

Shooing the Dead to Paradise

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In 1265 the Kōfuku-ji monk Jōen had three Buddhist images carved on a cliff at the foot of Nara's Kasuga mountain. According to the inscription engraved beside the images, Jōen had commissioned the sculpture with three objectives in mind: to help the soul of his dead mother reach Buddhahood, to assure his own rebirth in heaven, and to benefit all beings (SHIMIZU 1973, p. 66). The inscription, typical of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, identifies Jōen's images as a kind of mortuary sculpture. While mortuary sculpture sometimes marked graves or memorialized the dead, its primary purpose was to rescue both living and dead: the dead from their own sins and illusions, the living from the harm that might be caused by angry, damned, or polluted dead souls.

Images, stupas or steles dedicated to the dead – or to someone anticipating death – were visible tokens that paralleled the funeral rites they sometimes commemorated. Using rite and token, medieval Japanese attempted to answer certain questions raised by death and the dead: What happened to people after they died? How could harsh fates be avoided? Were the dead a danger to the living, and if so, how could the living protect themselves? How were the dead – whether dangerous or benign – to be remembered? How might one preserve continuity with a past in which the dead were central actors? While these questions are certainly universal ones, the ways in which the medieval Japanese answered them reflect particularities of time and place, and help to explain an important phenomenon of the Kamakura period (1185–1333): the transformation of Buddhism from an elite to a popular religion.

This transformation, according to James H. FOARD (1980, p. 267), “resulted from a new affirmation: that an individual of any social or ecclesiastical standing could immediately reap the full benefits of Buddhist

salvation, or such lesser benefits as health and prosperity, through some form of direct, personal devotion to a particular Buddha, bodhisattva, sutra, or saint.” Thus Buddhism was opened to all people—the poor, the ignorant and the wicked as well as the rich, the wise and the virtuous—on a scale unknown in the past. One vehicle for this transformation, I will argue, was the use of mortuary rite and token to pacify and save the dead, and to bind them to the living.

The Kamakura Buddhist transformation has often been linked to contemporary social conditions such as civil war and the rise of the *bushi* (warrior) class, but in a way that I maintain is mistaken or at least incomplete. The standard view has pointed to a pessimistic outlook that developed at the end of the Heian period (794–1185) and seemed to be ratified by the turmoil of Kamakura. This outlook was based on a theory, taken from Buddhist scripture, of inevitable cosmic decline, and the belief that the “last age” — *mappō*, a time of conflict, depravity, and people’s inability to practice the Buddhist law — had begun in late Heian. Religious teachers such as Hōnen and Shinran used this theory to justify their arguments for reliance on faith in Amida Buddha; according to standard views, the pessimism of *mappō* theory penetrated Kamakura society, and was one major reason that people — especially those plagued by the upheavals in secular society — turned in droves to Pure Land beliefs.

Such arguments, however, do not quite fit the circumstances of the times. The people who turned to all forms of Buddhism in the Kamakura age included many whose socioeconomic circumstances had taken a sharp upward leap. Many of them suffered in various ways, but at the same time benefited from economic prosperity and the expansion of local autonomy. It seems likely that the newly-active lay believers were not refugees from conflict and despair, but upwardly-mobile *bushi* and commoners seeking religious validation for their needs and religious expression for their modes of social organization. We might even call them optimistic about their chances for salvation after death, and their ability to bring about salvation not only for themselves, but for those they loved as well. It is this optimism that I find reflected in the evidence of mortuary sculpture.

Mortuary Rites and Sculpture: A Historical Overview

Buddhist mortuary rites and the use of mortuary sculpture were shaped by pre-Buddhist beliefs, in particular the notion that death and the dead were ritually polluting. This view transcends a normal repugnance for the corpse, or even the dread of one’s own inevitable fate. The concept seems

