UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Ashes living in cracks and hollows

Supervisor: Peter Ian Crawford
Student: Haruka Fukao
Candidate no. 10
hfu010@uit.no

Master's thesis in Visual Anthropology SVF-3903
UiT The Arctic University of Norway
June 2023

When the ashes were served from a tea can to a white plate for being ready for scattering.

Abstract

In Japan in the spring of 2022, a couple, Asuka and Novi, scattered the ashes of a twelve-year-old boy under a tree. Through intimate conversations, I explored their philosophy behind using the alternative mortuary rite “scattering of ashes”. They invited me into their daily lives as a filmmaker and researcher. Daily life revealed another side of the communion with the deceased by “greeting them at the altar”. My film, *Ashes Living in Cracks and Hollows*, is the result of this study. Additional research on local villagers in the Ibuki includes my grandmother and grand-aunt as references for understanding the tradition of mortuary rites in Japan, helping to enrich the investigation of how Japanese people navigate memories of the deceased and cope with grief.

Keywords: grief, bereavement, funeral, scattering ashes, ritual, ancestor worship

Acknowledgement

Arigato,
especially Novi and Asuka for inviting me into the most intimate part of your life. I really love sharing meals and stories with you and Fuki and Ryo. I hope this journey to find ways to get along with grief continues in the future.

Arigato,
Dorothy, my grandmother, my grand-aunt, villagers in the Ibuki area, the Ibuki folklore museum, my friends, and my family, thank you for sharing the tender, intimate and sometimes painful stories.

Arigato,
my lovely classmates in Trømso, even though I've never met you all in person and breathed in the same air, I have known your warm heart through the two years. Thank you so much for being super supportive and sweet all the time.

Arigato,
Leonard Kamerling for being my fantastic proofreader for both subtitles of my film and this thesis. Through the process, I could find new perspectives in writing and editing.

Arigato,
Julian David Loaiza Pineda, for supporting making the film. Rachel Katrin Andersen Gomez, for your fabulous help with my film and project, I loved sharing tears and teatimes with you too.

And, of course,
Arigato,
my supervisor Peter Ian Crawford, for supporting me all the way up to here. The mountain was super high, but I could hike up because of you. My favourite moment was how you obsessed with the word "coot", I admire your "geekiness" as you described yourself.

Tusen takk! See you all, hopefully in person someday.

Table of contents

Prologue

In the transition from winter to spring in 2022, the scattering of ashes at a site with trees did not seem official or formal. There was only a Japanese woman, Asuka and a man, Novi, as the main actors in the ceremony. Asuka is the mother of a deceased son and Novi is her partner. Novi and the son were like best friends. No guests were invited to the ceremony except me, holding my video camera.

At the ceremony they did not wear black clothes (in traditional Japanese funerals, people wear black) and they did not require me to send a condolence. The ceremony was completely casually. Even so, they seemed to have a specific process for scattering Ryo's ashes. First, they greeted the tree by touching its surface. Asuka said, 'This tree is permitted to scatter Ryo's ashes'.

They ate salt to purify their bodies and poured some sake to purify the tree. They served the ashes from a tea can on a white plate. Asuka scattered the ashes on the tree very briefly and roughly. She even cleaned up the plate with her hands, and Novi cleaned her hands with his hand. They were talking cheerfully with their eyes closed and they began to pray quietly. Asuka seemed to sob a little. She said, 'I feel I got used to this ceremony since we already did it for Fuki (Novi's deceased daughter)'.

After the ceremony, they said, 'Finally, we could do it', and they tidied up the equipment they used. Novi said, 'Why do people think that part of the dead body is "impure"?'. Asuka said, 'I actually ate Ryo's ashes. It tasted like stones'.

They saw a black coot in the water, looked at it for a while and laughed because it had such a unique way of swimming. 'That coot must be Ryo', they said. (See appendix 1). Right before leaving the site, Novi showed me a bag that contained the ashes. He said, 'This is the bag Ryo used to use. Its handle changed colour because of Ryo's sweat' (See appendix 2).

1 *Introduction*

1.1 Why do I want to research scattering ashes in Japan?

1.1.1 Recognising loss

Upon returning to Japan from Norway amid the Covid-19 pandemic, I could not help but feel the weight of my "ambiguous loss", a term coined by the psychologist Pauline Boss. This phenomenon can take two forms: physical absence with psychological presence or physical presence with psychological absence (Boss 1999: 8,9).

After five years of absence from Japan, the city of Osaka has become cleaner and has more Starbucks, but many of my favourite shops have disappeared due to gentrification. I hear old ladies talk sadly about the disappearance of local stores such as a sake shop and a karaoke bar. My friends who used to discuss artistic ideas, now discuss Japan's financial crisis. The drop in the value of the Japanese yen in 2022 has affected travel prices. I stopped travelling. I was supposed to study in Tromsø, in person, but instead I take classes online. My everyday life and my planned life do not exist together anymore.

I am experiencing an ambiguous loss that is characterised by a psychological absence. This loss pertains not only to myself but to my identity as a Japanese citizen and a citizen of the world. Defining the loss of my identity and my opportunities is not straightforward. There are no set rituals to manage this ambiguous loss or to navigate the uncertainty that comes with it (Boss 1999: 8). I am unsure if I have the right to grieve, but I am referring to it as "grief" to explain the purpose of my research.

