

## **Ancestors in Transition: Negotiating Contemporary Identities within the Japanese *ie* Household System**

Amy V. Walker Kuroki

### **Abstract**

The household, embodied by ancestral ritual (practiced under the guise of belonging to a Buddhist sect, in this case Jōdo Shinshū), remains a salient feature of Japanese culture and society. This article will put forth the argument that as long as the household structure continues to be performed as a coherent unit on the surface, transitions happening within are obfuscated as personal narratives play out in the family sphere; and this will be illustrated with reference to ethnographic accounts collected over an extensive period of fieldwork in rural Takachiho town, Miyazaki prefecture. Through the examination of oral narratives, individual cases unexplored in contemporary scholarship will be examined in order to show how complex issues of gender; divorce and single parenthood; and non-heterosexual identities are becoming commonplace features of lay and clerical households – often seen as peripheral to mainland urban centres, and excluded from discourses of social change. The ways in which people are negotiating the dichotomy between continuity and transition at the localised, individual level of personal identity while reproducing, protecting and perpetuating the situated *ie* household and neighbourhood temple through memorial ancestor ritual is the central theme of the discussion – moving away from the dominant ‘funerary Buddhism’ perspective.

**Keywords:** *Ie* Household, Gender, Sexuality, Identity, Ancestor Ritual, Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, Social Change

---

**Amy V. Walker Kuroki** is an independent researcher of Anthropology and Religion living between Miyazaki prefecture, Japan and Norfolk, UK. Her ethnographic fieldwork was conducted while a Visiting Fellow at Kagoshima University.

## Introduction

How can we define and contextualise the contemporary Japanese household? Historically, the Meiji Civil Code (1898), established the *ie* (家) as a legal category to which every subject should belong. A male head of household was responsible for the behaviour of other family members and in this way the *ie* could be used to control every citizen, informing a family-based State in which the emperor was the symbolic father.<sup>1</sup> Patrilineal descent and household ancestor rituals (tied to Buddhist temples and practices) ensured succession and lack of change<sup>2</sup> and aimed at creating a ‘unique Japanese culture’ that could homogenise family patterns and withstand modernisation.<sup>3</sup> Although the *ie* was abolished in the postwar United States-led constitution of 1948, it retains significance and influence in socio-cultural, ritual and economic terms.

In the postwar period the household *ie* can be characterised as a unit that comprises a multi-generational family tied by birth, marriage, or adoption. The *ie* is ideally succeeded by the *chōnan* [長男 eldest son]; younger brothers leave to form their own subsidiary households connected to the main stem household. Daughters leave the natal household in order to enter their husband’s household as a *yome* [嫁 wife] and become members of a new *ie*. However, the stem *ie* can be inherited by daughters, and adopted son-in-laws, and this is considered a flexible feature of the Japanese *ie*.<sup>4</sup> Historically the *ie* has been an economic unit with members co-operating as part of the household farm or business, often connected to the space in which the family lives.

The neighbourhood temple relies on the continuance of the *ie* as its membership base in the form of the *danka seido* (檀家制度 temple parishioner system) and for over four hundred years, neighbourhood households as *danka* have been affiliated to a local Buddhist temple.<sup>5</sup> Households in the research area of Takachiho still inherit the legacy of the *danka* system today, and membership of a particular Buddhist sect is succeeded by the next generation of *chōnan*. The affiliation and responsibility are passed on to one’s descendants and considered interminable.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the institution of the temple is firmly embedded within the area, and priests have a close relationship to their *danka* households due to tightly woven social relationships that underpin rural life, and are informed by historical and political legacies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Smith, Robert J, *Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974). Rowe, Mark, *Bonds of the Dead: Temples, Burial, and the Transformation of Contemporary Japanese Buddhism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 24-5.

<sup>2</sup> Tsuji, Yohko, “Mortuary Rituals in Japan: The Hegemony of Tradition and the Motivations of Individuals”, *Ethos*, 34, 3 (2006), 424.

<sup>3</sup> Rowe (ibid., 24).

<sup>4</sup> Ochiai, Emiko, *The Japanese Family System in Transition: A Sociological Analysis of Family Change in Postwar Japan* (Yuhikaku: Tokyo, 1994), 59. Moon, Okpyo, *From Paddy Field to Ski-Slope: The Revitalisation of Tradition in Japanese Village Life* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 101.

<sup>5</sup> The *danka* system was loosely founded in the Heian period and galvanised during the Tokugawa era when political control over the country was established by enforcing Buddhism. This measure was induced to combat the threat of Christianity – a system with a religious hierarchy above and beyond the Shogunate – demonstrating concerns over maintaining territory and political rule. In order to achieve religious dominance, in 1638, households were forced to register with a temple thereby proving they were not Christians whose allegiance would be elsewhere. If particular *danka* households did not attend certain rites, the temple certificate was revoked and the death penalty could ensue. Marcure, Kenneth A, “The Danka System”, *Monumenta Nipponica*, 40, 1 (1985), 40-47.

<sup>6</sup> Marcure (ibid., 41-43). Rowe (ibid., 76).

