

# Repetition and the Symbolic in Contemporary Japanese Ancestor Memorial Ritual

*Jason Allen Danely*

## Abstract

Ancestor memorial rituals, including mortuary ceremonies for the dead, periodic grave visits, practices at home altars, and the like, constitute the most popular form of religious participation in contemporary Japan, encompassing an increasingly diverse number of ritual forms. This article examines a common theoretical framework used to describe this diversity by categorizing rituals in terms of continuity vs. change or tradition vs. invention. This article proposes an alternate framework for understanding processes leading to the transformation of rituals like ancestor memorial. This framework is centered around the process of *repetition* and its role in the production of the symbolic. Drawing on the theoretical synthesis of Bourdieu and Lacan proposed by Steinmetz (2006), I argue that one benefit of looking at ritual from the perspective of repetition is the manner in which it highlights the role of symbolic capital as it impacts both the psychological experience of grief as well as social relationships based on mutual interdependence and generational succession. From the perspective of repetition, changes in ritual formed over time can be traced to actors' desires for preserving continuity of an underlying symbolic system, making it difficult to separate the ideas of change and continuity within the realm of practice. I illustrate the ways that this perspective gives insight into some forms of ritual memorial strategies within the context of the lived experiences of Japanese adults. Ancestor memorial, seen as an act of repetition, thus connects cognition and practice, pre-figuring both change and resilience while avoiding some of potential pitfalls of comparative studies based on limited categories of religious behaviors or institutions.

**Keywords:** *Japanese mortuary ritual, grief, repetition, symbolic capital.*

## Introduction

This article examines contemporary Japanese ancestor memorial rituals by distinguishing two levels of closely interrelated cultural work: first, the psychological process of grief work, and secondly, the socio-historical processes reproducing meaningful values, symbols, institutions over generations. I argue that processes of repetition at both of these levels work together to produce rituals that preserve participants' sense of continuity, even as the ritual's form, content or sentiment changes or adapts. As Roy Rappaport (1999) has noted, rituals are often repeated by individuals over the course of life, as well as by generational cohorts as the custom is passed down, and this repetition contributes to a sense of order and continuity while allowing the flexibility and adaptation (1999:427). Rappaport, however, emphasizes the "punctilious" repetition of ritual, and the effect of eternal changelessness that this impresses upon participants (1999:33, 222-232). While this may apply to Japanese ancestor memorial in some cases, it must also contend with a tremendous degree of diversity. Robert Smith's (1974) study, for example, re-

sulted in no less than 14 different patterns of periodic ritual observance, which still only accounted for less than half of his total survey sample (Smith 1974: 106). Japanese memorial rituals today maintain this characteristic of highly flexible and ambiguous guidelines, which are legitimated by the diverse options available in the modern mortuary services market. Repetition, not only secures a sense of continuity and authority, but, when loosely constrained by formal institutions, produces change and transformations as well. What kinds of patterns can be found in these repetitions and how does the nature of repetition itself shape processes of cultural transmission? How might these patterns be linked to emotional and phenomenological processes of repetition that often motivate memorial rituals?

The repetition of memorial rituals not only transforms the deceased person's spirit into a venerable ancestor, it also brings about changes in the minds of bereaved ritual participants. In this sense, ritual repetition can facilitate transformation of both the object and subject of the repetition. Indeed, repetition that resists change might

be considered pathological, such as in the case of the repetition of traumatic memories (cf. Ogden et al. 2006). The centrality of transformation within repetition is particularly important when considering the cases of older bereaved persons, for whom a death generates anxiety surrounding their own uncertain future. Approaching repetition from the perspective of the symbolic allows us to understand the decisions these older adults make about mortuary rituals, whether in preparation for themselves or for others, as they assess the value of their grief, the nature of its change over time, and the strategies for transferring this sentiment and the practices related to it to succeeding generations.

This article addresses the need to locate contemporary Japanese ancestor memorial practice (*senzo kuyō*) within a theoretical framework that can account for both its seeming continuity and change and therefore move towards a more productive critique of popular discourses concerning broader social transformations in the family.<sup>1</sup> I suggest that rather than viewing ancestor memorial today either as a conscientious modern invention or as a “return” to pre-modern forms, it is more accurate to view it as a repetition operating on several levels of social and psychic structures. Furthermore, I argue that understanding the beliefs and practices of contemporary Japanese ancestor memorial as assembled repetitions provides a basis for investigating the motivations for and effects of ritual memorial. I will first present a brief description of ancestor memorial ritual as it has been framed by the dilemma of continuity vs. change (cf. Morioka 1984; Bellah 2003:184-208; Long & Littleton 2003: 232; Tanaka 2007). I argue that while this dilemma has in some ways called attention to ancestor memorial as fluid and adaptable, it is also limited in helping us to understand motivational schema and value systems that underlie the decision making processes of ritual participants. In the second section I present an alternative model of Japanese ancestor memorial based on repetition. I argue that this model, which draws on a synthesis of psychoanalytic, cognitive, and social theory, helps to reframe questions about ancestor memorial in Japan and more accurately represents the lived experiences of ritual participants. In the last section I elaborate on this model using material from ethnographic observations and interviews from my research on aging and ancestor memorial in Kyoto, Japan. I conducted my fieldwork over a period of 20 months between 2005 and 2007, during which I focused on extensive life-history interviews with 10 key older adult informants, open-ended interviews with an additional 25 older adults, and semi-structured interviews with 7 younger adults. I also conducted participant observation on ancestor memorials in various religious institutions,

cemeteries, private homes and on Buddhist pilgrimage routes<sup>2</sup>.

## Continuity and Change

In Japan, practices directed towards the spirits of the deceased, such as funerals and other mortuary rituals (*sōgi*), grave/altar visits (*haka/butsudan mairi*) and more formal periodic memorials (*hōyō*) are widely acknowledged to be the most widespread and frequent forms of religious practice (see Roemer, this issue). Furthermore, other popular religious activities, such as pilgrimage and community festivals typically involve offerings and other forms of explicit recognition of the ancestors, reinforcing their role in legitimating and contextualizing these ritual spaces and practices. Historical and archaeological research on burial and mortuary rites suggest that ancestor memorial may be as old as Japan itself, persisting over the centuries through a combination of social utility and practical adaptation (Smith 1974: 6-12).