1.1.2 How to live with grief?

I realised that I could not express my grief in any symbolic rituals, which made me anxious. It is an unusual experience for me to take part in the Visual Anthropology course remotely from Japan, not on-site in Tromsø. Due to my unique circumstances, I felt like I was "squatting"[1] as I squat on the internet as my temporary place of belonging instead of being in Trømso. I was feeling isolated from others in the classes because I took an alternative way, I was a minority. When things are not solved in conventional ways, we tend to feel society as the subject (a master) and I as the object (a slave), which can be described as a defeated mindset that society is more significant than me (Boyer and Morton 2021:12,14).

---

[1] Squatter originally means 'one that settles on property without right or title or payment of rent' (Merriam-Webster 2023)

Against this defeated feeling, I found a concept called “hyposubject”, introduced by Boyer and Morton (2021). This concept is the opposite of “hypersubject”, such as “society (certain people) is more significant than me”. This “hyposubject” is under the concept that ‘(society is) ontologically smaller than its members’ (75). Boyer and Morton suggest becoming ‘Hyposubjects—squatters — They inhabit the cracks and hollows. They turn things inside out and work with scraps and remains’—off grid (15). This metaphorical way of perceiving reality, made me focus on the “scraps and remains” in front of me, creating my own infrastructure in order to not be in a slave-master relationship (44).

I began to see my situation as an online student as a significant opportunity. I could work the daytime for money, spend time with my family, and explore Japan from an outsider’s perspective, such as using the English language. Most importantly, because of feeling isolated or grieving, I could understand the feeling of loss of my subjects.

Writing this ethnography became a collection of rituals to confront my grief little by little as a third person. I focus on getting along with grief rather than blaming the cause because we cannot return to the previous time; we must live with our history and memories. I should work with the scraps and remains in front of me to live. This active reflexivity hinted at thinking about how to deal with grief without conventional styles. How do other people deal with unnamable grief without conventional funeral styles?

1.1.3 They scatter the ashes as a way of living with grief

While I was “squatting” with my grief, I met a couple who had recently experienced the loss of their children. They became the main subjects for this project. One of my subjects shared her plan for scattering her son's ashes. This made me wonder about her choice and the philosophy behind it.

“Scattering ashes” in Japan is an uncommon and subcultural practice. Japan has a 99 per cent cremation rate (Rowe 2003: 91, Becker 1999: 102) but most people choose to bury their loved ones in urns. An organisation called *So-so-no-Jiyu-o-Susumeru-Kai* (Grave-Free-Promotion-Society, or GFPS) supports people who choose to scatter loved one’s ashes. They call the practice *Shizen-so* (natural funeral). The number of ceremonies held to scatter ashes was 128 out of 961,000 deaths in 2000 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2000, Rowe 2003: 90).

When I began fieldwork for this project, I discovered that some people were sceptical to the practice of scattering the ashes because they thought it was illegal. However, the practice is not addressed by any existing law in Japan (Rowe 2003: 92, NHK 2019: 83, 84).

Even though my subjects' understanding of the practice was ambiguous, they still planned to implement it and not have formal graves for their children. Furthermore, they conducted the ceremony without institutional support, not using the services of GFPS. Choosing not to use commercial or institutional services made me even more curious about the philosophy behind the scattering of ashes.

1.2 Pull a cork

This thesis examines Japanese mortuary rites, especially the informal ash disposal outside institutional sites and the practice of greeting the deceased at the altar. I participated in one ash scattering ceremony as well as revisiting the site of ashes disposal of my subject's child. These activities helped give voice to their thoughts and ideas, which can be seen as social resistance towards current mortuary rites and the struggle in seeking appropriate ways for both the deceased and the bereaved. To support these ideas, I have introduced interviews with people in local villages, my grandmother and my grandaunt to represent wider opinions and methods of traditional communal funerals and the visiting of altars.

During a recent conversation with my supervisor, he mentioned that my research could be thought of as "emerging ethnography". Koda, a comparative thinker writing about tree burial, described the *shizenso* (scattering of ashes) as '…a culture which is in the process of being formed' (Koda 2012: 119). The reason Koda mentions this is to lead his argument on the point of such activities as tree burial and scattering of ashes on a meta-theory, itself with four quadrants. 1. individual subjective perspective (Psychology "I")', 2. collective subjective perspective (Culture "We"), 3. individual objective perspective (Behaviour "That")' and 4. collective objective perspective (Society "Those") (Koda 2012:121). This inspires me to think of the scattering of ashes outside the institutionalised site as "a culture which is in the process of being formed", with a four quadrant meta-theory.

With the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a significant shift in mortuary rites, leading to the inevitability of scattering ashes becoming a standard option in the near future. The subject matter of my research is not confined to a single definition but constantly evolving with the concept of "squatting" as presented by Boyer and Morton (2021). The scattering of ashes serves as a powerful metaphor for our world on a meta-level because it can be the reflection of the psychological, cultural, behavioural and social phenomenons in Japan (Koda 2012).

My main research question is: How do people live with grief in Japan? It is closely linked to the following sub-questions:

・If your grief does not fit into the existing ritual, what would you do to express it?

・Why do they scatter ashes?

・Why do they greet the deceased at the altar?

・For whom do we organise funerals? For deceased? For bereaved?

・Is scattering the ashes “squatting”?

2 Ethnographic context

2.1 Sites and time for fieldwork

The fieldwork was conducted from March to August 2022 in several locations in Japan. The highest daily infection rate from Covid-19 in Japan was recorded in August. The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare was still careful not to downgrade the medical definition of Covid-19 from Category II to Category V infectious disease (Kami 2022). This made it challenging to conduct research in close contact with some elder subjects.