Buddhist temples have been highly criticised both in academic literature and public discourse for their expensive services and summarised by the derogatory phrases ‘funerary Buddhism’, and ‘profiteering monks’,<sup>7</sup> and these factors have been cited for the decline of Buddhism nationally and responsible for a lack of scholarship on contemporary Buddhism.<sup>8</sup> Although the scholarship on funerary Buddhism has illustrated the crucial importance of economics, it has also obscured the complex web of social interactions between clergy, parishioner and ancestor found in more intimate and regular household memorial rituals which have not been studied ethnographically and yet are a major feature of lay/clerical activity. It has also (perhaps inadvertently) created a narrative whereby the *danka* parishioners are passive in the face of profiteering monks and has not fully considered the agency and indeed power, that individual households hold over the temples and their priests both financially and in terms of how temple families should ‘behave’. Participant observation at the research site<sup>9</sup> demonstrated that temple and parishioner were co-created within the context of the neighbourhood community; and there was a shared goal to perpetuate genealogies through temple and household interconnection. Therefore, both the clerical and lay perspective involved in ritual affiliation through the ancestor-based *ie* system will be considered equally important in this article – with an aim of moving away from a ‘funerary centred’ economic perspective towards one in which people exercise agency through their continued relationship with the local temple in order to maintain their households and genealogy.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the locality of the research. Takachiho comprises a strong local identity derived, in part, from ancestor-based practices. In every household unit visited during fieldwork, each family had two places for ritual activity in the home. A *butsudan* (仏壇 Buddhist altar) on the floor, houses the ancestral tablets inscribed with the names of the deceased members of the family and a depiction of Amida Buddha in its recess. Daily rituals (in terms of repetitive actions) are practiced in front of this altar (replenishing offerings of food and drink; lighting incense; ‘prayers’ to the ancestors) and these were supplemented by local priests’ visits for memorials at equinoxes and anniversaries, who on these occasions would recite Buddhist sutras in front of the altar (emphasising the importance of sect-specific Amida Buddha over local ancestor-based discourses), with the parishioners at a distance behind. A *kamidana* (神棚 god shelf) on the wall (and sometimes next to the *butsudan*), displayed ritual objects relating to local traditions and the common ancestor of Amaterasu, the sun goddess: Takachiho being central in the historical and mythological narratives of the Shinto pantheon. In addition, each household was involved in the *Kagura* (神楽) shamanic dances of myths and legends performed by the neighbourhood in a designated household (which rotated between hamlets every winter according to the ritual cycle). In short, syncretic religiosity characterises Takachiho society,

---

<sup>7</sup> The downturn of temple fortunes has been challenged by Rowe, who notes that the supposed ‘death’ of Buddhism has three strands: the relationship between temples and death rites; the negative attributes of funerary Buddhism; and the idea that the temple is becoming extinct. Rowe, M, “Where the Action Is: Sites of Contemporary Soto Buddhism”, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 3, 1-2 (2004), 454.

<sup>8</sup> According to Rowe, negative associations with funerary Buddhism and profiteering monks, alongside the modernist narrative of the decline of Buddhism in Japan and an emphasis on the study of the ‘New Religions’, has contributed to a lack of scholarship on contemporary Buddhism. Rowe, M, “Review of Stephen G. Covell, *Japanese Temple Buddhism: Worldliness in a Religion of Renunciation*”, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 34, 2 (2007), 452.

<sup>9</sup> Ethnographic fieldwork conducted during 2010-2012 was spent living in one main temple complex in Kamino hamlet, Takachiho. This was supplemented by visits to surrounding temples in the area; prefectural headquarters in Miyazaki city; and suburban temples in Kumamoto prefecture.

where folk practices informed by an awareness of the continued importance of the ancestors (both personal and communal) is considered more crucial at the daily level of practice for local people, than national Buddhist sect-affiliations to which they also belong.

### Gender in Succession

Neighbourhood temples in Takachiho are managed by an extended clerical family and mirror the typical household pattern in the area. The inheritance of the priesthood is based on the *jūshoku* (住職 head priest) system of patrilineal primogeniture, whereby the eldest son of the temple household succeeds his father and head priest after retirement. This system began in 1334, when the main temple headquarters at Kyoto, Nishi Honganji, evolved the patrilineal system of inheritance found throughout the history of the sect.<sup>10</sup> This was unprecedented at the time and although other Buddhist sects have now reluctantly allowed their priests to have families, while appearing to conform to ideas of ‘worldly renunciation’ by keeping their wives in the background, (as explored by Kawahashi, 1995;<sup>11</sup> Covell 2005<sup>12</sup>) – such acceptance, and even promotion of family life within Japanese Buddhism, is the domain of the Jōdo Shinshū sect. Historically, peasants, outcasts and lesser warriors living in agricultural areas dominated Jōdo Shinshū<sup>13</sup> and it was the only sect that preached everyone – regardless of status – was afforded salvation in the Pure Land after death. An interview with a temple wife *bōmori* (坊守) and ordained Jōdo Shinshū priest below demonstrates the continued importance of securing a male heir or substitute; often at the behest of the aging, and conservative, faction of the *danka* as part of this historical legacy.

\*

*Do you have children?*

“Yes, four girls: 25, 23, 18 and 14 years old. The eldest has returned home to be a Junior high school teacher and has also become ordained, so she came back and helped at *obon*”.<sup>14</sup>

*Was it difficult deciding who would become the next priest?*

“Japanese people say the next in line should be a boy, and we have girls. It doesn’t matter who, but we need one of them to inherit the temple as the next generation, this encompasses the idea of a blood relation (*ketsuen*), so the eldest daughter ought to do it. She really wanted to go to teaching college and asked us if she could go – she was crying, it was awful. We let her, and eventually she decided that she would come back for us, as we had let her do what she wanted initially. She studied Buddhism for a further year and came back. I don’t know if she felt pressure to come back as the eldest, but she did so voluntarily in the end. Still, I feel sorry for her. If she finds someone she really likes and wanted to go there, as a bride, there’s nothing we can do about it. We wouldn’t force her to marry someone she doesn’t want for the sake of the temple. This is a really old-fashioned way...and I don’t want to be a horrible parent. I’ve been talking about it with my husband and we decided we shouldn’t be selfish. If she wants to work as a junior high school teacher – that’s fine with us”.

*Would it be difficult to adopt her husband as a son?*

“Yes, that’s the most difficult thing. We want her to marry somebody she loves. That’s so important, we don’t want her married off to someone she doesn’t want to be with. Her partner doesn’t have to be a priest, but as

<sup>10</sup> Bowring, Richard, *The Religious Traditions of Japan 500-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005), 395.

<sup>11</sup> Kawahashi Noriko, “Jizoku (Priests’ Wives) in Soto Zen Buddhism: An Ambiguous Category”, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22:1-2 (1995),161-183.

<sup>12</sup> Covell, Stephen Grover, *Japanese Temple Buddhism: Worldliness in a Religion of Renunciation* (Hawai’i: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Bowring (ibid., 383).

<sup>14</sup> Buddhist-informed celebrations honouring the ancestral dead, observed throughout Japan as part of a national holiday.

long as he's somebody who's willing to take on the temple. If he isn't willing to protect the temple... just somebody she likes, then he couldn't manage it here, that's the really difficult thing. So, without an introduction to somebody – it might be tough”.