to be derived from the fear of harmful spirits that might attach themselves to the corpse. According to TANAKA Hisao's explanation (1978, p. v), these were death-inducing spirits that might also kill the living. Eventually these spirits became confused with the soul of the dead person, although some vestiges of the original belief remained. The confusion of evil spirit with the soul of the dead can be seen in the account of Izanagi in the netherworld, an ancient myth recorded in Japan's eighth-century historical chronicles, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* (PHILIPPI 1968, pp. 61–67; KURANO and TAKEDA 1958, Vol. 1, pp. 63–66; ASTON 1972, Part 1, pp. 24–25; TAKEDA 1948, Vol. 2, pp. 82–86). Izanagi, visiting his dead wife Izanami, disobeys her injunction not to look at her and is horrified by her maggot-eaten corpse. When he flees the “hideous and polluted land,” she first sends eight “ugly females” after him, and then pursues him herself. Polluted and ugly as the evil females, the dead Izanami has become their equivalent. Like Izanami, once beloved of her husband, the polluted dead were feared harmful to the living.

To neutralize the danger, people used two means associated with Buddhism: memorial services to pacify the souls of the dead, and disposal of corpses by cremation. In the sixth century, aristocrats began to abandon the practice of entombing the dead in huge burial mounds, and to hold Buddhist memorial services instead; according to Delmer M. BROWN (1979, p. 359), the services were seen as “a superior way to honor and appease souls of the dead.” Special attention was given to the angry dead—those who had died violently or in political disfavor. In addition, in the eighth century urban aristocrats began to cremate their dead; since the pollution attached to the soul was not clearly distinguished from the decay of the corpse, cremation was seen as a purifying process. Until the fifteenth century, however, most corpses were neither cremated nor securely buried, but instead were simply exposed (TAMAMURO 1963, p. 97). If pollution could not be overcome in any other way, the corpse was avoided, at least until it was cleansed by decay. Once the corpse was reduced to a skeleton, it might be reburied elsewhere, especially if it had been originally left in a common graveyard where pollution was continually renewed by new corpses (MOGAMI 1963, pp. 175–176).

Both major schools of Heian Buddhism developed mortuary rites (TAMAMURO 1963, pp. 100–116). Tendai rites were often associated with Pure Land beliefs, and included both funerals and deathbed rituals to invoke rebirth in Amida's paradise. Shingon services were centered on the *kōmyō shingon* 光明真言, a mantra thought able to cancel the sins and bad karma in a person's life. In services at Mt. Kōya, for instance, earth and

sand symbolizing the mantra were sprinkled on the corpse's head, breast, legs and feet, and monks recited the mantra as the body was cremated. Practices often overlapped, of course, and the *kōmyō shingon* might be chanted at ceremonies on Tendai's Mt. Hiei.

No doubt these services were conducted largely for aristocrats. It has been argued, in fact, that Buddhist rites for dead forebears became routine only in the seventeenth century (e.g. LAI 1978, p. 268). While this may be the case, a tale in the twelfth-century collection *Konjaku monogatari shū* suggests that long before that, Buddhist funerals had begun to penetrate the general populace on at least a limited basis (SAKAKURA et al. 1978–1984, Vol. 3, pp. 110–114 [27:36]). In the tale, a traveler in the mountains of rural Harima¹ province takes shelter in a watchman's hut, only to be awakened by a commotion. Peeking out, he witnesses a procession, led by monks beating gongs and chanting the *nenbutsu*. A coffin is set down just outside the hut, and after a service – which is not described – workmen pile earth over the coffin and set a stupa on top of the mound.

The use of mortuary sculpture – sometimes in conjunction with memorial services, sometimes to mark graves like that in the *Konjaku* tale – can also be traced back to the earliest days of Buddhism in Japan. For example, the seventh-century courtier Takaya no Daibu enshrined a bronze image on the occasion of his wife's memorial service (TAKEUCHI 1943–1944, Vol. 2, pp. 83, 961). In the Nara period, funerary laws required gravemarkers but did not specify their type (TAMAMURO 1963, p. 96). Mortuary stupas occasionally appear in Heian literary sources: according to the diary *Shōyūki*, stupas were erected for the dead in 997 and 999, the latter at the time of the reburial of a woman's remains (1965, Vol. 1, pp. 135 [7th month, 9th day], 152 [9th month, 28th day]; TANAKA 1978, p. 137). The cremation sites of late Heian emperors such as Go Ichijō and Horikawa were marked with stone stupas, but others were usually commemorated by perishable wooden stupas, if they had any markers at all (TANAKA 1978, p. 128; TSURUOKA 1967, p. 53). All this had begun to change by the twelfth century, if we are to believe the *Konjaku* tale. In the Kamakura period, moreover, provincial *bushi* routinely dedicated stupas or steles to their dead forebears; and a few extant examples of mortuary sculpture can be associated with ordinary villagers.