The ethnographic museum worked with is located in Maibara in Shiga, which has a sacred mountain called Ibuki Mountain. This mountain is well-known for its mythology. This mountain has been a symbol of animistic worship. At the museum, some locals told me that they long for young new settlers in their villages. The population was 7,412 in 1960 and declined to 4,877 in 2020 (Maibara-city 2021). The main subjects live in various locations in Japan. In order to protect their privacy, I do not mention the names of the sites.

2.2 Ageing phenomenon and low fertility rate

In Japan, 26.7 per cent of the population was over 65 in 2015 (NHK 2019: 44). The population over 65 by 2040 is expected to be 35.3% (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2020: 4). This ageing phenomenon was already recognised in the period of high economic growth, however, the fertility rate did not change. There is a concern about the future lack of space for graves. Japan is expected to experience a mass decrease in population soon (NHK 2019), and we may need to seek space to bury our deceased people or find other solutions. This coming transition partly explains the anxiety people experience about dying in Japan.

2.3 Religion and spirituality

Although we join our hands in front of a Shinto shrine every new year, ask a Buddhist monk to chant for our ancestors, celebrate a wedding at a Christian church or experience a commercialised Christmas, most Japanese people would say, ‘I do not believe in any religion’.

Japanese people used to observe two religions together, *Shinbutsu-Shugou* (Shinto-Buddhist syncretism). Shintoism is based on animism and is polytheistic. It contains the mythology of Japan's birth and the history of the Japanese emperors, encouraging people to be aware of folklore related to the gods of mountains, rivers and natural phenomena. Buddhism originally came from India in the mid-sixth century. The religion’s central tenet is not believing in gods but learning from monks who

have achieved enlightenment, making it different from monolithic religions like Christianity, Islam or Judaism.

According to Tanaka, many Japanese people do not follow a specific religion, but nearly half believe that they do not lack religious feelings (2010: 849). Japanese individuals seem to place value on acknowledging spiritual and supernatural forces beyond human control (Tanaka 2010:849). In Japanese history, being "non-religious" was important during the introduction of Christianity in the 19th century. It allowed people to avoid punishment and stigma from political authorities and their communities (Tanaka 2010: 847). This non-religious attitude created prejudice towards individuals who practised a particular religion (Fujiwara 2007: 47).

Even in modern times, many people believe in ghosts, spirits and superstitions. During my fieldwork, many subjects told me about superstitions from their daily lives. For example, "You shouldn't pass foods by chopsticks", which is connected to the tradition of passing bones from person to person with chopsticks at a funeral. These spiritualistic ideas are always connected to the idea of interconnectedness in human relations and the interrelations of nature and humans. This relates to Shinto's animistic stance in treating everything as Spirit. However, even though people find some mutuality in Shintoism or Buddhism with everyday spiritual encounters, most Japanese people would say they are "not religious" but "believe in spirituality" (Tanaka 2010).

2.4 Japanese ancestral worship

Ancestral worship is a unique characteristic of Japanese spirituality. The anthropologist David Plath (1964) wrote about *sosen-suhai* (Japanese ancestral worship), describing the significance of Japanese belief at that time.

The idea of the ancestor system is connected to the *ie-seido* (household). The household system itself has been described as a different idea from "family". 'Family is the incumbent segment of a descent line…' and '…household for the cluster of persons co-resident in the house at any time' (Plath 1964: 302). 'The Japanese household is a corporation that ideally has perpetual existence. Once established, a household line should not lapse' (Plath 1964: 301). The perpetuity of the household was always the priority at that time. The eldest son had a duty to inherit the household, and the daughters had a responsibility to "disperse" to other households.

Plath says "souls in Japanese household religion" can be categorised into three segments. The first is "the departed", which means the souls of household members who died in recent memory (Plath 1964: 301). The second is "the ancestors", which means 'all the departed regular members of a household, who have been expunged from living memory' (Plath 1964: 303). The third is "the

outsider", which means those at 'the fringe of institutionalisation, including all homeless souls' (Plath 1964: 304). This psychology of ancestor worship still exists in mortuary rites. Rural Japanese houses often have ancestral altars, and people offer the first serving of rice in a bowl for the ancestor.

2.5 Funerals in Japan

2.5.1 First, second and third phases of funerals in Japan

Japanese sociologist Taguchi's last lecture at his university talked about scattering the ashes and Japanese funerals in general. He categorised the Japanese funeral (*so-so*) into two phases. The first is a final greeting of the deceased, seen in *otsu-ya* (a wake), *kokubetsu-shiki* (farewell service), and *kuyami* (condolence). The second phase is an activity for deciding how to deal with the dead body, for example, *Ka-sou* (cremation), *Do-sou, Mai-sou* (burial interment), and *San-kotsu* (scattering ashes) (Taguchi 2010: 14). The Japanese sociologist Kurihara's expanded this to cover to three phases "separation, transition, and reintegration". In a funeral, these stages have the following meaning: 1. The deceased is separated from this world, 2. He/she moves to the afterworld, 3. He/she is reintegrated into the afterworld (Kurihara 1997: 130-132). Kurihara's "separation' and 'transition" can apply to Taguchi's idea. The Japanese anthropologist Suzuki mentioned that various death practices are interconnected to create a protracted method, e.g. funerals, burials, and ancestor worship (2012 :3).