*What kind of young men marry into temples?*

“Usually second sons of a temple family...but I have a friend, and her daughter met an ordinary office worker and he became ordained and entered the household”.

\*

In the above interview, the priest concedes that her eldest daughter is obligated through birth order, reiterating the importance of primogeniture even when not patrilineal. In this way, a situation as close as possible to the ideal is sought. In her narrative, the priest appears to be torn in allowing her daughter to marry for love, and concerned about the qualities of a potential husband who may not be willing to ‘protect’ (守る) the temple. A husband has to be willing to manage the considerable obligations that are entailed in temple life, and possibly become ordained so that he could share the burden of ritual responsibility along with the management of the temple with his wife. In order to arrive at a solution, a great deal is being invested in the hope and desire that the eldest daughter can find a husband that she both loves, and who is willing to adopt the unenviable position of adopted temple son-in-law. One of the important functions of the temple, embodied in the role of the *bōmori*, is to ‘protect and guard’ the surrounding community. However, in the contemporary era, this too, can be viewed as similar to other dimensions in society that are changing: as an *ideal* rather than a realistic possibility.

What does protect and guarding the community entail? Firstly, it has been argued that the position of women in the temple context is always underscored by their role as wife and mother. The main role of the temple wife is to produce a further generation of the temple<sup>15</sup> and ‘the cult of motherhood’, emanates from the strong bond in evidence between mother and child, by virtue of the role invested in motherhood in Japanese society.<sup>16</sup> Women enjoy a high status in domestic life, as long as they fulfil the mother and wife role well: a domestic matriarch and an on-stage patriarch are common roles performed within Japanese society and are employed to great effect in the temple setting.<sup>17</sup> The concept of women as ‘preservers of tradition’ is also crucial. Between 1603-1867 the concept of the *bōmori* was regarded as one ‘inside the home’, as ‘inside help’ for their husbands. The scholar priests of the eighteenth and nineteenth century describe the temple wife in terms of an ‘ideal wife and mother’, and privileged religious figure. As a welcoming presence, she was available at the temple at all times, to create relationships between temple and laity and embody a teaching role.<sup>18</sup> This was important in assisting her husband as head priest, who would often be away from the temple itself. The ideal of ‘good wife, wise mother’ trope embodies qualities of the traditional Japanese housewife, which temple wives are expected to perform in their religious role, principally in order to set an example to parishioners;<sup>19</sup> however participant

<sup>15</sup> Kawahashi, Noriko, “Feminist Buddhism as Praxis: Women in Traditional Buddhism”, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 30, 3-4 (2003), 291-313.

<sup>16</sup> Lebra, Takie Sugiyama, *Japanese Women: Constraint and Fulfilment* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1984), 161- 66.

<sup>17</sup> Kawahashi (ibid.,167).

<sup>18</sup> Starling, Jessica, “Neither Nun nor Laywoman: The Good Wives and Wise Mothers of Jodo Shinshu Temples”, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 40, 2 (2013), 281.

<sup>19</sup> Covell (ibid.),138.

observations and interviews at my research site revealed that in reality, it was usually (older) members of the Women's Association who guided the behaviour of (younger) temple wives.

Furthermore, in practice, the category of women in the temple setting is not one homogenous category with a single agenda. The success of the temple lies in the hands of women; and women act as both directors and producers behind the scenes: affecting the ways in which their husbands as on-stage actors are received, shaping opinion both within the clerical family and temple setting. Temple wives I interviewed had also taken ordination to become priests, and some were also able to serve in the role as head priest through further study and accreditation undertaken.<sup>20</sup> The Women's Association was crucial to temple management, and while temple wives may be seen as 'preservers of tradition' in theory, in practice they are often working to support their husband financially in order to keep the temple economically viable, while fulfilling duties in the administration of temple life while at home. To summarise, the identity of the *bōmori* within the temple space and wider community is complex and in the process of social change. Categories of gender-informed identity are not singular, and within the myriad roles that women undertake is the jostle for power and status between actors. According to the context, women may be regarded as peripheral, and behind the scenes; simultaneously they are central, the vital lifeblood of the temple – and the main opinion formers on the clerical family stage. In this way, women can be considered as holding the lowest status on the surface – and yet paradoxically, the most powerful behind the scenes in the temple arena.

The *danka* system, based on structures from the Tokugawa feudal system for politico-economic purposes, poses contemporary problems for clerical families. As society changes around the temple, issues of individual desire and identity cause friction within the core temple system and its inherited structure. Under these constraints, individual clerical families who do not fit the mould are left searching for their own solutions to a national temple-wide problem encompassing issues surrounding gender, genealogy and succession. Although the doctrine of Jōdo Shinshū does not discriminate in terms of gender and sexuality, in practice, in order to appease their *danka*, clerical families need to appear – at least on the surface – to be performing a historically-and-locally-informed coherent identity. The case described above neatly demonstrates the limitations and restrictions that clerical families are under to reproduce the patriarchal structures according to local understanding – and how the current generation of young women are compromised in choosing between their own desires; asserting legitimacy and agency; wider changing social norms surrounding gender roles – or the maintenance of their family heritage and genealogy.

### **Changing Family Patterns: Divorce and Single Parenthood**

The following narrative explores the issues of a single parent who works at her family-owned nursery school. The informant, in her mid-thirties, has spent more than a decade working in Osaka, before returning to her hometown with her child.

\*

---

<sup>20</sup> According to Covell (ibid., 114), before World War Two, women were expected to remain hidden from view in the temple environment, and their roles were restricted to supporting the head priest and producing an heir. In 1916, the Honganji branch of the Jōdo Shinshū sect officially recognised temples within sect bylaws. During the war, temple women had increasing responsibilities and were allowed to become priests, but not head priests until 1914, and in 1944 were permitted to become doctrinal instructors. In the contemporary picture, in the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji branch, 2.5 percent of head priests are women and 23.9 percent of total priests are women. Soto and Tendai sects have half this figure, with the Shingon-Chizan sect at 1.3 percent (ibid., 130).