The mortuary sculpture of the Kamakura period was frequently made of stone. Readily available in nature, cheaper than bronze and more

¹ In pre-modern times Japan was divided into provinces or *kuni*. Provinces mentioned in this article and the names of the corresponding modern prefectures are listed at the end of the text.

durable than wood, stone could be left unsheltered in temple graveyards; moreover, it represented permanence, in contrast to the ephemerality of human life made clear by every death. Mortuary sculpture included images, like Jōen's, with inscriptions that dedicated them to the dead; the five-tiered stupa or *gorintō* 五輪塔; and the *itabi* 板碑, a stele with a triangular top (suggesting a stupa) and a surface carved with inscriptions, images or the Sanskrit representations of Buddhas or bodhisattvas.

Mortuary images portrayed Buddhas and bodhisattvas associated with the afterlife: Amida, who had promised to welcome all the faithful to paradise; Jizō, who descended to hell to take on the punishments of the damned; and Miroku, who played a dual role—a saviour bodhisattva in the present, and in the future, a messianic Buddha who would save everyone born in his time. Inscriptions might be a simple dedication: on an image of Amida in Yamato province, “made on the sixteenth day of the sixth month, 1298, by Yūshō, for the dead”; “for my father and my master,” on an Amida carved in Mutsu province in 1306 (SHIMIZU 1973, p. 133; KAWAKATSU 1978, p. 190). Sometimes inscriptions included prayers for the salvation of the dead. For example, the donor of an image of Jizō dedicated in 1265 in Yamato requested his dead mother's enlightenment, and the inscription on a Miroku, carved in 1300 in Yamashiro, asked that a woman and her two children be reborn in a Buddha-land (SHIMIZU 1973, pp. 232, 99).

Comparatively rare, mortuary images are outnumbered by *gorintō* and *itabi*, both associated with the *bushi* of the Kantō region of eastern Japan. *Gorintō* were generally used by high-ranking *bushi*, who placed them on temple grounds or in artificial caverns called *yagura*, which might contain ashes of the dead. *Itabi*, on the other hand, were usually dedicated to *bushi* of middle and lower rank (TSURUOKA 1967, p. 68). Identifiable names on a handful of examples appear to be those of prominent local families.

In the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, people began to form *kechien* 結縁 (confraternities) to collect funds for mortuary rites and sculpture. The sculpture was installed at the local temple or another public site, a concrete testimony to collective action. For example, the inscription on an *itabi* in Musashi province reports that in 1296 more than one hundred people contributed toward a mortuary service and its commemorative token (KAWAKATSU 1978, p. 110). The twenty-seven donors of an *itabi* in Chikuzen province in 1344 were listed without surnames, indicating that they were villagers of relatively low status (KAWAKATSU 1970, pp. 86–87). The donors of these *itabi* may have joined together because they were too poor to afford either rites or sculpture on their own; or perhaps

they found social or religious value in collective action. In particular, the formation of *kechien* conformed to the *Yūzū nenbutsu* teaching that collective acts were more effective than individual ones in securing the goal of salvation.

Monument and Ritual

Like tombstones in the West, mortuary sculpture sometimes marked graves and sometimes honored the dead; often it did neither. The actual gravesite was not of great ritual importance, and in fact was often avoided. According to the fourteenth-century observer Yoshida Kenkō: "The body is interred in some lonely mountain and visited only at the required times. Before long, the grave marker is covered with moss and buried in fallen leaves. . . . in the end . . . the old grave is plowed up and turned into rice land" (KEENE 1967, pp. 30–31; YOSHIDA 1977, pp. 51–52 [No. 30]). Kenkō's observation suggests that services for the dead may have been performed initially at the gravesite, and were then moved to ritual sites elsewhere—a practice standardized later on in some locations and called the double-grave system. MOGAMI Takayoshi (1963, pp. 167–178) argues that the purpose of the system was to avoid pollution, especially in common graveyards where corpses were constantly being buried. MOGAMI suggests that the system was in use "somewhat before the sixteenth century," and surmises that some earlier *itabi* and stupas might have marked veneration rather than burial sites.