It implies that the Japanese people's mindset about separation from the deceased is not clear-cut with one funeral. Kurihara's mention of the third phase, "reintegration", especially is an integral part of Japanese mortuary rites. From the Buddhist influence, there has been a culture of remembrance of the deceased for 33 years[2]. 'They visit the grave on memorial days, equinoctial weeks, or special occasions. It is believed that during this long period, the deceased's individuality gradually fades away. The deceased is reintegrated into the afterworld as an "ancestor"'(Kurihara 1997: 131). Suzuki also mentioned the continuous visit by Buddhist monks for up to 33 years, for the "grief recovery" period (Suzuki 1998: 181). This explains the strong presence of ancestor worship in mortuary rites in Japan, and how the prolonged greeting to the deceased and ancestors helps confront the bereaved and grief.

[2] In Buddhism, "3" is an important numeric number because "3" means going beyond "2", as going beyond polarised thinking towards extremes such as "yes/no", "win/no", and "loss/gain". "3" is for living in "Chudo" which means the "middle way" as a symbol of enlightenment (Hishita 2007).

2.5.2 Transition of Japanese funeral

2.5.2.1 "*Okitsusutae*"

The tradition of cremation started in the 20th century in order to save space and in consideration of public health (Becker 1999: 102). Until then, burial was a standard way to send off the deceased. 'When there were not so many people and burial sites were surrounded by trees, the mortuary rite *okitsusutae* was normal. This was the most peaceful way of digesting the soul and skeleton'(Yanagita 1929: 303). *Okitsusutae* means the abandonment of a corpse. According to some ethnographers and archaeologists, from ancient times to medieval times, ordinary people used to abandon corpses in mountains, forests, woods, rivers, oceans, and islands. The Japanese word *homuru* can initially mean "throw-away" (Yasuda 1991: 48, Rowe: 2003: 93). Yasuda indicates that people believed that the physical body was just a vessel for a soul and thus did not feel an attachment to it (Yasuda 1991: 47).

2.5.2.2 *Danka-Seido*'s strong presence

Gradually, as the population increased, people needed to hide the corpses which is why burial funerals started (Yanagita 1929: 303). With the introduction of Christianity during the period of national isolation (1603-1868), there was a custom of family registration to Buddhist temples, called *Danka-Seido*, which was mandated to almost every household in 1640 (Rowe 2003: 94). Through *Danka-Seido*, people could claim themselves as not being Christian. People started to have their graves at the temple sites from that time. Because of this influence, present day Buddhism is often called *Soshiki Bukkyo*, which literally means Buddhism for funerals.

Ie-seido, which named the family as the central unit of society in 1898, coincided with the opening of Japan to other countries (Rowe 2003: 95). This gave the family's eldest son the duty of caring for the family graves. This system, even more, strengthened the tie between the household and ancestral graves at temples. This tradition remains even today without the *Ie-seido*. Even though the influence of the rapid growth of the economy in Japan brought many villagers to cities to form "nuclear families", the style of the funeral did not change from the remains of "*Danka-Seido*".

2.5.2.3 No one to take care of family graves

Nevertheless, the distance from cities to hometowns and the number of lone-families brought to light the problem of the inheritance of the family graves. Nowadays, people are facing the issue of the placement of responsibility for the care of ancestral family graves and also for those who die alone. There is a community administration for assisting with cremating the deceased, however, many urns

without families remain at the building of the administration. Local governors do not know what to do with the urns (NHK 2019: 19-22).

2.5.2.4 Disappearance of a collective funeral in Japan

Organising funerals as a collective is gradually disappearing in Japan. Significantly, the phenomenon of the rapid economic growth of Japan brought people to cities from their home villages and led to a reduction in the number of community funerals. Villages used to organise their funerals collectively preparing food, equipment, coffins, performing the cremation and burying. Decreasing populations made it difficult for them to continue. As a result, commercial funerals became common. Because of Covid-19, the number of community funerals organised by commercial companies has also decreased. 'While much of the recent decline was due to people opting for small-scale ceremonies to avoid the spread of COVID, many say the change is both overdue and unlikely to be fully reversed'(Yokoyama 2022). To prevent the spread of the virus, visitors to hospitals were limited, and family members could not gather before the end of life of a family member. Because of the economic crisis due to Covid-19, the cost of the joint funeral became a burden for families. 'One expense that many find particularly opaque is the offering of cash to Buddhist monks, who read sutras at ceremonies and give religious names to the dead for the afterlife. Monks are paid around ¥200,000 (approximately $1,500 US) on average for such services. There's rarely an explicit price list, but a bigger offering is understood to ensure a more elaborate religious name'(Yokoyama 2022).

The inability to share farewells as a collective in modern times may lead to difficulties in thoroughly confronting grief. According to one of the subjects of this fieldwork, 'Those who are bereaved family members did not need to do anything but grieve together during the funeral. Instead, neighbours helped to organise the funeral instead of the family'. People used to have "shared grief" as a way of helping each other with bereavement. Today they seek alternative ways of compensating for the lack of this collective grieving process.

2.5.2.5 Materiality of the deceased in Japanese cremation

The unique part of Japanese cremation is the ritualistic custom of passing the bones using chopsticks from one person to another to greet the deceased before putting them in an urn (*Syukotsu*). People are not generally disturbed or panicked in confronting the deceased as a wholly changed form— as ashes — because it is an accustomed ritual. 'Rather it seems like people pick the bones together to feel intimacy towards the final goodbye' (Shimane and Tamagawa 2011: 99).

2.5.3 The definitions and hypothesis

This thesis mainly focuses on the scattering of ashes as the second phase and greeting at the altar as the third phase mentioned by Kurihara (1997: 130-132). There is a belief that scattering the ashes substitutes touching the materiality of the deceased person, in order to confront grief, even with the lack of a collective funeral. Understanding ancestral worship helps clarify the positioning of the altars of the deceased.