Ancestor memorial in Japan today relies on cultural understandings of life and death that have carried on over a long history but which have been obscured by a discourse that favors a paradigm of disruption and change implied by the theoretical frame of modernity vs. tradition. Briefly, the narrative that is constructed from modernity theory about ancestor memorial is one in which “traditional” forms based on Meiji era (1868-1912) interpretations of formal lineage succession and inheritance of household property and responsibilities have proven unsustainable in the current socioeconomic environment (cf. Morioka 1984). Recent scholarship has highlighted the ways in which new trends and technologies surrounding mortuary and memorial ritual are reshaping cultural attitudes towards life and death within the context of population aging and shrinking families (Traphagan and Knight, eds. 2003; Kawano 2010), and new possibilities of marketing and mass consumption (Rowe 2000; Suzuki 2000). These studies point out that many of the rituals associated with Japanese ancestor memorial have shifted from religious institutions and community-based groups to private companies and associations more accommodating to the circumstances of changing social trends (Morioka 1984: 203-204). As a result, these works attempt to show how Japanese ancestor rituals today are informed by a new practical logic, taking on a distinctly modern purpose that focuses on individual tastes and preferences, emphasizes the practical concerns of mourners, and incorporates new technologies and ritual options to reduce the burden of post-death procedures. This perspective has led some anthropologists to argue that the move towards individualized and

informal memorials is evidence that people want to, as Satsuki Kawano (2004) writes, “find substitutes and *invent* their own memorial activity” (2004:246 emphasis mine).<sup>3</sup>

The changes that characterize contemporary Japanese ancestor memorial are often portrayed in the popular press both in Japan and abroad not only as modern inventions, but also as dramatic evidence of the loss of once important cultural traditions, which, although not necessarily cause for alarm in their own right, contributes to a discourse of broader social struggles to adapt to modernity on the level of the family. In support of such a view, we might point to the growing popularity of “western-style” grave markers, which according to a 2005 article in the *Daily Yomiuri* accounted for 63.9% of all gravestones included in one recent poll of major private cemeteries in the Tokyo region (*Daily Yomiuri* September 10, 2005).<sup>4</sup> Similarly, “soul parks” (*reien*) resembling the landscaped cemeteries found in the west are rapidly becoming dominant, displacing the convention of establishing grave plots at a Buddhist temple or temple managed property (Kawano 2003). These soul parks are especially accommodating not only to personalized monuments, but also to alternative burial arrangements, such as collectively maintained graves for remains of unmarried or divorced women (cf. French 2002; Wijers-Hasegawa 2004). Similarly, a three-part series of articles in MSN *Sankei News* that ran during the 2009 Autumn Equinox ancestor memorial holiday (*aki higan*), described a recent dramatic rise in “family funerals” (*kazokusō*), where only a small group of family members are in attendance, and “direct funerals” (*chokusō*), where corpses are transported directly to the crematorium and no funeral ceremony is held, as indications of weakening social and familial relationships exacerbated not only by intergenerational distance, but also by increased longevity and decreasing fertility (MSN *Sankei News*, 2009, September 22, <http://sankei.jp.msn.com/life/trend/090922/trd0909220846005-n1.htm>).

Despite the veracity of the discourse linking changes in the modern family to unconventional, and often smaller, less formal mortuary and memorial rituals does not mean that there is a shrinking market for these rituals for the dead. A 1991 *Business Week* article reported on the growing popularity of high-tech funerals in Japan, including some transmitted to mourners live via satellite and others where “synthesized music blares, and pink and green laser lights pierce billowing dry-ice smoke to form the outline of a tunnel tilting heavenward” before the mourners (Miller, *Business Week*, 1991, September 16, p.49).<sup>5</sup> As fantastical as all of this sounds, the use of futuristic gadgetry in Japanese mortuary rituals has con-

tinued to evolve over the 19 years since this article appeared, incorporating not only funerals and cremation, but burials and memorial rituals as well.

In October of 2009, for example, NPR broadcast a story about something referred to as Japan’s new “Graveyard in the Sky” (BBC Radio Roland Buerk 2009, October 8). With the drone of Buddhist chanting in the background, the reporter explained that this “graveyard” facility features a multistory vault fitted with a robotic arm that can retrieve the remains of those interred, delivering them to a small viewing window in front of a black marble gravestone. Photos of the deceased then appear on electronic monitors and mourners are given the opportunity to bow, offer incense and perform other customary rituals in a virtual sacred space. To those interviewed for the story, a shelf in the mausoleum is a bargain at 380,000 yen, or roughly \$4000 USD, and is conveniently located within walking distance of a train station.

While new technology is being put to use to address mourners’ needs, I have also spoken to several people during my own fieldwork who prefer the idea of having their ashes scattered in some natural area such as the mountains or the ocean. One middle-aged woman I spoke with told me that although her mother’s remains were buried in a conventional Buddhist cemetery, her father wished to have his spread in the ocean, where he had worked on boats for much of his life. She then told me that while the idea of scattering ashes appealed to her, she would rather have her own remains scattered in a place where they could be visited by other people, but which wasn’t affiliated with a particular Buddhist sect or temple, like a secular, municipally managed memorial park.

The practice of scattering remains in nature, known generally as *shinzensō*, or “natural burial,” has also been reported on widely in the mass media, by both social commentators and academics (Rowe 2003, Sato 2004, Kawano 2004; 2010). Whereas conventional Japanese mortuary procedures involve religious ceremonies for the dead that culminate in cremation and the interment of charred bone fragments within a household-based gravesite, *shinzensō* typically involve smaller, less elaborate ceremonies for the disposal of ashes absent of household-based monumentation. Similar to the “Graveyard in the Sky,” supporters of *shinzensō* cite cost concerns, honoring the individual preferences of the deceased, and the lack of descendants or responsible family caretakers as reasons for choosing this alternative mortuary practice. In contrast to modern high-tech innovations in mortuary ritual, *shinzensō* appeals to those who associate death with a “natural” environmental consciousness rooted in revivalist notions of Japanese spiritual identity (Kawano 2010: 168-175). The Grave-Free Promotion So-

ciety, which has become the most outspoken advocacy organization for *shinzensō* since its founding by Mutsuhiko Yasuda in 1991 explains on its website that, “By reviving an ancient Japanese tradition, we members of a citizen’s movement (Grave-Free Promotion Society of Japan), promote an environmentally sound mortuary practice, *shizensou*: scattering remains of the deceased in nature.” (<http://www.shizensou.net/english/introduction.html>)

While the importance of conventional forms of ancestor memorial appears to have diminished for some, others have taken it up in their devotion to new religious sects (*shinshūkyō*), such as Reiyūkai, Gedatsukai, Shinnyo-en, Seicho no Ie, and many others that place ancestor veneration and revelation at the center of their ritual practices (Shimazono 2004: 171-177). Yamaori Tetsuo (1986) has noted that *shinshūkyō* make ancestor worship an “integral part” of their practice, revealing its deep psychological resonance in modern day popular culture (1986:52). Indeed across these new religions of Japan the most commonly cited reason for joining is to mourn for lost loved ones and honor the ancestors (Kōmoto 2001; Sasaki 2002:56). In my own conversations with several members of Shinnyo-en, an international Buddhism-based new religious group, I found that receiving messages and advice on behalf of the ancestors through the revelation of spirit mediums (*reinōsha*) is one of the most important ritual practices of the sect. Although *reinōsha* with whom I have spoken do not claim to have any special powers and do not enter trance states when they are accepting these messages, they do have a cultural link with Japanese traditions of shaman possession, such as those documented on Mount Osore (Ivy 1995), at least insofar as imagining the ancestors as powerful beings that remain directly interested in the specific worldly affairs of the living (cf. Hori 1968: 217-251). While rituals involving the ancestors in the new religions do not always resemble conventional ancestor memorial practices, they do represent the desire of the bereaved to incorporate interaction with the deceased in their lives, and the continuity with similar forms of interaction in the past provides both a sense of social legitimacy and cultural intuitiveness to the practices.

