueba as a guarantor of safe childbirth. She lends the newly born child a 'placenta cloth' *enakin* 胞衣巾. This item must be returned to her when they meet again on the bank of the Sanzu River (Glassman, 2009: 185).

37 The ritual for the mountain deity is still performed by men from Ashikuraji, however, it takes place on the 9th day of March. Women still perform the ritual exchange of the robes for the Uba statues in the Enma Hall on March 13th.

sculptures.[38] On this occasion a new robe for Uba was produced by women aged over sixty years.[39] By making a new robe for Uba, the women secured a safe encounter with Datsueba at the Sanzu River, when their death would come. It was suggested that based on such merit transfer, the rite of changing the robe of Uba sculptures may be interpreted as a pre-emptive ritual for one's own death *gyakushu kuyō* (Tateyama Museum of Toyama, 2009; Hirasawa, 2012).

The textual, along with the pictorial references to Uba underline her importance in the Tateyama cult affiliated with Ashikuraji. What is interesting is the association that the Tateyama *shūto* made between the characters of Uba, Datsueba and the Cloth Bridge rite. This element is noteworthy in the interpretation of the rite because it complements its above-mentioned Buddhist aspects. The example of the Tateyama cult also illustrates that religious practices, even at one site, were not homogenous throughout the premodern period.

## Sustaining strategies

Painted images of the Tateyama Mandala were introduced to the people of the Edo period by representatives of the Tateyama cult who were wandering to distant places, visiting the cult's supporters and spreading the cult around the country. Scenes from this pilgrimage site were presented not just visually but they were accompanied by verbal explanations and stories.[40] This system of cult proselytizing stimulated its progress throughout the 18th century into the 19th century.

The system of relations that developed between the pilgrimage site, its proselytizers and supporters was not unique to Tateyama. Such a distinctive system of activity developed at many Japanese pilgrimage sites during the late 17th century (Ambros, 2008: 6).[41] Ambros (2008), in her comprehensive study on the Ōyama cult,[42] describes the development and activities of religious specialists who played

38 The practice now differs from the way it was performed in the Edo period. The details of the historical practice before the Edo period are not known. For more detail, see Tateyama Museum of Toyama (2009: 37–44).

39 This age, viewed as a boundary between this life and the afterlife, was a time of preparation for death. It is also an age of menopause, which may be seen as another reason why women were allowed to take part in the rite for the otherwise jealous mountain goddess. On the jealousy of the mountain goddess, see Hirasawa (2012: 163).

40 According to Hirasawa there are no known materials containing instructions for explanations of the images of the Tateyama Mandala. She is inclined to conclude that the explanations were partly improvised and partly adhered to some instructed form (Hirasawa, 2012: 45). See also Hirasawa (2012: 61).

41 A similar system was established at sites such as Kumano, Ise Shrines, Mount Fuji, Mount Haku, Dewa Sanzan and Ōyama.

42 Ōyama is a mountain in the Kantō area (an area of eastern Japan with Tokyo in its centre).

a central role in the popularization of mountain cults and pilgrimage sites (Ambros, 2008: 5). Religious specialists of this kind were known as *oshi* 御師. They were usually married owners of family lodgings for pilgrims visiting the mountain pilgrimage site (Ambros, 2008: 5). As Ambros noted, *oshi* in many cases derived from shrine priests and mountain ascetics, and so they were regarded as a subcategory of those groups; however, these professions do not characterize their roles as itinerant proselytizers. Every year they set up for a journey to close and distant places during which they visited supporters of the mountain cult (Ambros, 2008: 5).

Indeed, supporters of the Tateyama cult inhabited a wide area, extending to the Shinano 信濃 province (today's Nagano Prefecture), Owari 尾張 (the western part of present Aichi Prefecture) and even from such remote places as Edo 江戸 (present-day Tokyo) (Fukue, 2005; Hirasawa, 2012). In the case of Tateyama, the role of itinerant proselytizers was performed by representatives of the Tateyama cult known as *shūto* 衆徒 – owners of the pilgrimage lodgings in Ashikuraji village.[43] They undertook regular visits during the wintertime when it was not possible to set out on the pilgrimage because the mountains were not accessible.[44] During this journey, representatives of the Tateyama cult enjoyed the hospitality of their supporters, to whom they distributed amulets, white kimonos[45] and also medicaments, chopsticks and fans. On this occasion they also collected donations (Fukue, 2005: 8).