Mortuary sculpture was often kept at family-sponsored temples, and presumably everyone in the family would remember the identity of the deceased, his or her death date and the proper times for memorial services, at least for one or two generations. But few examples of mortuary sculpture seem intended as public monuments to memorialize the dead for generations to come. Inscriptions usually include only two-character posthumous religious names, recognizable only to those who knew the deceased. Sometimes names are not even given at all, and dedications are often a simple "for father" or "for my beloved mother." If full names appear, they may be those of the donor of the sculpture—usually the child of the deceased but sometimes a spouse, a disciple or a retainer. Thus the dead is identified only in relation to the donor.

Even if the deceased is named, his achievements are rarely listed. Of 189 thirteenth and fourteenth-century *itabi* listed in KAWAKATSU Masatarō's *Nihon sekizō bijutsu jiten* (1978), only one seems in any sense a tribute to the accomplishments of the dead. This is the *itabi* dedicated at Manpuku-ji in

Musashi province in 1307 for the sake of Asaba Yukinari, identified as founder of his clan (1978, p. 250). ISHII Susumu (1974, p. 198) cites another Musashi example which lists no name, but declares that the deceased “honored soul,” a member of the imperial guards, was a man of mercy who had cared for the people. Thus it appears that as memorials, mortuary images and *itabi* were made for a narrow audience, those few who would recognize “Jōen’s mother,” “Tachibana Kiyoshige’s son,” or “Dōamida-butsu” (a posthumous religious name, about as distinctive as “Brother John”).

It appears, then, that mortuary sculpture did not necessarily function either as tombstone or as memorial. Is there then any common purpose that defines mortuary sculpture as a type? I suggest that it functioned in two important ways. First of all, it was intended to assist the dead in attaining Buddhist salvation, an accomplishment that was expected to benefit the living as much as it did the dead. On a more mundane level, it helped to assure family continuity and community solidarity. To comprehend the significance of mortuary sculpture and the centrality and interrelatedness of these purposes, three factors must be considered: the power attributed to an image or a stupa, or to the act of having one made; the use of sculpture as the focus for mortuary ritual; and the relationship between the fear of the dead and the hope for their salvation.

In the medieval Japanese view, the primary value of Buddhist images and stupas rested on their ability to produce miraculous results. Meditation on an image was thought to confer extraordinary spiritual gifts: the meditator became one with the Buddha represented by the image, and shed the illusions that obstructed the path toward Buddhahood. Having an image or stupa made was an especially potent act, since it produced merit for the donor that could be transferred to others – in the case of mortuary sculpture, to the dead. Jōen’s inscription, for instance, asked that the power of the image bring spiritual rewards to himself, to his mother, and to all others. In other words, mortuary sculpture was thought to possess talismanic powers in and of itself.

Inscriptions on mortuary sculpture often refer to memorial rites, probably conducted at the site where the sculpture was installed. These rites were of two kinds: the ordinary service or *tsuizen* 追善, held for the dead by his or her family, and the *gyakushū* 逆修, a pre-death service that replicated ordinary rites. *Tsuizen* spanned many years – one reason, perhaps, that durable stone was used for mortuary sculpture. The rites were intended not only to comfort the living and to honor the dead, but also to help the dead attain salvation.

The belief that the living can relieve the suffering of the dead was central to Chinese Buddhist practice, which supplied the model for *tsuizen* and other rites for the dead. Stephen F. TEISER has examined the history of the ghost festival in China (Yü-lan-p'en; Japan's *Obon*), in which people who wished to rescue their dead kin from hell made offerings to Buddhist monks, thus helping "to effect the passage of the dead from the status of a recently deceased, threatening ghost to that of a stable, pure, and venerated ancestor" (1988, p. 13). This, of course, was one purpose of the annual ghost festival as it was practiced in Japan, and of mortuary rituals that might take place at any time of the year.