2.6 Positioning of scattering the ashes in Japan

2.6.1 The initial intention of scattering the ashes in Japan

The number of ceremonies for scattering ashes was 128 out of 961,000 deaths in 2000 (Ministry of Health and Welfare 2000, Rowe 2003: 90), which indicates that it is a minor practice in Japan.

So-so-no-Jiyu-o-Susumeru-Kai (Grave-Free- Promotion-Society) organiser Mutsuhiko Yasuda, a former Asahi Shinbun newspaper editor, initiated the first scattering of ashes ceremony in 1991 (Rowe 2003: 86). The starting point of the activity was a social movement in Yamanashi prefecture against the regional development service at water sources for Tokyo. In the end, Yasuda conceived an idea to establish a space for scattering of ashes. He stated, 'If we could make this space for scattering the ashes, this can improve three problems, which are the lack of space for graves, the development of underpopulated regions and also protecting the source of water from the pollution'(Yasuda 1991: 42).

Anthropologist Kim researched the organisation for one year. She describes the organisation's activity as a principle of *shimin-undo* (a grass-roots-movement) (2017: 111, 112). Kim and Rowe's description of this activity can provide valuable insights into changing "the concept of the family", "religious freedom", "self-determination" and "the long-standing Buddhist monopoly over death" (Rowe 2003: 87, Kim 2017: 112). Rowe and Kim perceive the activity not only for environmental or spiritual reasons but as social resistance.

2.6.2 Ambiguity of the disposal of ashes practice

Even though there are some people interested in the practice, the legality of scattering ashes is still blurred in Japan. According to a research report funded by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, there is a law that could be applied to the scattering of ashes. Article 190 states that a person who damages, abandons or unlawfully possesses a corpse, the ashes or hair of a dead person or an object placed in a coffin shall be punished by imprisonment with work for not more than three years (Kitamura 2021: 5, Yasuda 1991: 215). However, in 1991, the Ministry of Justice explained that

‘Article 190 is originally for not restricting mortuary rites’. Therefore, as long as it is a ceremony based on mortuary rites and performed in moderation, there is no legal problem (Kitamura 2021: 8, Kim 2017: 117). The Ministry of Justice added that Article 190 might not apply to the scattering of the ashes because its original objective is burial and cremation funerals, but not for other funeral practices such as scattering ashes in the mountains or ocean (Kitamura 2021: 8, Kim 2017: 117).

A 1998 report stated that ‘Article 190 wouldn’t be for punishing those who scatter ashes’(in Kitamura 2021: 27). However, there would be some disputes. A survey showed that 80-90 per cent of people think the scattering of ashes should not be done in towns, near water supply places or in parks (Kitamura 2021: 8). This implies that we must set social regulations for the practice.

2.6.3 Some towns started to create regulations about scattering the ashes

Since 2005, fifteen towns have decided to regulate against the scattering of ashes (Research Institute for Local Government 2023). Three of the towns passed a regulation prohibiting the practice: ‘No person shall scatter burnt bones outside the cemetery’. Two towns passed a regulation for restrictions on scattering; ‘No person shall scatter burnt bones, except as otherwise specified by the Mayor’. Nine towns passed a regulation for ‘permission to operate a scattering ground; a person who wishes to operate a scattering ground shall obtain a permit from the Mayor’. One town passed a regulation ‘Ordinance regulating scattering sites and prohibiting scattering of ashes in principle’.

These regulations appeared because of disputes between individuals who want the option of spreading ashes and locals of the towns (NHK 2019: 85). There is yet no national regulation for specifically restricting the scattering of ashes. This implies the possibility that my subjects’ choice to scatter the ashes of their children may not be viable in the future.

2.7 Language structure and high-context culture

Nowadays, with the appearance of individualisation, Japanese people have started to use the subject “I” more often. ‘First, as culture becomes more individualistic, first-person singular pronouns (I, my, me, mine) are used more frequently while first-person plural pronouns (we, our, us, ours) are used less frequently’(Ogihara 2017: 3). However, in contemporary spoken Japanese, subjects (I / you / he) are often left out because they are considered to be too direct. The background of this is related to high context culture. ‘In high-context cultures—communication relies heavily on non-verbal, contextual, and shared cultural meanings’ (Confederation Collage 2021). Japanese people often depend on *Ku-ki o Yomu* (reading the atmosphere). The reason why people can communicate without using subjects is that people read the context without needing to use words that provide information

like age, social status, and birthplace. ‘For high-context cultures, language is a kind of social lubricant, easing and harmonising relations that are defined according to a group or collectivist orientation where “we” rather than “I” is the key to identity’(Confederation Collage 2021). During the course of my thesis writing, I discovered a significant interconnection between the bereaved, the deceased, society, culture and myself. This connection, referred to as “we”, was influenced by the ambiguous subjectivity of the Japanese language, despite the fact that I am writing in English, which is my second language. Throughout my writing, there was a persistent sense of “we”. While translating the words of my informants, I often questioned whether they intended to convey “we”, “I”, or “they”, realising the potential for misunderstandings. This linguistic subjective ambiguity led me to contemplate the notion of “ancestors and antecedents” as an interconnected entity on a meta-level.

2.8 The deceased and bereaved people (informants/subjects/participants)

There are three deceased subjects; Ryo-san, the son of Asuka. Fuki-chan, the daughter of Novi, and Ki-bou, the brother of Miko. They all died at a young age. I have never met them in person.