Ambros (2008) mentions regional differences that developed within the *oshi* systems by giving examples of *onshi* in the Ise Shrines, and *oshi* and the category of *sendatsu* 先達 – pilgrim guides from the Kumano area. While the *oshi* in Kumano provided lodging and ritual prayers, the *sendatsu* were acting as mediators between the *oshi* and the pilgrims (Ambros, 2008). Similarly, a division of roles took place in Tateyama. Responsibilities and rights for the two villages, Ashikuraji and Iwakuraji, involved in the cult of Tateyama were clarified after a trial which took place in 1711 (Fukue, 2005: 14; Hirasawa, 2012: 33). The trial ruled on the

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Similarly to Tateyama it was a well-known pilgrimage site in the Edo period.

43 The term *shūto* which will be used through this work is taken from the Museum of Tateyama and the numerous works of Fukue. As for the studies written in English: Hirasawa (2012) uses the term 'priests'. While Averbuch (2011), Glassman (2009) and Gorai (1991) use terms related to the tradition of Shugendō such as *oshi* and *sendatsu* (pilgrim guide).

44 Fukue states it was in the time of agricultural inactivity (Fukue, 2005: 8). Kodate notes that it was during the winter time when the mountains were inaccessible because of snow (Kodate 2004: 133). The area of the pilgrimage route is covered with snow from November until May.

45 A white kimono is designated for dead people, but it was also used during the pilgrimage in the mountains. The white colour of the kimono was probably used to symbolize death and rebirth during the pilgrimage journey. The same clothing is used by some groups of mountain ascetics today. Figures of the pilgrims in white clothing are also depicted in the Kumano Mandala and the Fuji Mandala (see, for example, Arichi, 2006: 343 and Moerman, 2005).

responsibilities and rights to spread the cult around the country as well as the right to access the mountain. As a result, people from Ashikuraji were in charge of visiting cult supporters and inviting pilgrims to Tateyama, while people from Iwakuraji were guiding the pilgrims through the mountains.

Nevertheless, in the later Edo period, *shūto* from Iwakuraji also gained the right to visit supporters of the cult and to receive donations for reconstruction of the temple buildings (Fukue, 2005: 10). Thus, representatives of both centres of the Tateyama cult would tour the country on determined routes (Formanek, 1998: 167). On the occasion of the visit they invited people from the neighbourhood to join a gathering where they displayed the Tateyama Mandala (Fukue, 2005: 9; Kodate, 2004: 133). In the style of narration they used, called *etoki*, the Tateyama Mandala served as a support in an effort to introduce the Tateyama cult to the audience. Besides this didactic function of the Tateyama Mandala, the gatherings at the houses of supporters of the cult were used as an opportunity to invite the male audience for a visit to Tateyama and to participate in the seasonal rituals and pilgrimage. Formanek's study of the Tateyama pilgrimage (1993) informs us that the laymen were promised by Tateyama *shūto* that:

> 'By ritual ascent of the mountain with the concomitant physical exhaustion, they would experience the torments of hell already during their lifetime and thereby reduce the weight of their sins. After having toured the Hells they would reach the *zange-zaka*, or Penitence Slope, where by confessing, they would further reduce their sins, until they finally reach the summits where they would experience the pleasures of the Pure Land and thereby obtain the promise of being reborn there.' (Formanek, 1998: 171).

Pilgrims thus experienced ritual rebirth on their way through the mountains and at the same time they were guided through the mountains following the legendary path of the founder Ariyori.

Uba as well as the Cloth Bridge rite are associated with Ashikuraji, which lost the right to guide male pilgrims through the mountains. In order to deal with this situation, Ashikuraji turned to women visitors (Hirasawa, 2012: 179). An interesting point in this enterprise is the tendency to associate Uba with the protection of women, which is also reflected in the transformation of the foundation legends (Hirasawa, 2012: 163).

Hirasawa has pointed to the contradiction of Uba's role associating her with women in the Cloth Bridge rite, and her early character as a mountain deity worshipped by hunters, therefore linking her with men. Her study also denoted the absence of a connection between the Uba character and protection of women before the Edo period; such a role was attributed to her only later when the cult began to provide special services for women. She suggested that development of

the cult towards women-orientated rituals might be related to Ashikuraji's loss of access to the mountains (Hirasawa, 2012: 179). The old pilgrimage path connecting Ashikuraji with the starting point of the mountain ascent was obstructed by a new road to the Tateyama hot springs completed in 1814. The road disconnected Ashikuraji from the pilgrimage path. Another disadvantage for Ashikuraji was caused by special exhibitions of treasures of Iwakuraji's temples and shrines known as *degaichō* 出開帳.[46]

What is of particular importance here is that the economic situation may have influenced the effort of Ashikuraji to appeal to women visitors (Hirasawa, 2012: 154) as well as the effort of Iwakuraji to organize special exhibitions. Similarly to Hirasawa, other studies have noted the significance of Ashikuraji's economic situation in the context of providing the Cloth Bridge Consecration rite for women and its promotion around the country (Hirasawa, 2012; Fukue, 1998; Averbuch, 2011). The economic situation of Tateyama and the strategies which developed to sustain the cult also suggest that the mercantile activities were part of the activities of religious centres already in the pre-industrial time.