“My parents thought that I was a fool, because I was pregnant, my mother said, ‘well, you’ve gone and done it now’. They wouldn’t forgive me, and the timing was bad. I was living in Osaka and just as I decided I would come back home and try and make a go of it at the nursery, I found out I was expecting. I didn’t want to be with my partner or marry him, but I was having a child, what could I do? I thought for the sake of the baby I had to get married. It was the only thing I could do at that point, but I was so stressed, I really didn’t want to go through with the marriage, and it made me so ill, so I spent months in hospital before the birth. My father is a difficult human being. In Japan, in Takachiho, there are so many men like this, used to thinking they’re ‘number one’ and that they’re right no matter what – I hate this kind of attitude...

In Takachiho there is still stigma, ending a marriage. My parents were horrified. I told them that after a few years’ time people would forget; some single women even have two or three children. I told them that people would adjust, and it would become normal after a while. People wouldn’t remember the circumstances, and they would just see a woman and her child... but they didn’t accept this line of reasoning. They told me we ran a nursery school, so it was different: it looks especially bad. In Takachiho, people complain about parents leaving children for a few hours, yet I think many single parents feel the same. Some kind of service is needed for us. Sometimes I worry I’m not being good enough, and what the future will be like for my son without a father...”

\*

The above illustrates how Japanese society can still be characterised as having a ‘marriage culture’,<sup>21</sup> and the continued importance of a married status, especially after children are conceived. Children born to non-married mothers are stigmatised in terms of the household register where they are labelled as illegitimate, and have problems with inheritance rights, which may keep birth outside of marriage minimal.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, low rates of births to single women have been understood in terms of the deep-rooted legal and social discrimination against children born outside marriage.<sup>23</sup> As statistics sourced from the town hall reveal, households with single parents (predominantly women) are now in the hundreds (in a town with a population of 16,000 spread over ninety one square miles of mountainous hamlets, this is considerable) – and rise yearly. Indeed, the diversification of the family unit is now becoming a norm in practice and one that requires exploration – although Japanese researchers have been historically reluctant to pursue these issues due to the remaining taboo surrounding single parenthood.

Utilising the resources of home and family while trying to improve personal circumstances is a theme that resurfaced during fieldwork. For contemporary women it is felt that the hometown and household is a good, if not an ideal, place to return to: parents help raise the children and women are able to go to work; although any welfare benefits reduce, which affects childcare costs as the finances of the whole household are considered. An outcome being that young women are now more likely to divorce a partner and return home to their natal household than remain in an unhappy marriage. This is seen as preferable to being alone in the city without necessary services where childcare providers offer little choice and babysitting is non-existent.<sup>24</sup> The women are overwhelmingly welcomed back –

---

<sup>21</sup> Lebra (ibid.,113).

<sup>22</sup> Rindfuss, R. Choe, Bumpass, and N. Tsuya (eds.) “Social Networks and Family Change in Japan”, *American Sociological Review*, 69, 6 (2004), 838-861.

<sup>23</sup> In 1992, figures show that 1.1 % of children were born outside marriage compared to 47% in Sweden (Ochiai, ibid.,173). From a broader historical perspective, high rates of divorce found in 1899 were comparable to figures in 1995, and Ochiai argues that it is more remarkable that they were stable in the period postwar to the 1970s, which may be the anomaly in hindsight (Ibid., 179).

<sup>24</sup> Other women I spoke to also confirmed this. One woman in her early thirties with an eight-year-old boy told me that she was able to leave her child in the care of her parents while she worked part time as a nurse in an elderly care centre. At the same time she could study for her nursing and welfare exams in order to gain promotion in the future.

during interviews with government officials I was told that returning women were seen as a positive influence of regeneration in the town, bringing with them skills and successive generations for an agricultural, remote town, two hours' drive from the nearest city centre, and with a declining aging population. Furthermore, it is hoped they will later remarry and have more children with local men, repopulating hamlets that are in danger of dying out.

### Ritual Outcomes

What happens to sect-based ritual affiliations symbolised by the *butsudan* in the case of a single mother? Historically, when a woman left her natal household she would typically enter her husband's sect. However, when she returns does she re-enter the religious tradition of her parents, and what happens to the ritual status of her children? From a doctrinal perspective the priests informed me: "It's fine for both to be part of the family's religious sect, it's no big thing. In Jōdo Shinshū the emphasis is upon the *nenbutsu*<sup>25</sup> and Amida Buddha – not the ancestors." However, this doctrinal assertion obscures the practice that previously, the *butsudan* has been inherited with the *ie* by the *chōnan* alongside ritual implements, land and business. Indeed, second and third sons, or remaining daughters, are not even recorded in official temple records. Many people in the locality were not aware of this however, and younger sons often discover when they need the services of a priest, they do not effectively belong to a sect. Furthermore, in practice – but not in Jōdo Shinshū theory where Amida Buddha is the only legitimate form of worship through recitation of the *nenbutsu* sutra – the household regards the *butsudan* as an embodiment of the continued relationship with the ancestors, irrespective of sect teachings – reflecting the dominant religiosity of the family in which the temple is utilised to provide ritual expertise and institutional context within a personal ancestor-based household system. This system is one that the priests are wary of openly criticising, fearing that they will lose their parishioner base. Instead, there is a discourse of 'encouraging' the *danka* away from 'ancestor worship' towards 'correct, non-superstitious sect teachings' and practices surrounding the *butsudan*.

In leaving Takachiho, young people break with the household as a spiritual unit that involves a transmission of knowledge, usually from grandparents to younger generations. With each generation that leaves, knowledge and understanding of the meaning and performance of rituals becomes increasingly fragmented, and in some areas activities have become splintered as people are unsure how to perform ceremonies correctly, and lose confidence in issues such as how to treat the ancestral tablets and wash the bones of the dead: a formerly important practice in Yoron Island, Kagoshima prefecture, that is now declining due to loss of ritual knowledge.<sup>26</sup> In the past, younger generations would have been part of a continual cycle of gradual ritual participation from an early age, taking on greater responsibilities later as they gained status in the family. Similarly, in Takachiho, transmission patterns are now fragmented, as people with key socio-ritual roles in the family leave, and divorced daughters inhabit a liminal ritual status in the household that they have re-entered. In returning to the natal household, daughters are not automatically afforded a

---

<sup>25</sup> A central tenet of the sect is the repetition of the *Nenbutsu*. It originally meant to contemplate on the Buddha, but within the sect means to recite the sacred name: '*Namo Amida Butsu*' (I take refuge in the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life), that embodies the essence of Amida or Oneness, as 'expression of profound gratitude'. Tanaka, Kenneth, K, *Ocean: An Introduction to Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism in America* (Berkeley: Wisdom Ocean Publications, 1997), 246-7.