There are three types of bereaved subjects I focused on during my fieldwork. First, the bereaved people who invited me to observe and film their daily life with their memorial activities. Second, the bereaved people who understood the basics of traditional funerals in local villages. Third, my grandmother and grand-aunt for teaching me two different perspectives on religion and spirituality, and encouraging my reflexivity.

2.8.1 Walk with Ryo-san

The life of the 12-year-old boy Ryo, ended in 2020. Before his death, he planned to travel to Fiji to study English in the spring of 2020 but Covid-19 prevented it. According to Asuka, Ryo was an extraordinary child. He started to read when he was a baby. He could read books for grown-ups even as a primary school child. Asuka often told me how special he was, and Novi and Asuka told me that Ryo was ‘like an alien from another planet’.

Ryo’s favourite books were coincidentally my favourites. Ryo read “No Longer Human” by Osamu Dazai. It is about a guy who always felt agony as a human and who felt like an outsider. The protagonist implies the difficulty of living in society and is recognised as a “social outcast”. Another of his favourites, “I Am a Cat” by Soseki Natsume, about a cat who laughs at human behaviour and conversation, observed as an outsider. Both books speak to the difficulty of being outsiders and longing for belonging to society. According to Asuka, Ryo’s choice of books depended on the

author's perspective. Ryo's mind was always wondering about the fundamental questions in human society as a third person. Listening to memories of Ryo, I imagine that he and I could have been friends who shared the same taste in books and an enthusiasm for other cultures.

2.8.2 My grand-uncle Ki-bou

My encounter with Ryo reminded me of my grand-uncle Ki-bou. That was a nickname my grandmother gave him. I lived with my grandmother when I was 19 years old. Ki-bou was 19 years old when he died. therefore, I became interested in him then. He was the younger brother of my grandmother, born in Manchuria, China. According to my grandmother, Ki-bou and a baby sister were almost sold to a local Chinese family when they were trying to return to Japan after WW2.

Ki-bou loved cooking and was good at Origami-paper, so his classmates often teased him about "doing girl things". He stopped going to school because of this. However, his curiosity did not stop him from studying. He read books in the library every day instead of going to school. He was learning English from a teacher. His curiosity about foreign cultures and enthusiasm for books linked him to Ryo and to my interests. I imagine the three of us as friends. Because Ki-bou is my blood relative, he is also an ancestor.

2.8.3 Fuki-chan, a wildflower in the wind

I call her Fuki-chan. *Chan* is an honorific used for girls or boys. Fuki was born in 2018 and was the daughter of Novi. Shortly after birth she developed an infection and passed away in a Tokyo hospital. Novi said, 'Fuki was not fully a human being yet[3], I feel. Because we didn't get to know what she liked or disliked, and so on'. Her life was like a transient cherry blossom tree or a swift wind. During the two months of her life, she was cuddled by many people, including her older brother. In a photograph, the brother's tender eyes show his excitement for his first sibling. Novi often told me that her image is a wildflower. Therefore, flowers were constantly on the altar with the urn containing Fuki's ashes. For her funeral, there were many different types of flowers brought by guests. Her name originally comes from the mountain where Fuki was born. It means "joy and the moment the first buds pop out of the snow". So Novi decided to scatter her ashes on that mountain with a hoped-for breeze to send her to the sky.

---

[3] "There was neither pollution nor vitality and thus there was no inverse relationship between pollution and vitality. Since the child was not considered a full person, the parents could not fully relate to their children" (Kim 2015: 27).

2.8.4 People practising scattering ashes

Asuka, Novi, and Dorothy led me to explore the empirical sides of mortuary rites and spiritual encounters. Asuka and Novi are a couple. Dorothy is Novi's mother. I learned about the practice of scattering ashes in Japan because of my relationship with them.

Asuka and Novi work as representatives at an after-school facility. Both run an NPO (Non-Profit-Organisation) to support those uncomfortable living in social situations e.g. *Hikikomori*, *Futoko*[4]. Asuka sometimes cooks for the NPO. I met the couple in May 2021, when I applied to work at their after-school facility. I had lost my job as a Japanese teacher because of the closure of the country's border due to Covid-19. Asuka and Novi became the main subjects of my film and thesis.

2.8.4.1 Asuka

Asuka is a 40-year-old Japanese woman. She believes in Shintoism and has a house altar. Placed on the altar is a straw rope made by Ryo symbolising their connection. Every day she joins her hands in front of the Shinto altar and a separate altar for Ryo and Fuki.

In her mid-20s, Asuka became pregnant with Ryo. She thought this was an excellent opportunity to enjoy the female side of her being, a once-in-a-lifetime experience. After giving birth to Ryo, she started to work part-time and met Novi. They became friends talking about the struggles of their lives, and eventually decided to open a facility together to support and provide food for children as an after-school service. Asuka started her work life as "everyone's sister", a reliable person who listened to people and served food, along with her role as a wife and a mother. She related to me that the struggles she had in the past enabled her to sympathise with the children.

Ryo's death became a trigger that led her to divorce her husband. At the end of Ryo's funeral, the ashes were taken by the husband's family. Asuka wanted to keep some of the ashes but her husband's family refused. Ryo was the only one who would inherit the husband's surname. Therefore, the family's despair towards losing an heir, led them to obsess with the ashes. Eventually, the husband understood Asuka's need and allowed her to receive some ashes from the family.