Tateyama was not an exception. The situation was similar for other types of religious institutions in the Edo period. As was noted by Hur (2007), Buddhist temples which were economically insecure 'resorted to the business of prayer or votive rites, which generated income in form of prayer fees, donations, alms-giving' or the sale of amulets and talismans (Hur, 2007: 8). Elsewhere Hur likewise interprets *kaichō* as a 'lucrative means of public fundraising', a type of income to which many temples turned in early modern Japan (Hur, 2009: 45). Besides these sources of income, Hur (2007) mentions the popularity of 'miraculous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas' that were attracting crowds of visitors and pilgrims in the Edo period. The success of such activities 'owed much to the religious fashion of the time' (Hur, 2007: 9). By the same token, such promotional and commercial activities were important to the sustainability of the Tateyama cult.

In her study, Ambros (2008) addresses the issue of scholarly inclinations to interpret the mercantile activities of *oshi*, such as distributing of gifts together with talismans, as degeneration of the religious professionals connected to the cult. As she remarks, 'the mercantile activities of the *oshi* were not necessarily linked to a degeneration of the profession but were linked to their religious functions and helped them reaffirm their social networks' (Ambros, 2008: 8).

46 They began in 1819. The practice of exposition of sacred icons that are not seen by the public under normal circumstances is known as *degaichō or kaichō* 開帳. It was also frequently found in other areas during the Edo period (Reader, 2014: 4–5), for example, in the area of Chichibu and Tokyo. For more information, see Reader (2014) and Kornicki (1994). The same development is documented for the Ōyama cult, which already in the 17th century focused on providing rituals and display of sacred images (Ambros, 2008: 117).

Similarly to Ambros, Reader (2014) has been critical of approaches which view the mercantile activities as a degradation of religion. His criticism has been aimed in the direction of academic studies which tend to see commercialism as a negative trait of religion, particularly in the field of pilgrimage studies:

> '..., there has been a frequent tendency to treat the commercial dimensions of pilgrimage and its involvement with the marketplace as little other than disjunctions from the core issues in the field. Examples abound of how academic studies have portrayed the commercial, promotional and material domains of pilgrimage, especially in the modern day, as somehow contradictory to the "true" nature of pilgrimage' (Reader, 2014: 11).

Illustrating his analysis from cases concerning world pilgrimage sites, and paying special attention to Japan and pilgrimage in Shikoku, Reader demonstrates that the commercial and promotional activities of the pilgrimage sites may be viewed as 'essential and intrinsic features of pilgrimage, rather than intrusive external disjunctions to it' (Reader, 2014: 19).

Moreover, Reader has stressed that comfort gradually became part of the pilgrimage experience, which worked as an allurement for visitors to pilgrimage sites. Similarly, the study of Tsushima (2012) shows that inclusion of leisure activities in the mountain shrine visits was well established among Japanese people already in the 19th century.

In accordance with this line of analysis, studies of Tateyama have stated that the tastes of pilgrims were changing during the 19th century and that people were not coming to Tateyama for austerities, which were part of the ascent to the peaks of Tateyama, but preferred to visit the holy places at the foot of the mountain, where they got married or enjoyed its *onsen* 温泉 (spa) (Fukue, 1998: 70–72; Averbuch, 2011: 17). Such dynamics have also been shown by Formanek (1998) in her study of the Tateyama pilgrimage. Based on examples from 19th century pilgrimage accounts, Formanek demonstrates the institutionalization and commercialization of pilgrimage in the Edo period, when it had lost much of its ascetic character and with pleasure seeming to be as important, if not more important, than the religious goal.

Reader, however, warns against views that reduce pilgrimage into a consumerist endeavour. Rather, as he says, commercial agencies 'have been instrumental in the shaping of the pilgrimage market' and should be seen as 'formatting elements within the structure of pilgrimage' (Reader, 2014: 111). This, he reasons, is because they have widened the numbers of people who may participate in a pilgrimage.