<sup>26</sup> Machi, Taiki, "Changing Funeral Practices in the Japanese Periphery: Study of the Bone-washing ritual in Yoron Island", Paper presented at the Japanese Studies Graduate Summer School, Australian National University (2013).

ritual identity; and the question of who will succeed the household and develop ritual knowledge becomes increasingly problematic.

Younger members of the *ie* are increasingly geographically mobile, moving in and out of the locale as their work, status and identity changes, problematising the acquisition of knowledge embodied in the gradual habitual actions of the past. As people move from the locality, it is difficult to sustain a religiosity that is localised in one place, in which the extended household and the *danka*-temple system is embedded. Furthermore, the socio-spiritual system of the ancestor-household member collaboration that ensures the reproduction, protection of its members and succession of the lineage, becomes redundant if there is nothing to inherit in terms of a viable business. Subsequently, such widely practiced rituals may become increasingly irrelevant for future generations, who have become removed from the performances of ritual that function to uphold a household-based system. However, despite these demographic, transmission, and spatial issues that affect the ability to practice, the ‘little religions’<sup>27</sup> (of personal ancestor veneration, *kagura* participation and folk beliefs) remained important across the generations, and helped shape belonging and local identity in the area.

Indeed, the ‘little religions’ practiced through memorial and daily activities in front of the *butsudan* is a mode of feeling – an ‘ancestor consciousness’ which places constraints while generating relationships, continued protection and involvement with wider spheres. The bonds between living and the dead have been documented by Rowe in the continuance of ancestor-based relationships through Buddhist temple affiliation in new contexts, where priests attempt to attract new members through personalised funerary services for households who lack descendants to care for the traditional grave.<sup>28</sup> It also remains integral in the discussion of the war-dead interred in sites such as Yasukuni. As Nishimura (2018: forthcoming) has noted, the discussion of Yasukuni shrine has been Shinto-centric, and yet many personal histories, genealogies and practices performed have little to do with the larger controversial, political processes of Shinto-based worship (which generates great media attention) and more to do with local practices, personal memorial and group commemoration. In this localised discourse, which reveals the continued importance of an ancestor-consciousness, the living are required to both ‘pacify and console’ the spirits of the recent war dead and victims of the Atomic bomb and natural disasters. They are also ‘inspired’ through a continued relationship with the ancestors to resolve issues, which the dead have by necessity left undone: at times devoting their lives to bringing about peaceful resolution through collective activities and engagement with religious authorities, charitable groups and wider socio-political organisations (such as anti-war and anti-nuclear

---

<sup>27</sup> Vásquez investigates how local and what he terms ‘little religions’, have become prominent in the contemporary global age. These have been considered ‘superstitious’ and strange because many have been syncretic and mix the profane with the sacred in multiple traditions. Vásquez notes that although religious scholarship tends to privilege large institutions or texts, it is the ‘little religions’ that tell us more about how people negotiate their lives and engage with belief in a contemporary world. He argues that people often use religions as a tool in dealing with the new contexts they find themselves in, especially in an era of mass migrations and social uncertainty. Furthermore, local practices can help construct meaning whereby: ‘Religion can serve to reaffirm a strong sense of local identity against macroprocesses’. Vásquez, Manuel A, and Friedmann Marquardt, Marie, *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion across the Americas* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 32.

<sup>28</sup> Rowe (*ibid*).

movements: addressing the causes of death for *hibakusha* victims exposed to the blast and radiation).<sup>29</sup>

In the case study, the single parent interviewed reported that many of her generation “did not believe”, in any particular religious sect and dismissed the New Religious Movements as too fervent. Echoing the premise that ‘practice’ is more crucial than ‘belief’ in Japanese religiosity, she claimed that as people age they were attracted to the older, established practices of Buddhism, because such religions allowed you to feel calm, and the temple is a place where you could go, “to really relax your heart and mind”. As a regular visitor to the local temple household she would often visit when she needed to escape from her own family circumstances. Although she sometimes attended Dharma talks at the temple itself, as she brought no offering, rice, or money to the temple, she was simply there to listen – rather than actively engaging the practices of Jōdo Shinshū as a parishioner.

The informant’s natal household held affiliations to the neighbourhood Zen sect and while she was aware that she did not belong to any sect as an individual, at some point in the future she maintained she would “have to decide” – assuming that this would be a natural progression of ritual identity as she aged, with the implication that some form of religious practice would continue. Despite a self-proclaimed lack of (Western-style) ‘belief’, the practices of ancestor-informed Buddhism remained important to her. As she knew little about Shinto, and more about Buddhism, she was likely to choose a Buddhist sect affiliation in the future, echoing findings that knowledge transmission in ritual activity is an important facet in the continuance of contemporary Japanese religiosity.<sup>30</sup> The informant’s brother had been nominated to take over the family business, and although the legal system grants equal rights to individuals and lack of discrimination by gender, the patriarchal legal status of the *ie*, previously enshrined in law and abolished postwar, has now been moved into the more informal language of ‘custom’ in the current Civil Code.<sup>31</sup>

The future for returning single women, their ritual identity and economic status thus remains unclear and new forms of ritual affiliation may or may not take place for those who remain single. For those who remarry, amalgamating outside elements and absorbing them into new household affiliations takes place. Either way, the liminal social and ritual identity of divorced single mothers is becoming a new norm that requires negotiation at the level of the individual, household and wider society: and in complex issues of identity, ancestor consciousness and sect affiliation become crucial issues. In the discourse of the ancestors – both those recently departed and those who have joined the ranks of those no longer in living memory – an individual without household connections means to lack the security that the dead afford.

In premodern times, without the security of the household, there was little possibility of sustaining life during economic and political upheaval, and to be ritually liminal was dangerous; it could be argued that this is still the case judging by the functions that the *ie*

---

<sup>29</sup> Nishimura, Akira, Forthcoming: “Studies on the Commemoration of the War Dead in Modern Japan” (2018).