The diversity of memorial rituals today is much greater than what I have described above, and extends far beyond the scope of this article. Even in this brief discussion, however, there appears to be multiple trajectories and intersecting discourses regarding the treatment of the dead, their relationship to the living and the implications of all of this for what it means to be Japanese or to participate in modern Japanese culture. The fact remains that most Japanese practice some form of ancestor memorial ritual, or even several different kinds over the course of their lives. During my fieldwork I found many examples of

middle-aged adults assuming new memorial responsibilities as they grew older and had children of their own, women adopting the practices of the their husbands’ family, individuals converting to new religions, and older adults observing the deaths of loved ones from new perspectives. This dynamism has the potential for explaining much about transformation and transmission, but it can also be lost if we are simply comparing snapshots of the past and present, without a sense of the processes linking the two.

Although high-tech mausoleums, scattering ashes in nature, and ritual spirit communication differ from one another in form, the basic rationale for these changes in ancestor memorial is the same: preservation of rituals depends upon adaptation to social, cultural and economic context — continuity requires change, revitalization requires innovation. Many changes in Japanese ancestor memorial happening more broadly follow a similar logic; whether forgoing the rental of expensive funerary altars (*saidan*), purchasing posthumous names (*kaimyō*), or choosing to have one’s remains interred in one of the increasingly popular individual “perpetual memorial graves” (*eitaikuyō*) rather than in a family grave plot, the economic investment required to preserve previous ritual forms is not balanced by the anticipated gains in other ways. By choosing to alter or omit certain features of the overall regime of ancestor memorial rituals, however, actors can achieve a suitable balance between costs and benefits that is more acceptable. What is preserved then is less the ritual form than the processes of repetition that imbues rituals with symbolic value for both the bereaved performer of the rituals and the succeeding generations charged with carrying on the memorial rituals in the future. But how does one evaluate the suitability of a ritual within the context of personal grief, family values and cultural ethical norms?

I don’t mean to suggest that the decisions about post-death arrangements being made by the recently bereaved or by individuals considering their own mortality can be entirely captured in strictly rational economic terms. In considering not only the voiced concerns of ritual participants (such as the cost of rituals), but also the practices, it becomes clear that deeply felt emotions, memories, self-perceptions, values and cultural and religious beliefs complicate the decisions about post-death care. When a widow decides to chant sutras daily for her husband’s spirit, or an older adult decides to mourn a parent’s death by partaking in a religious pilgrimage, the repetition of cultural rituals delivers a comforting rhythm to the creation of new narratives of loss that cannot be easily quantified in economic terms alone. In addition, decisions about graves, funerals and memorials are often

made over time through a process involving discussions with family members, clergy, acquaintances, and increasingly professional funeral companies (Suzuki 2005). If repetition is to be a useful lens for investigating Japanese ancestor memorial, there is a need to establish some coherence between its functioning on psychic, social, and cultural levels

### (Not) Continuity, (Not) Change

Japanese ancestor memorial is primarily comprised of a regime of practices that mark divisions not only between life and death or this world and the next, but also between what one has been in the past and what lies ahead in one's future. In the minds of those who perform these practices, this temporal inter-contextuality informs their intuitive judgments regarding the personal authenticity and cultural identity that ritual generates.

Although the ways in which this decision making process unfolds around ritual is potentially quite complex, it begins with the general observation summarized by Bloch (2004), that,

Actors in ritual guide much of their behavior in terms of what they believe others, or themselves, to have done, or said, on previous occasions. In this sense they are repeating either themselves, or others. Indeed any act, whether a speech act or otherwise, that appears to originate fully with the actor cannot properly be called a ritual in English. (2004:67)

Bloch continues, "what is involved in ritual is conscious 'repetition,'... all rituals thus involve what can be called 'quotation,' if we use the term to refer not just to language but to all repetitions or originators. These originators must have some sort of authority, and this authority justifies quoting them, as in the Lord's Prayer or the Christian communion service" (2004:68). In determining, then, what remains "in quotes" and what acts as the syntactical packaging of these quotes we can begin to rethink our understanding of how ritual is learned, cognized and transmitted over an individual's life and over generations.

The argument that Japanese ancestor memorial retains or repeats certain symbolic content despite sometimes dramatic changes in the style of its performance is not entirely new. Mark Rowe (2000), for example, has argued that in the case of Japanese funerals, "current forms, like their predecessors, are legitimate reflections of the values, economic realities, views on impurity and the after-life, and technical developments of the society in which they exist" (2000: 354). In this sense he is in basic agreement with Suzuki Hikaru (2000), who argues that con-

temporary funerary rites are shaped not only by the institutions that provide ritual services, such as the funeral homes in which she conducted her fieldwork, but by the clients' desires as well. Suzuki writes that for mortuary ritual, "multiple, circular movements between funeral professionals, consumers, and cultural values create cultural continuity" (2000: 178). Ivy's (1995) observations of repetition in memorial rituals through the psychoanalytic notion of "uncanny" goes a step further to indicate the centrality of repetition in the modern nostalgia of rituals in Japan (1995:135-140).

Ancestor memorial practices are not only made habitual through repeated enactment, but the meanings generated by these practices are themselves characterized by their repetitive nature. Taking Bloch's analogy of quotation, we might say that a quotation generates meaning and emotion through repetition, and also that repetition itself becomes imbedded as part of the identity of that quote, just as a frequently cited proverb is imbued with a sense of value and timeless wisdom by virtue of the cultural act of its repetition as much as by its content. As memorial practices are repeated, they are transmitted over generations and through history, tracing a genealogy of meaning that is robust yet malleable, persistent yet adaptable to changing social circumstances.

It is also important to note how the repetitive practices of ancestor memorial in many ways resemble psychoanalytic descriptions relating to loss and mourning. Freud's describes this relationship in the "Fort/Da" game (1961[1920]:12-15), in which he observed his one year old grandson throwing a small wooden reel over the side of his cot and after briefly "mourning" its disappearance saying "o-o-o-o-o," before pulling it back by its string and receiving it with a happy "Da!" ("there!") (1961[1920]:14). In Freud's interpretation, the repetition of this act allowed the boy to gain a sense of mastery over the anxiety felt about the absences of his mother (1961[1920]:15). The reel became a symbol, and the repetition of the symbolic act imparted a secure sense of reality that could be transferred to other relationships. Freud writes of the boy, "At the outset he was in a passive situation—he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an active part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not" (1961[1920]: 15). The concept of "repetition compulsion" elaborated by Freud is a central component of psychoanalytic theory, strongly linking cognition and behavior, and was later developed by others (most notably Lacan) with respect to the entry into realm of the symbolic and "uncanny" appearances<sup>6</sup>.