In Kamakura-period Japan, there were thirteen mortuary rites in all. The first ten services were meant to ensure a merciful judgment for the dead in a series of trials before the ten judges of hell (TAMAMURO 1963, pp. 162–168). Services were conducted at seven-day intervals during the first forty-nine days after a person's death, and less frequently after that until the thirty-third (or sometimes the fiftieth) death anniversary, when the soul was thought to lose its individuality and dissolve into the general community of the dead. Without an individual personality, the soul had no capacity for harm, and further services were not particularly useful. By this time, moreover, the deceased was remembered only vaguely, since spouse and even children may have also been dead. Thus the timing of the individual soul's absorption into the collective "dead" roughly coincided with the disappearance of the individual in the memories of the living.

The *gyakushū* – its subject alive and present – typically compressed the *tsuizen* rites into a shorter period, usually a year. Though *gyakushū* were known among the Heian aristocracy, it was in the Kamakura period that they became widespread. Mortuary sculpture begins to document these services in the late thirteenth century: among the earliest known *gyakushū itabi* is one dedicated in 1283 in Mutsu province (KAWAKATSU 1972, p. 155). *Itabi* commemorating *gyakushū* rites became quite common after that. From the middle of the fourteenth century, inscriptions on *itabi* cited *gyakushū* ceremonies just about as often as ordinary posthumous rites.

Gyakushū rites were considered even more useful than ordinary funerals in achieving the goal of salvation (KAWAKATSU 1972, p. 149), a view that was rooted in Buddhist scripture. The sudden popularity of *gyakushū* in the late thirteenth century, however, invites some speculation.

According to INOUE Mitsusada (1956, p. 238–247), late-Heian and Kamakura literary sources indicate that the fear of hell was especially cogent at the popular level. Because people believed that their next rebirth depended not only on deeds in their present lives, but on those in past lives

of which they knew nothing, they developed a sense of hell's inevitability. Even worse, those of limited means felt it impossible to escape hell through performing good deeds that the wealthy might accomplish, such as donating to monasteries or having sutras copied.

Anxieties about the afterlife engendered new methods to avoid its worst possibilities. Passive reliance on saviours such as Jizō and Amida is a well-known feature of Kamakura Buddhism. But as *bushi* and prosperous farmers took greater control over their daily affairs than before, they also seem to have taken active steps to control their afterlives. In particular, *gyakushū* left nothing to the good will of others, even of one's descendants. The fear of hell, moreover, was by no means an individual concern. The unredeemed sinner faced not only the prospect of harsh suffering, but also the likelihood of returning to earth as a malevolent spirit to torment its kin. The increasing use of *gyakushū* points to the socially responsible concern that after death, one might harm even one's own children. This speaks for a sense of continuity between living and dead, a matter that will be treated in detail later.

At the heart of mortuary ritual – whether *tsuizen* or *gyakushū* – lay two conflicting emotions: fear of death and the dead, and compassion for others. A tale from the late-thirteenth century collection *Shasekishū* (MORRELL 1985, pp. 81–82; WATANABE 1966, pp. 67–68 [1:4]) suggests that compassion was extended even to strangers, and might overcome the pollution that engendered fear. In this tale the monk Jōgambō, on his way to the shrine at Kinpusen in Yoshino, meets several children in tears by the side of the road. Asking the cause of their distress, Jōgambō is told that their mother has just died and they cannot bury her: “The neighbors wish to have nothing to do with such nasty, unpleasant business, and so there is no one to look after the burial.” Jōgambō takes the corpse to a nearby field and buries it after a hasty funeral service, even though he believes the act will pollute him and render him unfit to worship at the shrine. But when he tries to return home, he is paralyzed and is unable to do so; he is, however, able to walk freely toward Yoshino. Praying to the *kami*, he asks why this has happened and is told: “I certainly do not abhor what you have done. On the contrary, I respect compassion.”