<sup>30</sup> Raised by Machi in the Yoron Island context (ibid.).

<sup>31</sup> Rowe notes that the move from the household in legal terms to ‘custom’, ensures that the ideals of the extended household system remain in the code even though they are not explicitly named (ibid., 25). Indeed, Yanagawa et al have argued that the revision of the postwar civil code did not abolish the household as a religious institution, but instead made it *clearer* that household and ancestor worship were inseparable (Yanagawa et al. 1978, 15). Rowe (ibid., 25) argues that clause 897 continued to connect temples to the family system through rights of succession over graves and ritual implements well into the postwar period, and that this persists despite the legal dissolution of the *ie* system in 1947. The ambiguous definitions in the legal code that shifts inheritance rights over the household and ancestral rituals into the realm of ‘custom’ – essentially allows for the continuity of prewar norms.

continues to perform for its returning ancestral members. Even with a change of constitution postwar and despite demographic changes, the extended family ideal remains ingrained in the popular imagination, ‘customs’ (i.e. unwritten rules), and the law. Due to urbanisation and economic growth the extended family may have almost disappeared on face value; yet the household ideal (embodying the social relationships found between the living and the dead) and its social and economic functions remains. In the ethnographic case illustrated, as long as the traditional *ie* is being performed on the surface, its composition underneath may undergo flux – but the services provided and the ritual identity it holds – remains crucial to the individuals contesting its very nature within. If we regard the living and the dead within the household as two halves of the same coin – that one co-creates and generates the continued existence of the other – it is clear that it is not only the social, economic and ritual identities of the living, but also those of the ancestors, that are in a state of transition in contemporary Japan.

### Sexual Identity and Succession

During fieldwork I spent time at a Jōdo Shinshū temple household in the suburban outskirts of Kumamoto city. This temple also demonstrates problems of succession, via male heirs. In the case below, the eldest son has recently announced his sexual identity to the household and wider community.

\*

*Informal Conversation between a head priest (of Temple B) and bōmori (of Temple A) during a party:*

“I couldn’t believe it... I really couldn’t believe it when I heard he was gay and living in Fukuoka with his partner”, the head priest tells the *bōmori*.

She asks how he knew about the situation and the priest says he had heard about it on the grapevine, but still could not contain his amazement at the open nature of the announcement.

“Yes well, he’s either in Fukuoka or away somewhere else. He’s always going to Tokyo, having fun. He’s hardly ever here, always off somewhere. We had no idea, no idea – and then suddenly everyone knows, and now we have to deal with it. It’s common knowledge now. What can we do about it”.

*Official informal interview with the bōmori (of temple A) the next day:*

“This temple is busy because of the kindergarten, so there are always things going on. Before I entered the temple I was really worried about it, but then I thought it was ‘safe’ because the man I was marrying was the second son. The *chōnan* wants to be the next head priest – so it will go to him, not my husband”. I ask about her only child, a five-year-old daughter. “She doesn’t have to do priest’s work when she’s older, only if she wants. There’s no pressure on her to do so”.

\*

The current *chōnan* – although willing to become the next head priest – has announced that he will not be marrying due to his sexual orientation. This means that all of the roles afforded to the wife of the *chōnan* (including caring for his parents and producing a male heir) will fall to the second son and his wife without the according official status and identity afforded to the head priest and temple wife. The *chōnan* is treating the issue ambivalently, and appears unwilling to bow to pressure. He subverts norms by refusing to conform to considerable pressure of remaining silent in order to appease, and openly refers to his sexual status. At the time of our visit it is his birthday, and a large group, including priests, friends, and members of the wider family, gather to celebrate at a nearby restaurant. When called to make a short speech, as we raise our glasses, he announces unselfconsciously and with reflexive irony: “Here’s to another year, without getting married”. The silence of the assembled party

demonstrated how people were dealing with the issue on the surface: by ignoring it. However, in the private sphere, the situation is obviously not met with the same silence, and it is broadly regarded that through his open admission of sexual orientation, the *chōnan* has sidestepped his obligations to the household and in the process has alienated members who resent his abdication of responsibility combined with the public performance of his nonnormative sexual identity. Although the *chōnan* has not been rejected by the household, or disinherited, his father is visibly uncomfortable by the fact that he clearly wishes to be transparent in his sexual identity, while refusing to show any qualms over transgressing boundaries of filial expectation in the prioritisation of his own narrative of individual choice over household and priestly duty to marry, and produce heirs.

The *chōnan* is engaging and very popular, yet despite successful techniques in attracting a young *danka* membership, the main role of the *jūshoku* must be fulfilled as father and husband first and foremost: revealing that the function of priest is a reproductive one firstly, and a ritual one secondly; this is compounded by the fact that many eldest sons have no desire to enter the priesthood due to its restrictive traditional image, rules and etiquette. Furthermore, sect practices are more in accordance with ideas in keeping with the extended household pattern of the *ie* – than as a prerequisite for any kind of ability as a successful priest and teacher. Although Jōdo Shinshū itself does not discriminate against homosexuality, and although suburban Kumamoto is less conservative in comparison to rural, agricultural Takachiho, an outward public expression of homosexuality is widely uncommon, particularly in the role of priest. Interestingly, although the role of the *bōmori* assumes the image of a temple wife aiding her husband as head priest, the role is actually one of support and does not presuppose gender or marital status: it is literally an assistant role to the head priest, and could also be performed by a male. However, the situation where the partner of a priest acts in this role of *bōmori* appears a long way off, and even if this situation was accepted, the reproduction of another generation requires further negotiation.

Although a ‘gay identity’ in terms of a Western understanding (contextualised in terms of lifestyle choice or rights) is rare,<sup>32</sup> by refusing to hide his sexual identity, the priest is purposefully ignoring the separation between *uchi* and *soto* (inside and outside) *omote* and *ura* (surface and reverse); and instead, presents a unified identity that remains consistent throughout social interactions with others. In applying this to a broader discourse of scholarship on the ‘Japanese self’, it appears that several boundaries had been blurred by the *chōnan*’s approach.<sup>33</sup> In consciously subverting a discourse of identity that is directly engaged with the approval of others as a supporting cast, the priest has knowingly presented

---

<sup>32</sup> McLelland has problematised the category of a ‘gay identity’ applied to Japan, and has also observed that preferring men as sexual partners has not proved an obstacle to marriage (which is not necessarily regarded within the discourse of ‘being in love’ historically, or in the contemporary picture). Furthermore, men have been unwilling to co-habit with other men due to the fact that they may be seen as inhabiting a ‘gay category’, which is not compatible with wider Japanese norms. McLelland, Mark J, “Is There a Japanese ‘Gay Identity’?”, *Special issue: Critical Regionalities - Gender and Sexual Diversity in South East and East Asia: Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 2, 4 (2000), 459-472.