## Vanishing of the cult

In an effort to sustain the Tateyama cult, the pilgrimage villages responded to the 'taste' of current visitors by offering special services in addition to religious benefits. However, the situation of pilgrimage sites became complicated in the Meiji period because of the new government's political intervention in the structure of religious institutions in Japan. These reforms were aimed at weakening the state's ties with the Buddhist system that had supported the previous Tokugawa regime (Ambros, 2008: 207).

As a reaction against Christianity, the previous Tokugawa government established a certification system which proved association of a person with a temple. Beginning in 1613 with bans on Jesuit priests,[47] the Tokugawa government used Buddhist temples to monitor the populace through this temple certification system *terauke seido* 寺請制度. This system enabled those who underwent an inspection at a Buddhist temple to prove their non-Christian identity. Gradually, Japanese people were required to undergo a temple certification at the Buddhist temple with which they were affiliated (Hur, 2007: 14–15).[48] The system reached almost universal enforcement in 1671 (Cowell, 2009: 295; Rowe, 2011: 21). The annual temple certification system was the first step to the *danka* system, which provided financial support to Buddhist temples from the temple supporters, in Japanese known as *danka* 檀家.[49] This system of certification later anchored the connection between temple supporters and temples through the funerary services (Hur, 2007: 16–17).

In the spring of 1868, the new Meiji government opted to raise Shinto above Buddhism in order to reverse the reliance on Buddhist temple registration by the previous regime (Ambros, 2008: 207). With an aim of advancing Shinto as the state creed, a series of separation edicts *shinbutsu bunri rei* 神仏分離令 – disassociating Buddhism from Shinto shrines and worship – were issued by the new government (Rowe, 2011: 23). It was an attempt to establish a system with unity of rites and politics (Ambros, 2008: 207). The edicts which resulted in the suppression of Buddhism (Rowe, 2011: 21; Ambros, 2008: 207) had an impact on religious practices that combined Shinto and Buddhist tradition, such as the Tateyama cult.

The *danka* system continued in the Meiji era, but the family registration law from 1872 *jinshin koseki* 壬申戸籍 officially abolished temple certification and

47 The 'Order to expel the padres' *bateren tsuihōrei* 伴天連追放令 (Tamamuro, 2009: 16).

48 Hur (2007: 16) stresses that the registration of those who were inspected by a temple was executed by village or ward officials.

49 Hur (2007: 9) warns that the *danka* system is mistakenly translated into English as 'temple parish system', but while 'parish' indicates affiliation based on geographical setting, *danka* is not restricted by the location of the temple and its supporter. For more on this system, see Tamamuro (2009).

moved families outside of temple control (Rowe, 2011: 23–24). The new regime then destroyed the economic bases of Buddhist institutions by confiscating temple lands and undermining the temples' bonds with supporters of their cult by instituting Shinto shrine membership with supporters *ujiko* 氏子. Nevertheless, both the disassociation of *kami* and Buddhas and the suppression of Buddhism were processes that varied on the regional and local levels (Ambros, 2008: 208).

In the case of Tateyama, for example, in 1869 the Kaga domain authorities demanded reorganization of the Tateyama cult. The name of the shrine *Tateyama gongen* was replaced by the new name *Oyama jinja*. The Buddhist images and the Uba Hall were to be removed and the shrine precincts reorganized (Hirasawa, 2012: 187). Religious representatives from both villages were to become Shinto shrine priests and to stop identifying themselves as Buddhist monks, but they refused to do so and abandoned the role of priests completely (Hirasawa, 2012: 187). The Tateyama Mandala images depicting the Shinto deities (the versions from Sakaki-ke and Hōsenbō) illustrate the effort to sustain the cult in the Meiji period (Hirasawa, 2012: 191).

Another effect of the Meiji period reforms was that many temples were deprived of a critical source of income. Land reform efforts designed to end tenant farming and lead to an equitable distribution of land, further reduced the landholdings of most temples. In the following period, the temples were forced to rely on income from the performance of rituals such as funerals (Covell, 2009: 293). Moreover, after the Second World War, shrines and temples started to face a decline in the number of households who supported them financially.

In this critical condition in which religious institutions and pilgrimage sites found themselves in the 20th century, it becomes interesting to find out how these sites sustain or are reviving religious practices today. As illustrated above, the cosmology of hells which developed into rituals associated with wishful rebirth became insufficient in attract pilgrims and sustain the Tateyama cult. The fate of other pilgrimage and mountain sites related to religious practices was going in a similar direction. In their analyses of secularizing tendencies along with the decline in religious affiliation in contemporary Japan, some authors have turned their attention to funeral services as a way to fund Buddhist temples (Hur, 2007; Rowe, 2001; Covell, 2009). Taking this trend into consideration, the next chapter will focus on alternative ways of sustaining the mountain sites.