This attitude toward death – in which compassion balances fear and even begins to outweigh it – is also suggested by another type of Buddhist sculpture, not specifically dedicated to the dead. In certain areas of central Honshū, sacred images were carved on the lids of coffins unearthed from prehistoric graves (KAWAKATSU 1978, p. 327; KŌSHIN KONWAKAI 1975, p. 318). SATŌ Sōtarō (1974, p. 279) suggests that the images were

designed to pacify the souls of those interred in the coffins. It seems unlikely, however, that people would have been concerned with those so long dead; and the virtual absence of inscriptions indicates that the sculpture was not dedicated to anyone in particular. Instead, it seems intended as a general statement about the Buddhist approach to death. Coffin lids, once used to contain the corpse and perhaps prevent the escape of a malevolent soul, were transformed into entities that embraced Buddhism's salvific powers — just as Buddhist rituals and mortuary sculpture turned the dead into benevolent souls on their way to Buddhahood.

Mountains and the Dead

Buddhism's treatment of the mountains parallels the treatment of death that I have discussed above. In religious practice, in myth and in terminology, ancient and medieval Japanese demonstrated their equation of death and the mountains, basing it both on imagination and on concrete circumstance. The mountains were connected to death in specific ways (GRAPARD 1982, pp. 200–201; TAMAMURO 1963, p. 88). Graves are often called *yama* or mountain. The tumuli of the Kofun period (third-sixth centuries) were excavated from mountainsides or, when on the plains, were covered with earth to simulate mountains. Corpses were discarded in the mountains, far from villages and cultivated land. All this led people to think of the mountains as “the other world” where one went after death. According to YANAGITA Kunio's now-famous study (1963, pp. 291–377), the mountains were regarded as the home of *yama no kami*, ancestral spirits who descended from the mountains at planting time to help their descendants, then returned in the autumn when the planting was finished. As Allan GRAPARD (1982, p. 200) points out, “the notion of the mountain as the realm of death” was a crucial factor in the deification of mountains in early Shinto.

Like death, the mountains were dangerous. Dead souls were feared harmful to the living; the mountains were the homes of real hazards such as bandits and vipers, and mythical hazards such as the long-nosed goblins called *tengu*. Dead souls were in danger of hell; the mountains, or specific regions in them, were sometimes regarded as hell. One slope of Kasuga mountain (Nara prefecture) is called Jigokudani — the Valley of Hell — and a peak in the Tateyama ridge in Toyama prefecture is named after hell's famous Peak of Sharpened Swords, that the damned were forced to climb. Even the sacredness of certain mountains, conceived of as regions of the *kami* or as *kami*-in-themselves, made them inhospitable and forbidding,

approachable only by those who had undergone special purification rituals.

On the other hand, death gave the soul its greatest opportunity, the chance for salvation, most often conceived of as rebirth in a Buddha's Pure Land. The mountains provided opportunities for salvation as well. Heian monasteries were often located in the mountains, and ascetic wanderers retreated to the mountains, mixing love of nature with a desire for the solitude needed for meditation. Thus Buddhist coloration was added to the concept of the mountains as the home of the dead — not only were they graveyards full of polluted corpses, but they also were equated with the paradises to which Buddhist believers aspired. For example, Mt. Kumano in central Honshū was identified as the Pure Land of the bodhisattva Kannon (WAKAMORI 1972, p. 95), and other mountains such as Ōmine, Kinpu and Kasagi were also regarded as Buddhist heavens or Pure Lands. Legends concerning Mt. Kōya, site of the Shingon patriarch Kūkai's mausoleum, made it a popular gravesite: Miroku the future Buddha was expected to manifest himself to Kūkai, who was waiting there in meditation. The fourteenth-century text *Genkō shakusho* reports that people would carry the ashes of the dead to be buried at Mt. Kōya, in hopes that Kūkai would take them to be enlightened by Miroku (BUSSHO KANKŌKAI 1913, p. 283).²

GRAPARD (1982, pp. 210) explains the process of sacralizing certain mountains as one of "mandalization," in which the two main mandalas of the Shingon school — the Diamond and the Womb mandalas — were "projected over geographical areas to produce natural mandalas, sacred spaces for practice and the realization of Buddhahood." Elsewhere, he points out the correspondence to the *Lotus Sūtra* of an important site of ascetic religious practice, the mountainous Kunisaki peninsula in northern Kyūshū, and suggests that stone sculpture as well as temples played an important part in establishing the correspondence (1986, p. 26).