<sup>33</sup> Although concerns over the presentation of the self is a feature of all societies, scholars such as Lebra, have described an example of an interactional and presentational self as an aspect of Japanese personhood that cannot be separated from the group. In the ‘interactional self’, there is awareness that the self is defined or blemished through social interaction, and the self is socially contextualised through this process with a high degree of the awareness of others. In the presentational self, the surface layer of the self is metaphorically localised as a person’s face: ‘*kao*’. The *kao* is upheld by the presenter’s performance in etiquette and conformity to norms. In the performance of the ‘Self’, the Other is significant as an actual or potential audience. Lebra, Takie Sugiyama, “Self in Japanese Culture”, in *The Japanese Sense of Self*, edited by Nancy R. Rosenberger (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 105-121.

an alternative sense of *self* in public. By doing so, he appears to be integrating his various identities in promoting a self that does not depend on shifting contexts, or the consumption and approval of others (and could be considered closer to a 'Western' sense of self, or a more Westernised 'gay identity'). It appears then, that it is not primarily in his homosexual status that he is transgressing boundaries (the temple wife bluntly stated: "what can we do about it"), but essentially in the fact that he is unwilling to hide or minimise his identity in the public realm for the sake of appearances and conforming to outside norms, that is causing the most problems for the household. In this way, his sexuality is not the issue either morally or ethically, but his lack of willingness to sacrifice his *self*, or at least his performative identity for the whole, is.

This case study supports statistical findings that parishioners and ordained priests in the Jōdo Shinshū sect are less likely to discriminate against homosexuality than the Japanese average.<sup>34</sup> The issue appears not to be his sexuality and the performance of a gay identity, but the fact that it is the *only* identity he is willing to perform in both public and private. While this may have been a serious issue for previous generations, society is in a transitional process, and the priest is negotiating a difficult arena in which there is little precedent. In the above, the current *chōnan* is not prepared to conform to previous standards, where men who sexually preferred men have married women in order to raise a family and avoid inhabiting a 'gay identity' as a category. Furthermore, the *chōnan*'s status as a priest has made these issues more apparent, and brought tensions to light, principally because he holds a widely visible role performed in the public domain. Whether this will have an impact on the expression of self and identity of the younger *danka* who attend the temple is a question for the future.

The role of producing male heirs or adopting a son-in-law will now fall to the second son and *bōmori* principally in order for the outward form of the temple structure to be maintained. If an eldest son taking over a temple with a supporting *bōmori* is not possible, again the closest to an ideal will be sought. In this way, the temple is kept within the same clerical family, while inner adaptations in the private sphere ensure that the outer structure is judiciously maintained. Correspondingly, changes are quietly adapted to, as the temple adopts a discourse of continuity on the wider, public stage; and although the temple retains its clerical family by adapting its inner dynamics, conflict during adaptation means that everyone is required to make compromises over their own desires and personal identities relating to gender, sexuality, ritual and social status.

Essentially, fieldwork revealed throughout that although the sect teachings are inherently egalitarian, the clerical household still attempts to conform to a morality, ethical system, and attitudes engendered by discourses of a previous era, in order to appease parishioners who are the economic sponsors and patrons of the temple; instead of acting in accordance with sect doctrine, or in taking a new leadership role and responding to the very real fears of changes in the family unit that the community is experiencing directly. In the case studies, clerical households as a unit appease and capitulate to wider, older, conservative social norms in an attempt to secure their future in the short-term. Despite changes at the individual and family level, and an accommodating religious framework, the temple adheres to former patterns unflinchingly, aware of the problems yet hesitant to act on them, preferring to appease their elderly and main parishioner base. Within this process, there is increasing tension between the old and the new, as the temple struggles to reproduce local traditions, while younger generations challenge established norms and boundaries. These involve more globalised, individualistic narratives of personal freedoms and love supplanting arranged

---

<sup>34</sup> Dessi, Ugo, "Social Behaviour and Religious Consciousness among Shin Buddhist Practitioners", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 37, 2 (2010), 355.

partnerships – found in the three examples. Such narratives may flout conventions, demonstrate agency, and pose problems for the inheritance of the *ie* household system and its ritual context. Although change is always a feature of any society, currently, individuals are negotiating rapid transitions at the personal level of identity, choice and need; while living under the constraints of institutions and social norms that often resist such processes: and which were often conceived as political policies of a premodern era.

### Concluding remarks

The ethnography and narratives reveal that the neighbourhood temple is negotiating dual forces: between ‘traditional’ roles of protection and reproduction, and (post)modern narratives of individual choices concerning traditional gender roles and expected sexual identities; between maintaining local norms, while being impacted by broader, national and globally generated discourses; and between public, and private performances. These negotiations are complex, multi-layered, fragmented, and hybrid: as actors within the temple setting and its associated households oscillate between reproducing historical structures inherited with the intention to assure their legacy and family businesses, while directly engaging with change at the very real level of the everyday.

Although the inner life of changing clerical circumstances no longer matches outer temple discourses of ‘continuity without change’, the temple acts as an agent of reproduction in the community, negating change in order to perform a ‘traditional’ discourse of familiarity and repetition. And it is this discrepancy between reality and performance, alongside the motivations underlying these discourses (i.e. the best way to guarantee finances in order to ensure historical legacy and maintain the wider community) that the three cases reveal. Significantly, it is at the most intimate and personal level of identity where real changes are made, and this can be seen in the ethnography, where adaptations are being negotiated gradually within the inner sphere of family life. This results in necessary accommodations, amalgamations and negotiations internally, while deflecting problems and ultimately keeping things the same – or at the very least, performing a *display* of continuity on the outside.