Ancestor memorial is, however, much more than a grander version of the “Fort/Da” play, although it can be argued that what is at issue in both cases is a similar process of gaining a sense of mastery over anxiety generated through feelings of attachment and abandonment, appearance and disappearance, memory and forgetting. In looking at the embodiment of religious beliefs through repeated practices, we need to also remember that these practices, or at least the general category of practices to which they belong, are also part of an historical tradition that incorporates and grants institutional organization and legitimation to them. Ancestor memorial ritual exists as much in structure as it does sentiment, and repetition is a function of both.

While psychological theorists since Freud have written at length on the role of repetition in terms of psychic functioning, social theorists have observed repetition working on the level of institutions, class relations and socialization. Just as psychoanalytic theory sees repetition as a result of cognitive and social conditions that precede the individual, and are therefore inherently social in nature (Steinmetz 2006), social theory has come to recognize the reproduction of cultural propositions such as norms and values that structure institutions, as generated by what Bourdieu terms the *habitus*—a set of dispositions that are by their very nature repeated in mimesis (Bourdieu 1990b:73). If we consider that ancestor memorial rituals are also situated within objective structures perpetuated through the repeated performance of embodied dispositions (Traphagan 2004), then we must also understand repetition’s dual role as that which enables cultural reproduction as well as cultural change or adaptation.

For Bourdieu, *habitus* contributes to cultural reproduction because it is constrained by *doxa*, a form of symbolic capital that reproduces the conditions of dominance and subordination by obscuring the economic implications of everyday exchanges through “misrecognition” (1977: 164). In a sense, the *doxic* mode mirrors the unconscious functioning of the ego when it inhibits thoughts and actions that threaten to expose the real or actual conditions (Steinmetz 2006: 456). A critique that is often launched at both of these models, however, is that they lack an agent of change, or an autonomous system that can somehow stand outside of the *doxic* or ego-centered mode respectively and initiate radical transformation.

For Freud, the agent is the psychoanalyst who, through working with transference is able to uncover the true nature of a patient’s symptoms. The transference itself is another example of repetition, but one in which, as Chodorow explains, “we use experiences and feelings from the past to give partial meaning to the present as well as to shape the present, as we act and interpret pres-

ent experience in light of the internal past” (Chodorow 1999: 14-15). The repetition of experiences and feelings through transference is especially relevant in the case of grief and mourning (cf. Schur 1972: 319-344), which it must not be forgotten is one of the central functions of ancestor memorial. Repetition, in the case of transference can be seen as an agent of both continuity as well as change.

Change also arises in part as the result of the repetition of the *habitus*, but in order for *habitus* to remain effective in reproducing social structures, its own repetition must remain masked. Bourdieu writes,

The *habitus*—embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history—is the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so *ensures the permanence in change* that makes the individual agent a world within the world.” (Bourdieu 1990b: 56 emphasis mine)

The *habitus* “ensures the permanence in change,” but because it is constantly being repeated in practice, it also works to produce the very change that it seeks to inhibit. Bourdieu recognizes in the field of literature, for example, that repetition has the potential to produce parody, “rendering [something] incongruous or even absurd, simply by making it perceptible as the arbitrary convention it is” (Bourdieu 1993: 31). In a similar way, (and recalling the “Fort/Da” game) this function of repetition has been recognized in play. Repetition in children’s rhymes and songs, for example, expose the formality of conventional or fixed styles and open the possibility of what Howard (2009) calls symbolic “decalibration” that allows actors to “break in and spin out” of “activities in creative and valued ways, engaging in the inversion and mutation of social expectations” (Howard 2009: 346).

Bourdieu is also keen on the idea of play, and often uses the analogy of the game to explain how the “rules” that define the *doxic* field of play are tested in practice by the “feel for the game” that encompasses a wider range of possible strategies (1990a:22). Even so, the kinds of goals or motivations that any player might have are limited to those of the game, which, in Bourdieu’s analysis, ultimately arrives at the accumulation of more capital, be it economic or symbolic. The work of symbolic capital in Steinmetz’s (2006) fusion of Bourdieu and Lacan therefore becomes an important site for observing repetition, to which I will return to this later in the article.

The analogy of *habitus* as a form of play, albeit one that is directed towards practical ends, lends itself to interpreting the persistence of ancestor memorial not as repetition, but rather as a kind of improvisation (cf. Roemer, Sayers this issue). Improvisation implies that those who are familiar with the general “rules” of play are then able to adapt and innovate spontaneously or when circumstances warrant it. Improvisation resembles *habitus* in that it is a partially unconscious generative scheme that is not limited to individual actions and decisions, but rather consists of intuitive responses generated on the social level—just as a Jazz musician improvises in response to the other musicians, the mood of the audience, and even the embodied history of the genre itself.

While I do not deny that there is an element of improvisation involved in choices concerning Japanese ritual procedures for the dead, I also believe that in this case, improvisation cannot be recognized independently from repetition. Repetition, as I argue here, is never an exact replication of the past, but rather a constructed memory or imagined past brought into the future (cf. Steinmetz 2006:457-459; Yamada and Yoshinobu 2006: 154). It does not therefore eliminate the possibility of innovation, strategizing or alteration. However, it is repetition that makes such improvisation possible in the first place. To use another metaphor, we could think of the transmission of ritual in terms of following a family recipe, which, after generations of repetition becomes gradually altered as ingredients are substituted or new cooking technologies are introduced. Those preparing the recipe may still hold to the idea that it contains a certain special knowledge or cultural memory from the ancestors even as no one would deny that many elements of the process and even the end product have changed in many ways. To be sure, this is a case of improvisation, but the improvisation is so constrained and diffuse that it loses much of the connotations of the term.

Repetition is both the mode and content of transmission and adaptation in Japanese ancestor memorial, and when viewed as such it productively reframes the discourse on memorial ritual and Japanese culture. One benefit of looking at ritual as repetition is that it avoids the problem of assessing contemporary practices on competing scales of “continuity” vs. “change”, “tradition” vs. “modernity”, “native” vs. “other”, all of which entail contentious moral assumptions. Secondly, repetition provides a link between psychological and social theory of ritual, and thus between cognition and practice. Third, repetition encourages us to begin our inquiry with questions of what is being repeated and why, rather than what continues and what changes. The difference between these two lines of inquiry may appear subtle, but this can be

clarified by examining the kinds of observations from which my ideas on repetition arose. In the following section I will begin to address repetition in light of my own research in order to illustrate why it is important and what kinds of results it can yield.