Indeed, Buddhist sculpture was utilized to define sacred space, whether it was likened to sutra, to mandala or to paradise. Images and stupas were carved on mountain cliffs, marking the ascetic's path and visibly transforming the mountain into a "Pure Land." Such images are analogues to mortuary sculpture. First of all, the act of making a sculpture was significant in itself: like donors of mortuary sculpture seeking merit for themselves and others, ascetics carved images as a discipline that would lead

² For a discussion of the Kūkai legend and a survey of related primary sources see GOODWIN 1977, pp. 129–135.

them to Buddhahood. Secondly, a cliff image might become the focus for an ascetic's meditative ritual, just as a mortuary image might serve as the focus for a funeral or memorial rite. Finally, just as mortuary sculpture eased the passage through death and thus pacified the dead and protected the living, cliff sculpture opened passageways through the mountains. Ascetics and pilgrims could follow these routes – if not in complete safety, at least with some expectation of attaining Buddhahood.

Rituals to purify the mountains sometimes had aims similar to the salvific aim of mortuary ritual and sculpture. An example comes from an episode in *Shozan engi* 諸山縁起, a Kamakura-period text, that relates the austerities of the sixth-century ascetic En no Gyōja (SAKURAI et al. 1975, pp. 104–108).³ On a mountain journey, he encounters evil spirits and the pollutions of childbirth, cannibalism, the eating of carrion, and death. But he overcomes pollution through a mixture of Shinto rites such as *harae* (purification) and Buddhist rites such as reading sutras and forming *mudrā* (gestures thought to effect union with a Buddha). Evil spirits, for their part, seem unwillingly bound to malevolence and ask En no Gyōja to use his rituals to purify them – or even to make them disappear. In one case, he advises an evil spirit to bathe in a holy river (the Shinto rite of ablutions) in order to attain rebirth at the time of Miroku's advent. Thus evil and pollution are not only defeated by ritual, but are "saved" in a Buddhist sense, just as sinners are shooed to paradise by mortuary rites.

Neither the mountains nor death were ever rendered completely harmless. The sacralization of the mountains was not a permanent and irreversible process, but rather, one that continually needed renewal. Sacred space or not, the mountains were still hazardous, home to both *tengu* and viper. Thus images of Fudō – the ascetic's guide and protector – were carved over and over again by generations of mountain practitioners. In fact, it was crucial that the mountains never be permanently purified, for the ascetic could reach the Pure Land only through ordeal. As for death, Buddhist practice could do no more than provide safe conduct through it, arming each individual traveler with the protection of mortuary rite and token.

Binding the Dead to the Living

The power to guide the dead out of hell and point them toward paradise gave an awesome responsibility to the living Buddhist faithful, and

³ For an examination of this text regarding another matter – the mandalization of the mountains – see GRAPARD 1982, p. 211.

strengthened the ties between them and their dead beneficiaries. But the living received concrete benefits in return. Appropriate mortuary ritual and tokens not only freed the living from the wrath of the dead who might otherwise be reborn as dangerous malevolent spirits, but also solidified the continuity of the family structure. This was crucial for the Kamakura *bushi*, whose military power and control of land depended upon the cohesiveness of their families or *ie* (see MURAKAMI 1984, pp. 297–308). Since *ie* were stem families based on patrilineal descent, it was particularly important to remember dead forebears, at least within the *ie* itself. Like ancestral rites in more modern times, mortuary rites and sculpture were useful in preserving the awareness of the *ie* as a corporate body that transcended the generations. Similarly, the *kechien* formed to sponsor mortuary rites and sculpture must have contributed to village solidarity, binding neighbor to neighbor and everyone to the dead.