Although two years have passed since Ryo's death, not everyone knows about it. Asuka's colleagues at her workplace still do not know about the death.

---

[4] —hikikomori (socially withdrawn), futoko (children who refuse to attend school) (Nae 2018: 16). Hikikomori, and futoko are recognised as people who are not apprehensible because they don't belong any social status. Parents of the children often try fixing their life or hiding them, because they feel ashamed of having them as social outcasts.

2.8.4.2 Novi

Novi is 36, believes in Buddhism, and chants at the altar every month, observing the date of Fuki and Ryo's death.

When he was a child, Novi's parents moved their family around Japan to try and improve his health. When they moved to the countryside, he recovered. Novi said, 'Nature is the most powerful medicine'. From this experience, Novi started to think of human beings as a part of nature.
When he was a teenager, his father died. That changed his way of seeing death and life. Since then, he started to study Buddhism. That led him to think about the interconnection of humans and nature in the circulation of life and death.

Eventually, his daughter, Fuki, was born and he experienced her death soon after birth, which separated him and his ex-wife, who had very different ways of perceiving the experience. Novi decided to confront death by scattering ashes and daily praying. Recently, he re-started his studies at a university in order to gain more knowledge about people dealing with developmental disorders. His encounters with Ryo influenced Novi to continue his studies. Novi was interested in becoming a *no-kan-shi*, a ritual mortician. We had discussions on learning traditional mortuary rites, how to listen to the voices of the deceased and bereaved people respectfully. He is still figuring out how to navigate this process.

2.8.4.3 Dorothy

She is a mother of three children, one of whom is Novi. She prays at the altar for her husband every day. Before her husband passed away, he told her, 'I do not want to be buried in an ancestral grave', therefore Dorothy took the initiative to scatter his ashes. She sometimes dreams of her husband, whose appearance is the same as when he died. She commented that the time in the other realm is slower.

Dorothy used to work as a journalist for a newspaper company. She was writing about her bereavement and was therefore very helpful to me in framing the questions for my fieldwork. She prepared documents and photographs to help create triggers for my fieldwork interview questions.

2.8.5 Local people in the Ibuki area

At the folklore museum *Ibuki-yama Bunka Shiryokan*, I was invited by an archaeologist, Takahashi, and a staff member, Matoba. I chose the Ibuki area because I wanted to know how local people created traditional funerals in the region.

Takahashi and Matoba suggested I meet the local villagers volunteering at the museum. They encouraged me to gain fresh knowledge about mortuary rites from the local people. I revisited the museum several times.

Those whom I met revealed the gradual disappearance of “handmade” funerals. Two women, Marumoto and Taniguchi, and three men, Fukunaga, Ando and Takahashi, all in their eighties and the nineties, resided in villages near Mount Ibuki. I interviewed five people from three villages, Shunjo, Joheiji and Kouzuhara. The five said they organised funerals by helping each other as neighbours. The two villages, Shunjo and Joheiji, used to do burial funerals. The only village that did cremation was Kouzuhara, a place for fugitives.

Some villagers were born in the same year of my grandmother's birth. Therefore they treated me like a granddaughter. They sometimes shared with me their desire to pass these stories on to their grandchildren. Every villager proudly told me how they used to organise funerals. They knew the tradition would disappear soon.

2.8.6 My grandmother and my grand-aunt

2.8.6.1 Miko

Miko is my grandmother, who is eighty years old and was born in Manchuria. She moved to Japan after WWII. She shared with me a shocking scene of a dead child in a cardboard box thrown into the ocean while she was on the ship to Japan from Manchuria with her family. Somehow, she has a feeling of being a survivor.

She had a near-death experience when she was a girl, but believes she recovered because of her mother’s prayers. Since that time, she started to believe in religion. She sings and dances a prayer song every day for an hour. She has three altars, one for her husband and his ancestors, one for her family including Ki-bou and one for the religion.

2.8.6.2 Chie

Chie is my grand-aunt, who is close to eighty years old, and was also born in Manchuria. She too moved back to Japan after WWII. However, she does not have memories from China at all. Compared to Miko, she does not have the feeling of being a survivor from moving back to Japan from Manchuria because of her young age at that time.

She invited me to her home to show me how she served her husband’s altar. She also talks about her scepticism towards spirituality and the religion Miko so strongly observes.

3 Methodology

3.1 Participant observation in the moment of scattering the ashes with a video camera

For this research, participant observation was conducted in filming my key subjects' lifestyles and ritualistic activities. I have visited the home of my key subjects continually, almost every week during the fieldwork period. "Participation" is a problematic term in being a researcher and also a filmmaker. Standing with my camera I often asked myself whether I should join hands with my subjects as they prayed or continue filming. Nevertheless, caring about the appropriation of the degree of participation made my subjects uncomfortable. Ultimately, I prioritised my experience - joining hands in front of the ashes for scattering, and leaving my camera for a while. Through feeling the warmth of our clasped hands, I imagined my subjects' prayers. 'The favoured way of making the most of oneself as a tool of ethnography is to do as others do'(Madden 2010: 83) Participating in the ritual setting worked very well to feel their temperature, their tension, and their struggle to find the best ways for the ritual at the moment.