## Repetition and Return

When I asked Saito-san, a 71 year old retired salaryman who lives with his son’s family not far from downtown Kyoto, why he finds it important to visit the dead, he replied:

My personal belief is that when people die, they return to the earth. That’s what I believe. Rich or not, it doesn’t matter. All of us return to the earth. Funerals used to cost so much money, but lately spreading ash over the earth or in the sky is becoming more popular. (Jason: Is that what you want?) I think that’s fine. Returning to nature. Then I could reappear again in front of you as nature!

Saito-san’s statements reveal both his sense of pragmatic concern about economic costs of rituals and changing customs, as well as a culturally rooted belief about “return” to nature and to rebirth or reappearance among the living. For Saito-san, return to the earth is not an end, but a single moment in a natural and ongoing process of repetition of life and death. Saito-san frequently visits the grave of his wife, who died 33 years prior, and in his bedroom he keeps a simple memorial shelf with her inscribed memorial tablet (*ihai*) and an old black and white photograph taken of the two of them on their honeymoon. On other occasions, he mentioned his longing to be with his wife again in the other world, and his wish to have her photo placed in his coffin at cremation.

For Saito-san, the repetition of memorial rituals offers a source of personal meaning and a way to cope with feelings of grief. Some of the rituals he participates in index the cultural traditions of his own ancestors (such as the grave visits), while others are variations on broader cultural values (the return to nature) or beliefs about the afterlife (being cremated with the photo of himself and his wife). He observed the formal *hōyō* service for his wife on the 33rd anniversary of her death (popularly considered to be the last major formal memorial service marking the transition of the spirit to full-fledged ancestorhood), but he also gives offerings and special flowers at her grave on her birthday (a much more idiosyncratic ritual). If we were to attempt to parse out which rituals constitute change and which are continuous, we may lose sight of the actual process of cobbling together a ritual

assemblage, the relationships between rituals, and the ways the rituals mark different influences on Saito's attitudes towards life and death as they changed over his life course. We would also be getting further away from Saito's own perception of the rituals, the impact that grief has had on his life and the anxiety and insecurity he feels about his own death and post-death treatment at the hands of less than trustworthy sons.

When viewed from the perspective of repetition, we can begin to see contemporary memorial systems as strategies for maintaining and generating not only personal meaning, but symbolic capital. In repeating the rituals believed to have been once performed by the ancestors, mourners accumulate symbolic capital of ancestral authority, and the value of this capital is tied to the continued repetition of the ritual. In other words, although one might dutifully repeat the rituals of the past, the failure of the succeeding generation of caretakers to continue these rituals has the effect of devaluing or at least diminishing the value of the symbolic capital accumulated in the process. Tradition may be defined by its repetition, but in order for this tradition to maintain its vitality through the interested exchanges that invest it with symbolic capital, it is constantly moving outside of the strict confines of fixed institutional logics.

Japanese folklorist Kunio Yanagita's (1970[1946]) conception of Japanese religious orthopraxy (Yamashita 1985: 59) advanced a similar notion of repetition and symbolic capital. In *Senzo no Hanashi, (About Our Ancestors)* (1970[1946]), Yanagita refers to the basis of tradition (*dentō*) in terms of "*katoku*," or "income":

The word *dentō* is used at present to express the invisible legacy, but it gives one the feeling that there is only a passive way of thinking about it. Here we treated it as something more than that, something learned, actually practiced and transmitted, worked with and shown, taught and made to be memorized, something that is handed down to the next generation from what can be ascertained by the ear and eye or something outwardly manifest. This tradition may not be the central idea of *katoku*, but it seems to be something forming the base for that core and embracing it. (Yanagita 1970 [1946]: 40)

This notion of tradition as capital that is both manifest and "invisible," or "unconscious," and as a special kind of "income" transmitted and memorized, generates attachment not only in the sense of continuing bonds with the dead, but with a cultural legacy as well.

The ideal case of ancestor memorial, in which symbolic capital not only maintains value but accrues *interest* (in Bourdieu's sense of the term), is possible only if

descendants "invest" in the memorial rites (if they are interested). Such cases are not unheard of, and are not surprisingly more common in households where succession is associated with the inheritance of wealth and authority (cf. Hamabata 1990). More likely, however, is the case where doubt in the ability or will of succeeding generations to memorialize the dead means that the person wishing to be memorialized must carefully choose how to invest their capital.

There are, of course, ways in which one can attempt to influence the decision to repeat the memorials, often at a direct cost to the person wishing to be memorialized. Jeremy and Robinson (1989) for example, note that in the rural Japanese village where they lived, a retired household head quickly initiated a process at considerable cost to move the family grave plots to an area closer to the home so that his descendants would be more likely to learn and follow the memorial rituals for the ancestors (Jeremy & Robinson 1989:36).

In a similar way, Mori-san, an 82 year old woman I interviewed on several occasions, purchased new gravestones for both her divorced mother and mother's parents, whose separate gravestones occupy adjacent plots. Periodic replacement of old gravestones is quite common, as the stone itself becomes weathered and the names inscribed on it less clear with time<sup>7</sup>. What is interesting to note in Ms. Mori's case, however, is that she made the purchase as she herself was in the process of moving to a new residence with her recently married daughter. Mori-san, who has never held full-time employment, and subsisted on a minimum social security benefit equivalent to less than \$300 US each month, likely spent over \$20,000 on these new gravestones, including construction and inscription, ceremonies to reinstall the remains and disposal of the original stones<sup>8</sup>.

Making such a sacrifice for these graves may seem irrational given that they represent two terminal household lineages memorialized almost exclusively by a very elderly woman moving to a different town. From the perspective of repetition, however, Mori-san's investment can be justified, since it not only recognizes the authority and value of the ancestors (and therefore the value of the symbolic capital), but in doing so it also calls attention to the next generation (in this case her daughters and their families) to continue the memorial services after she has died in spite of normative customs that discourage daughters from maintaining graves of their natal family. While the connection between the replacement of the gravestones and the change of residence was never explicitly discussed, and may well have been motivated by unconscious forces, the coincidence of the two clearly illustrates the context in which repetition functions to pro-

duce symbolic capital, which can be leveraged by older family members as insurance towards their own future.

The investment in memorial rituals and symbolic objects applies not only to funerals and gravesites, but also to the home altar where the ancestors are enshrined and remembered (*butsudan*). Another older woman I spoke with, whom I will call Nishida-san, told me that she used most of her large initial pension dispensation to replace her *butsudan*. Her son, who inherited the small family business from her, had suggested that she use the money to do some travelling or some other leisure activity, but he was eventually convinced by his mother that replacing the *butsudan* would be more appropriate. Interestingly again, the purchase of the new *butsudan* not only coincided with her retirement, but also with an important anniversary of her husband's death (*meinichi*), so that the ritual to reinstall the spirits of the deceased in the newly purchased *butsudan* could be combined with the memorial service for her late husband. Again, this woman did not explicitly mention that her decision to purchase a new *butsudan* was meant to inspire her son to invest in the ancestors, the association of her retirement and the memorial for her late husband, whose ancestors established the family business, produces a direct connection between the symbolic realm of memorial ritual and the transmission of symbolic capital through which it is maintained.