Some interesting parallels can be drawn with similar circumstances in medieval Europe. In both Japan and Europe of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the growth of markets and a cash economy resulted in new complexities in the social structure. A middle class began to form in both societies: in Europe, an urban bourgeoisie; in Japan, a rural bourgeoisie composed of local *bushi* and prosperous farmers. Both had need of religious validation for a way of life that was held in contempt or at best ignored in existing religious schemes. The counterpart of the merchant in medieval Europe—whose pursuit of profit seemed improper or even sinful (LITTLE 1978, pp. 35–41)—was doubtless the Japanese warrior, who took life in defiance of the Buddhist precepts. More generally speaking, however, the “middle classes” of medieval Japan and Europe required a method to obtain salvation that demanded neither wisdom, nor superhuman virtue, nor wealth enough to donate large sums to religious institutions. Such a method—which also permitted the living to help the dead, and by extension, themselves—emerged in both Japan and Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: in Japan, it was based on mortuary ritual, in Europe, on the concept of Purgatory, the place between heaven and hell in the sacred geography of medieval Christianity.

Jacques LEGOFF (1984, pp. 7–13) associates Purgatory with the increasingly complex social structure of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As intermediate social categories emerged between the old dichotomies of rich and poor and clergy and laity, sacred geography had need for an intermediate realm as well. Purgatory gave hope to those of intermediate virtue: people who were neither good enough to merit heaven, nor bad enough to deserve eternal damnation in hell; the circle of the “interme-

diates" was even expanded to include usurers (LEGOFF 1984, p. 304)—despised but crucial to economic growth. The travail of sinners in Purgatory was temporary, though harsh and of long duration; like the damned in the Buddhist hells of China and Japan, one could obtain an early release through the good offices of friends and family: prayers, offerings, masses and other good deeds. Thus, "the faithful found what they needed both to satisfy their desire to support their relatives and friends beyond the grave and to sustain their own hopes of benefiting in turn from similar assistance" (1984, p. 134)—just as did the medieval Japanese who performed mortuary ritual and made mortuary sculpture for their dead and for themselves. In Europe as well as in Japan, moreover, the establishment of ties between living and dead enhanced the solidarity of families and confraternities (1984, p. 12).

Mortuary ritual, be it Buddhist rites or masses for Christian sinners, had significant results for the medieval religious community. In Japan, mortuary ritual enabled Buddhist specialists to establish themselves in rural communities (TAMAMURO 1963, p. 210); this stood them in good stead in later years, when standard sources of income began to decline and they had to seek alternate means of support. In Europe, the Catholic church obtained a new position of power through its ability to extract offerings from a dead soul's living family (LEGOFF 1984, p. 135). The ties between religious specialists and family were also strengthened in China, according to TEISER (1988, pp. 196–197), as monks became "an essential party in the cycle of exchange linking ancestors and descendants."

In short, in medieval Japan as in Europe and China, methods were developed to rescue the dead from the harshest consequences of their misdeeds. The ties between dead and living were strengthened, and religious specialists found a place in the intimate corners of secular life. Most important, these methods provided hope for all of imperfect virtue, fearful of their own fates after death. Buddhism in the Kamakura period was based not so much on the pessimistic view that all were sinners and all deserved hell—or that the evil in the times made all men and women helpless—but on the optimistic view that action could be taken to avoid the worst of fates. That action, moreover, had special value for people seeking not only to allay their concerns about death, but also to reinforce and validate the structures of their secular lives. Using the vehicle of mortuary rites and sculpture, religious specialists seized the opportunity to answer these needs, and thus to spread an invigorated Buddhism among the medieval Japanese.

Pre-Modern Provinces and Modern Prefectures

Chikuzen province: Fukuoka prefecture
Harima province: Hyōgo prefecture
Musashi province:	. Tokyo metropolitan and Saitama prefectures
Mutsu province:	Miyagi, Fukushima, Iwate and Aomori prefectures
Ōmi province: Shiga prefecture
Yamashiro province: Kyoto municipal prefecture
Yamato province: Nara prefecture

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