Indeed, as long as the *ie* as a salient historical construct is performed convincingly by its key actors on the surface for the consumption of a wider audience, what happens within its confines is of less importance – as long as its functions are more or less maintained and household genealogy assured. This has been a key strategy that has served the Temple parishioner system throughout its history – and in the contemporary local context, not much seems to be changing on the surface; yet underneath a myriad of transitions are taking place that create micro-currents of change informed by a world of broader social, political, global and economic flux. Underscoring these discourses, ancestor consciousness remains crucial as rituals serve the living in various, very real, tangible ways: as people negotiate a contemporary period of increasing uncertainty, transition and change – concurrently utilising the *ie* as a resource in unpredictable social, economic and political times. During this process of transition, continuing relationships between the living and dead, embodied in ritual practice, ensure that although internal family dynamics may transform within – the *ie* household as an outer construct appears set to remain.

## References

- Bowring, Richard. *The Religious Traditions of Japan 500-1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Covell, Stephen Grover. *Japanese Temple Buddhism: Worldliness in a Religion of Renunciation*. Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005.
- Dessi, Ugo. "Social Behavior and Religious Consciousness among Shin Buddhist Practitioners". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37:2 (2010): 335-366.
- Kawahashi Noriko. "Jizoku (Priests' Wives) in Soto Zen Buddhism: An Ambiguous Category". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22:1-2 (1995): 161-183.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Feminist Buddhism as Praxis: Women in Traditional Buddhism". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 30:3-4 (2003): 291-313.
- Kawahashi, Noriko and Masako Kuroki. "Editors' Introduction: Feminism and Religion in Contemporary Japan". *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 30:3-4 (2003): 207-216.
- Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. *Japanese Women: Constraint and Fulfilment*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Self in Japanese Culture". In *The Japanese Sense of Self*, edited by Nancy R. Rosenberger, 105-121. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Machi, Taiki. "Kagoshima Ken Yoron tō ni Okeru Senkotsu no Kihanka to sono Fuseiritsu—'Kasōba Hitsuyō Ron' to Minzoku Chishiki no Arikata o Megute" (Degeneration of the Bone-washing Ritual and the Failure of Standardising Local Crematory Practices: A Case Study from Yoron Island, South-West of Japan) *Kyūshū Jinruigaku Kenkyū Gakuhō* (Kyushu Journal of Anthropology) 39:7 (2012): 19-36.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Changing Funeral Practices in the Japanese Periphery: Study of the Bone-washing ritual in Yoron Island". Conference paper presented at the Japanese Studies Graduate Summer School, Australian National University, (2013).
- Marcure, Kenneth A. "The Danka System". *Monumenta Nipponica* 40:1 (1985): 39-67.
- McLelland, Mark J. "Is There a Japanese 'Gay Identity'?" Special Issue - Critical Regionalities: Gender and Sexual Diversity in South East and East Asia. *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 2:4 (2000): 459-472.
- Moon, Okpyo. *From Paddy Field to Ski-Slope: The Revitalisation of Tradition in Japanese Village Life*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.
- Nishimura, Akira. "Inori no Nagasaki—Nagai Takashi to Genbaku Shisha" (Nagasaki, the Praying city: Nagai Takashi and the Atomic Bomb Dead), *Tokyo Daigaku Shūkyō Gakunenhō* (Tokyo University Annual Review of Religious Studies) 19 (2001): 47-61.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Relating to the Unknown Dead through Ritual: on Publicness in Japanese folk Religion". *Forum Bosnae, Sarajevo* 39:7 (2007): 232-246.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Battlefield Pilgrimage and Performative Memory: Contained Souls of Soldiers in Sites, Ashes, and Buddha Statues". *Memory Connection Journal* 1:1 (2011): 303-311.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Engagement of Religious Groups in Postwar Battlefield Pilgrimages". *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture* 37 (2013): 42-51.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Forthcoming: "Studies on the Commemoration of the War Dead in Modern Japan". (2018).
- Ochiai, Emiko. *The Japanese Family System in Transition: A Sociological Analysis of Family Change in Postwar Japan*. Yuhikaku: Tokyo, 1994.
- Plath, David W. "Where the family of God is the family: The role of the dead in Japanese households". *American Anthropologist* 66:2 (1964): 300-317.

- Rindfuss, Ronald; Bumpass; Choe; and Noriko O. Tsuya (eds.) “Social Networks and Family Change in Japan”. *American Sociological Review* 69:6 (2004): 838-861.
- Rowe, Mark. “Stickers for Nails: The Ongoing Transformation of Roles, Rites, and Symbols in Japanese Funerals”. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27:3-4 (2000): 353-378.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Grave Changes Scattering Ashes in Contemporary Japan”. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 30:1-2 (2003): 85-118.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Where the Action Is: Sites of Contemporary Soto Buddhism”. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 3:1-2 (2004): 357-388.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Review of Stephen G. Covell, Japanese Temple Buddhism: Worldliness in a Religion of Renunciation”. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 34:2 (2007): 452-455.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Bonds of the Dead: Temples, Burial, and the Transformation of Contemporary Japanese Buddhism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Smith, Robert, J. *Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974.
- Starling, Jessica. “Neither Nun nor Laywoman: The Good Wives and Wise Mothers of Jodo Shinshu Temples”. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40:2 (2013): 277-301.
- Tanaka, Kenneth, K. *Ocean: An Introduction to Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism in America*. Berkeley: Wisdom Ocean Publications, 1997.
- Tsuji, Yohko. “Mortuary Rituals in Japan: The Hegemony of Tradition and the Motivations of Individuals”. *Ethos* 34:3 (2006): 391-431.
- Vásquez Manuel A. and Friedmann Marquardt, Marie. *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion across the Americas*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003.
- Walker Kuroki, Amy V. “Rōkaruna hani de gurōbaru kibo ni kōryūsuru – aru jodobukkyō jiin no kakushin to henyō” (Global connections in the Local Sphere: Innovation and Change in a Pure Land Buddhist Temple), *Newsletter of the International Institute for the Study of Religions* 83:15-2 (2015): 6-11.
- Yanagawa, Kei'ichi; Abe, Y; and Jan Swyngedouw. “Some Observations on the Sociology of Religion in Japan [with Rejoinder] [with Reply]”. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 5:1 (1978): 5-36.