In the two cases described above, symbolic capital, generated by initiating the repetition of rituals and symbols, correlates with investments of economic capital. Again, the symbolic capital here is the means to a double recognition: the imagined recognition of the social field of the ancestors and the demand for recognition of descendants or those left behind. It is important to note however, that in some cases, a disinvestment of economic capital can also serve to perpetuate the repetition of ritual memorial.

Nakamura-san, a 67 year old man living in a small traditionally constructed house in the middle of Kyoto, told me that he feels the extensive ancestor memorial rituals that he carried out would not be continued by his sons, both of whom lived separately and had married wives whose families were affiliated with different Buddhist sects. When I asked Nakamura-san if his son will set up a gravestone for him after he and his wife die, he replied, "It would be nice if he my son did that for me but ... (chuckling nervously) Well, I'm a little worried about that ..." Nakamura-san's wife took this opportunity to tease him, saying, "I don't think he's [the son] going to set up anything for YOU!" and laughed as well.

Troubled by this doubt, Nakamura-san's strategy was to consolidate the family graves, which at the time consisted of ten separate grave plots, each dedicated to a different married couple in his and his wife's lineage. As we

talked about this plan to consolidate the graves, his voice became soft and mumbling, and he rubbed his forehead wearily. After a pause, Mrs. Nakamura spoke up to her husband again, "You have to decide [about the grave] one way or another before you die you know!" The decision was clearly difficult for Nakamura-san, but the rationale for repetition, even in an abbreviated form, preserves some of the value of his symbolic capital. It also offered an opportunity to exercise agency to influence his sons (whose input on the matter was not sought) by conducting the consolidation through a formal, public ritual means.

Although most of the younger people I spoke with about death and memorial had few opinions or interest in the subject, I did speak with one woman in her mid-20's (Ms. Kikuchi) for whom the subject was deeply significant. After her older sister passed away, Ms. Kikuchi decided to investigate ways to plan and personalize funeral and mortuary arrangements, even taking a part-time job at a large funeral business in order to learn about different rituals and formats. Consistent with the idea of repetition, Ms. Kikuchi told me that she strongly feels that memorials should be conducted in a manner that was respectful of the wishes of the deceased, and that these may not involve costly formalities or pageantry:

For example, because it's your grandfather, you might think that you have to get a big, expensive gravestone, and you waste your money. Things like that happen. So for me, before death, it's important for a person to think about what kind of funeral they would want, what kind of way would they want to be laid to rest (*maisō*). I wanted to make a kind of company that would help people to make up a plan about how they wanted to be seen off (*miokuru*).

Repetition, in this case is clearly not exact reproduction, and although it leaves open the possibility for radical departures from traditional or conventional forms, this is not the primary intention suggested by Ms. Kikuchi's view. Rather, the focus is on repeating the wishes of the deceased in a kind of ritual quotation, just as Mori-san, Nishida-san and Nakamura-san all hope to have their ways of honoring the ancestors repeated. Mori-san's replacement of her family's gravestones, Nishida-san's purchase of a new *butsudan*, and Nakamura-san's grave consolidation are examples of everyday decisions made on the basis of caring for the dead in the way that they would like to have been cared for, or of repeating a variation of the way in which the deceased acted when they were alive. In memorializing the individual, symbolic capital displaces the necessity for expending economic capital—repetition is preserved through simplification.

The various cases that I have described above become unified by viewing them as repetitions of cultural schema concerning what to do with the dead or what should be done after one's own death. These decisions are morally weighted; they are based on a value orientation that links symbolic capital with repetition. It is too difficult here to state conclusively what it is that is being repeated, or what patterns emerge from intergenerational transmission—the symbolic “income” that Yanagita described. The repetitive nature of periodic memorials is, for most people, a necessary representation of the fundamental aspect of the return of the spirit, and as a result, the hope of being reunited with them (cf. Yamaori 2004). The desire to return, and to return to deceased loved ones may underlie the strong connection of Japanese mortuary rituals to natural surroundings, which throughout most of Japan experience strong seasonal transformations and renewals. Persistent schema such as these, are necessary for repetition to be recognizable as repetition and for the fact of that repetition to embody a sense of authority to be repeated in the future.

Repetition of memorial rituals for the individual mirrors the psychic repetition of that individual in memories of the bereaved. In Japan, an individual's identity also depends on their relationship to a broader social realm and historical heritage. Ritual practices should therefore represent a repetition of the past and insure their own repetition in the future. Symbolic capital is accumulated in this repetition, and decisions regarding its investment are structured not only by normative or institutionalized “rules of the game,” but also by less tangible moral-affective, internalized cultural models of grief. Steinmetz's (2006) formulation of a synthesis between the Lacanian symbolic and Bourdieu's use of capital enables us to see repetition in both the game and the grief, returning our attention to problems of motivation and intentionality

## Conclusion

When looking at ancestor memorial ritual and other religious practices in Japan, we must be prepared to critically interrogate not only the empirical data, but also the interpretive frameworks we employ to analyze that data as well. No single framework, including the one presented here, can nor should encompass the scope of beliefs and practices that constitute people's complex relationships with the dead, whether in Japan or elsewhere; there will always be important examples of those that fall outside of our general frameworks and help us to generate new lines of inquiry.

It is in this spirit of inquiry that I suggest that rather than framing ancestor worship as it is practiced today as alternately change or continuity, invention or return, modernity or tradition, a framework of repetition, in

which once normative ritual forms transform through the process of their transmission, may hold greater heuristic potential. Whereas the framework of “continuity vs. change” often forces scholars to constrain and fix the variables they wish to compare (the definitions of “ancestor” or “worship,” the difference between funerals, burials and memorials, composition of commemorative monumentation, dividing of ritual roles e.g.), repetition seeks to open the door to a much broader range of experiences and meanings, and thus approach a more holistic understanding of dynamic ritual practices. In scumbling the sharp lines sometimes drawn between different kinds of rituals, institutions, and different kinds of dead, and looking at processes of repetition within ritual assemblages, our analytic categories can expand to include practices and beliefs that have been marginalized in scholarly research, and open greater discussion with other disciplines. In the cases of the older Japanese adults described above, for example, casting their stories as examples of repetition and transformation helped me understand their experiences as much more than old-fashioned holdovers from more “traditional” times who are unwilling or unable to get with the times. The persons cited are indeed not only diligent participants in the transmission of ancestor memorial rituals, but they are also agents affecting change through their improvisations and adaptations.

Repetition, as I have elaborated on it in this article, is a conceptual keystone linking the arcs of psychological and social theory, cognition and practice. It describes a process through which people negotiate the inner affective realm of love and grief, and the external social realm of identity formation and cultural integration as well. As Rappaport (1999), Bloch (2004) and others have noted, it is also one of the more defining features of ritual. Just as the child playing “Fort/Da” does not separate the inner symbolic work from his repetitive acts of play, I have argued that the emotional work of ancestor memorial cannot be separated from its repetitive enactment within a sociohistorical arena<sup>9</sup>. Repetition at both of these levels are entries to the symbolic, which, being social in nature, must find integration with the cultural world. *Habitus*, and the objective institutional structures that it reproduces, constrains the field of ancestor memorial ritual, as it signifies a particular engagement with Japanese historical memory, but repetition also provides a mechanism for symbolic slippage, decalibration and manipulation in the midst of social reproduction.

The theoretical synthesis suggested in this paper arose out of an attempt to understand why Japanese people practice ancestor memorial in the ways that they do. When I began my research I anticipated a much greater sense of

anxiety among older adults that I imagined to be trapped between a longing for the “traditional” death ways of the past and the “modern” forms that I found. I was often surprised at what appeared to be resignation to cultural change, to new styles of rituals that seemed only shadows of those they must have seen and heard as children. Upon revisiting the transcripts and conducting several follow-up interviews, I began to see more clearly that what was at stake was not reproduction of the past, but repetition—a repetition that I had already noticed in the gestures, chanting, and other practices as well as in the memories recounted in individual narratives.

The conclusions of this article are limited in that they are mainly generated by and meant to address the specific situation of bereaved older adults in urban Japan. There will no doubt be variations based on region, age cohort, and living pattern that I have not described here, but which have been suggested by other scholars. Most importantly, the question of generational difference and changing attitudes and practice over the life course needs to be more fully addressed, since it remains unclear to what degree attitudes concerning funerals, burials and memorials are a consequence of historical cohort effect

or psychosocial developmental factors (Tanaka 2007: 186-187). Greater comparative and cross-cultural work on ancestor memorial ritual (to which this issue contributes) would also be useful in this regard, as I have tried to limit my discussion here to the case of Japanese culture, which has developed distinct cognitive schema of time and the life course that gives significant meaning to repetition and recovery (Yamada and Yoshinobu 2006).

In contemporary Japan, ritual remembering and repetition gives consolation and hope in the midst of change and instability. It creates and recreates performed narratives of those who have died and those still living. It is the “income” inherited over generations both real and imagined, that circulates through families and communities and finds investment in sometimes unlikely places—scattered from helicopters or enveloped by smoke and lasers. While it is important to learn what we can from the ways in which large-scale changes in demographic, technological and other environmental factors influence ritual over time, it is also important to recognize motivational, cognitive and discursive factors as well. Repetition, endlessly variable, always in the midst of play, provides one way to link these worlds.

## Notes

1. I use the phrase “ancestor memorial” as a gloss for the Japanese term *senzo kuyo*, but the range of rituals that I describe belong to a more general category of all rituals conducted on behalf of the dead. Many other authors have commented on the awkwardness of labeling Japanese “ancestor worship” notably Plath 1964, Smith 1974.

2. Funding for this research was made possible through grants by the IIE Fulbright Program and the UC Pacific Rim Research Program. Conference and write-up support was provided by the Center on Age & Community at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. I also thank John W. Traphagan for his generous support and helpful commentary on earlier versions of this article.

3. More recently (2010) Kawano has eased or clarified her statements about invention, writing “The development of revivalist thinking has not led to the replacement of “traditional” death rites by new ones; rather, the result has been diversity. This diversity, however, is not a random collection of various practices invented with the death of each person.” (2010: 175-176) This statement and those that follow not only do justice to the empirical data, but strengthen her own analysis on the subject considerably.

4. According to the article, the survey, conducted by Rokugatsu Shobo Co. “asked 60 private cemeteries in Tokyo and Chiba, Kanagawa and Saitama precectures about 40,000 graves made since 2002. According to the survey findings, Western gravestones have become more common than traditional styles in 51 cemeteries, or more than 80 percent of all the cemeteries surveyed.”

5. Rowe (2000:363-365) describes funeral services at this establishment, Gyokusen-in which began in 1991. In addition to a detailed description and interview transcripts with funeral staff, Rowe notes that “this kind of attempt to appropriate and re-create

tradition is one of the hallmarks of current funerals (and present day ritual in Japan in general) (364).

6. For more on repetition, trauma, and the uncanny in psychoanalytic thought see Ogden, Minton & Pain 2006, Woodward 1999, Ivy 1995, Lacan 1978, Schur 1972.

7. Most temple administered graves, like those of Ms. Mori’s family, require not only regular maintenance, such as cleaning and weeding, but also the payment of a small annual donation. Failure to meet this requirement may result in the disinterment of the remains and the relocation of the neglected stone to the memorial site for the abandoned or “unconnected” spirits (*muenbotoke*), which are often located near the entrance of a cemetery as a silent, grim reminder of the dependence of the dead.

[E 997]]8. The price of grave plots, monuments and services varies considerably. Kawano (2004) notes that in Tokyo, for example, it is not uncommon to pay 3,000,000 yen (about \$27,300) for a cemetery plot and set of gravestones” (2004:238). My estimate came from a survey of grave service provider advertisements seen in Kyoto or internet sites of similar businesses in Kyoto. Out of respect for the privacy of this informant, I did not inquire about the exact amount paid (and given the reluctance of many to admit such private matters honestly to outsiders, I doubt that I would have received a dependable answer even if I did).

9. Erik Erikson (1997[1982]) describes this kind of repeated meaningful act as “ritualization,” writing, “our term ritualization ... is used only for a certain kind of informal and yet prescribed interplay between persons who repeat it at meaningful intervals and in recurring contexts. While such interplay may not mean much more (at least to the participants) than “this is the way *we* do things,” it has, we claim, adaptive value for all participants and for their

group living. For it furthers and guides, from the beginning of existence, that stagewise instinctual investment in the social processes that must do for human adaptation what the instinctive fit into a section of nature will do for an animal species" (1997[1982]:43).

Erikson's comment is particularly interesting in terms of the topic of this article because of his use of phrases such as "investment in social processes" that seem to fit my use of symbolic capital.

## References

- Acciaoli, Greg  
1981 Knowing What You're Doing, a Review of Pierre Bourdieu's Outline of a Theory of Practice. *Canberra Anthropology*. IV: 1. 23-51.
- Bellah, R. N  
2003 *Imagining Japan: The Japanese Tradition and its Modern Interpretation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bloch, M  
2004 Ritual and Deference. In H. Whitehouse, & J. Laidlaw (Eds.), *Ritual and Memory*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira.
- Bourdieu, Pierre  
1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
1990a *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Translated by Matthew Adamson. Cambridge: Polity Press.  
1990b *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.  
1993 *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Edited and Introduced by Randal Johnson. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brooks, P.  
1980 Repetition, Repression, and Return: Great Expectations and the Study of Plot. *New Literary History*, 11(3), 503-526.
- Buerk, R.  
"Graveyard in the Sky" Broadcast on BBC Radio October 8, 2009
- Chodorow, N.  
1999 *The Power of Feeling: Personal Meaning in Psychoanalysis, Gender and Culture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Comaroff, Jean and John. L Comaroff.  
2001 Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming, in *Millennial Capitalism and the culture of neoliberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Daily Yomiuri* (English version)  
Western Gravestones Gaining in Popularity. 2005, September 10.
- Erikson, E. H.  
(1997 [1982]) *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version with New Chapters on the Ninth Stage of Development* by Joan M. Erikson. New York: W.W. Norton and Co.
- French, H.  
(2002, May 9) Death Does Them Part (Wives Make Sure of That). *The New York Times*.
- Freud, S.  
(1961 [1920]). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. (James Strachey, Trans.). New York: Norton Publishers.
- Genyu, S.  
2005 *Shindara Dou Naru no* [What Happens When We Die?]. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo.
- Hamabata, M.  
1990 *The Crested Kimono*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Hori, I.  
1968 *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Howard, K. M.  
2009 Breaking in and spinning out: Repetition and decalibration in Thai children's play genres. *Language in Society*, 38(3), pp.339-363.
- Inoue, H.  
2003 *Haka to Kazoku no Hen'yo* [Changes in Graves and the Family]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Ivy, M.  
1995 *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, phantasm, Japan*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Jeremy, M., & Robinson, M. E.  
1989 *Ceremony and symbolism in the Japanese home*. New York: Manchester University Press.
- Kawano, S.  
2010 *Nature's Embrace: Japan's Aging Urbanites and New Death Rites*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.  
2004 Scattering Ashes of the Family Dead: Memorial Activity among the bereaved in contemporary Japan. *Ethnology* 43(3): pp.233-248.  
2003 Finding Common Ground: Family, Gender, and Burial in Contemporary Japan. In J. W. Traphagan & J. Knight (Eds.), *Demographic*

- Change and the Family in Japan's Aging Society* (pp. 125-144). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Kierkegaard, Søren.  
 1946 *Repetition: an essay in experimental psychology*. Translated by Walter Lowie. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kōmoto, M.  
 2001 *Gendai Nihon ni okeru Senzo Saishi [Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan]*. Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobo.
- Lacan, J.  
 1978 *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. New York: Norton.
- Long, S. O., Littleton, C. S.  
 2003 Demographic and Family Change: Problems and Solutions. In J. W. Traphagan & J. C. Knight (Eds.), *Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Aging Society* (pp. 229-236). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Miller, Karen L.  
 1991 Rest in Peace ... With Lasers, Smoke, and Synthesizer Music. In *Business Week*. September 16, 1991 p. 49.
- Morioka, K.  
 1984 Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan: Continuity and Change. *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 11, (no.\*\*\*), 201-213.
- MSN Sankei News  
 Chokusō- Kieru Tomurai (Jō) Kiete shimaitai. *MSN Sankei News* September 22, 2009, <http://sankei.jp.msn.com/life/trend/090922/trd0909220846005-n1.htm>  
 Chokusō- Kieru Tomurai (Chu) Bukkyokai Zure Jikakau. *MSN Sankei News* September 23, 2009, <http://sankei.jp.msn.com/life/trend/090923/trd0909230800003-n1.htm>  
 Chokusō- Kieru Tomurai (Ge) Namida Mienu Wakare no Ba. *MSN Sankei News* September 24, 2009. <http://sankei.jp.msn.com/life/trend/090924/trd0909240753005-n1.htm>
- Nakao, K.  
 2005 The Imperial Past of Anthropology in Japan. In J. Robertson (Ed.), *A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan* (pp. 19-35). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Ogden, P., Minton, K., & Pain, C.  
 2006 *Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy*. New York: Norton.
- Plath, D.  
 1964 "Where the Family of God is the Family: the role of the dead in Japanese households." *American Anthropologist* 66(2): 300-317.
- Rappaport, R. A.  
 1999 *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rowe, M.  
 2003 Grave Changes: Scattering Ashes in Contemporary Japan. *Journal of Japanese Studies* 30(1-2): pp. 85-118.  
 2000 Stickers for Nails: The Ongoing Transformation of Roles, Rites, and Symbols in Japanese Funerals. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 27(3-4): pp. 353-378.
- Sasaki, K.  
 2002 *Sei to shi no Nihon shisō [Japanese Thoughts on Life and Death]*. Tokyo: Transview.
- Sato, N.  
 2004 Scattering Ashes in Nature Gaining Social Acceptance. *The Japan Times*. January 12, 2004.
- Schur, M.  
 1972 *Freud: Living and Dying*. New York: International Universities Press, Inc.
- Smith, R. J.  
 1974 *Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.  
 1999 The Living and the Dead in Japanese Popular Religion, in *Lives in Motion : composing circles of self and community in Japan*. Ithaca, N.Y.: East Asia Program Cornell University
- Steinmetz, George.  
 2006 "Bourdieu's Disavowal of Lacan: Psychoanalytic theory and the concepts of 'habitus' and 'symbolic capital'." *Constellations* 13(4): pp.445-464.
- Suzuki, H.  
 2000 *The Price of Death: The Funeral Industry in Contemporary Japan*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.  
 2005 Shifting Lives of Japanese Elders: Emerging Communal Relationships with Funeral Companies. *Research Collection School of Social Sciences*, paper 78.
- Tanaka, K.  
 2007 Graves and families in Japan: Continuity and change. *The History of the Family* 12(3) 178-188.
- Traphagan, J. W. & J. Knight (Eds.)  
 2003 *Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Aging Society*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Traphagan, J. W.  
 2004 *The Practice of Concern: Ritual, Well-Being*

- and Aging in Rural Japan*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.
- Wijers-Hasegawa, N.  
2004 Family Plot not for all women. *The Japan Times*. January 26, 2004.
- Woodward, K.  
1999 The Mirror Stage of Old Age In K. Woodward (Ed.), *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (pp. 98-113). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Yamada, Y. and Yoshinobu K.  
2006 Images of Circular Time and Spiral Repetition: The Generative Life Cycle Model. In *Culture & Psychology*. 12(2), 143-160.
- Yamaori, T.  
1986 The Metamorphosis of Ancestors. In *Japan Quarterly* 33 (1) 50-53  
1990 The Religious Identity of the Japanese. In *Japanese Civilization in the Modern World: Religion, Senri Ethnological Studies*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- 2004 *Wandering Spirits and Temporary Corpses Studies in the History of Japanese Religious Traditions*. Translated by Denis Hirota. Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies.
- Yamashita, S.  
1985 Ritual and "Unconscious Tradition": A Note on About Our Ancestors. In *International Perspectives on Yanagita Kunio and Japanese Folklore Studies*. J Victor Koschman, Ōiwa Keibō, and Yamashita Shinji editors. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Yanagita, K.  
1970 *About Our Ancestors*. Trans. Fanny Hagen Meyer and Ishikawa Yasuyo. Tokyo: Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

### Biographical Sketch

Jason Allen Danely, Assistant Professor, Anthropology Department, Rhode Island College, Providence, Rhode Island.