Filming rituals, especially scattering ashes, was ethically tricky. The ceremony can happen only once in their life, when the ashes are scattered. Nevertheless, they shared the precious moment with me and my camera. I wanted to respect the subjects' actions and not hinder their ritual. 'Ethnographic information about humans can be interesting and educative, but also sensitive and potentially dangerous'(Madden 2010: 33). Holding a camera made me aware of the preservation of outsider-ness. I became aware that the film's potential would be judged in the future in the academic context. I imagined how my subjects would perceive criticisms at that level. At the beginning of the fieldwork, I hesitated to film them. I mainly tried not to film their arguments and discordance in everyday life. However, they realised my hesitation and said, 'Do not be distant and hesitate. We know the risk of being a part of this project'. I realised the balance of being "close but not too close". For them, I was not close enough, and they were willing to reveal themselves regardless of the risk of judgement. In Madden's explanation of the closeness to the subjects, his subjects needed a period of "clock off', however, my subjects allowed me to do the fieldwork "clock on" all the time (Madden 2010: 81).

3.2 Am I a researcher or an artist? And subjects aged over the 70s

"Tomurai to Kamera"(Kim and Jinushi 2021) is written by an artist and an anthropologist about their fieldwork and films on the topic of *tomurai* (grieving/funeral). The book shows the difference between an artist's and an anthropologist's perspective on filming graves and mortuary rites.

I am not originally from the field of anthropology, I studied fine arts, and my major was performance art. To be aware of academic researchers' perspectives on artists, I read a section about the anthropologist Kim and found her honest critical realisation of a subject's "irritation" towards Jinushi's way of interviewing when she was filming graves for Koreans residing in Japan. Kim indicated the irritation of the subjects in the video because of Jinushi's ignorance. However, at the same time, Kim praised Jinushi's brave approach to show the bold reaction of the subjects towards ignorance (Kim and Jinushi 2021: 148, 149). Jinushi also said that she could find her ignorance made her subjects annoyed, and when she watched her documentation, she felt irritated at her ignorance, too. However, Jinushi also admitted the potential to show the tension in the conversation between the subject and her (149). From Kim and Jinushi, I could know the risk of irritating the subjects, but at the same time, that can reveal some natural reactions of the subjects.

With the subjects over the age of 70s, I conducted interviews through the ethnographic interview method introduced by Spradley (in Madden 2010). As a young Japanese descendant, I mainly considered the balance of expressing curiosity and ignorance. The villagers often asked me, 'Do you know shoes made of straw ropes?', 'Have you ever used medicinal plants?' and so on. And every time, I answered, 'I'm afraid I do not know them', which indicated my ignorance. They seemed not irritated but more like laughing at my ignorance. Likely, my naive position encouraged them to teach me how to make tools for funerals. For example, the first-hand experience of making a rope from straw, touching real burial coffins, and smelling wild medicine plants made me aware of the sensorial experience of the villagers. And also, my curiosity was shown through my handmade dictionary (see appendix 3). This is related to Spradley's "Expressing Cultural Ignorance" and how one gets the interviewee to "educate" the interviewer about what they do (in Madden 2010: 73). Throughout my research, I found my ignorance and felt irritated by myself as a beginner researcher. However, this was useful in the context of meeting those over the age of the 70s with curiosity as a Japanese descendant.

3.3 Trying communion with the deceased

Recently I watched the film *Itamu-hito* (Mourner), a Japanese fictional film (Tsutsumi 2015). The core of the film is about a protagonist's activity of *itamu* (mourning). In the film, he travelled everywhere to mourn deceased people even though he did not know them when they were alive. The most inspiring part of his stance was that he was not focused on how the person died (the cause of the death), but about whom the deceased person loved, who loved the person, and how the deceased

person was appreciated by people. This part inspired me in my research. I decided not to focus on why and how they died but more on how bereaved people live with the deceased people's memories.

Another inspiration for my fieldwork was an animation film *Suzume no Tojimari* the film's core is the mourning of a place and not a person (Shinkai 2022). The film portrayed a fictional ritual of closing doors with a key in order to calm the natural spirits responsible for causing earthquakes. One of the protagonists said like, 'If we forget appreciation for the place, the natural spirits open the door to cause the earthquake'(2022). Many people in Japan still believe in the danger of digging into something taboo such as death which is categorised as *kegare* (dirt). If people touch that without respect, the spirits will be unhappy.

When I visited my subjects' homes, I join my hands in front of the altar, serve some sweets and have communion with my thoughts. I still do not know the best way to have communion with them. At least, I always try not to forget the presence of deceased people, even if they are not physical, and appreciate what I have learned from them by writing this thesis and making a film - with a warm heart.

4 Bereavement and grief in Japan, some analytical issues

In understanding the grieving process, I attempt to provide insight into how bereaved individuals can create meaningful rituals with self-determination. Through examples, such as the Japanese perception of convention, grief, scattering ashes, and ancestor worship, I further explore these issues.

4.1 Bereaved people deal with grief in social life

'Death generates anxiety and grief' (Suzuki 1998: 180). One of the important functions of funerals is to assist the psychological recovery of the living (181). 'Grief can be defined as the processes by which persons move from equilibria in their inner and social worlds before a death to new equilibria in their inner and social worlds following bereavement' (Klass 1997: 149). Grief requires psychological recovery, and to equilibrate in the inner and social world, there is a necessity of mortuary rites.

Calderwood, Alberton (2023: 25) and Souza (2017: 61) mention the importance of researching a readjustment of the bereaved people's social life since the bereavement process is not only about the intrapsychic but more holistic to voice the needs of bereaved parents from the parent's perspective.

The state of a loss of a beloved one is experienced by every participant in my research. Novi and Asuka are bereaved as a result of the loss of Ryo and Fuki. Miko and Chie experienced bereavement from the death of Ki-bou and from their husbands. Local people experienced their neighbours and their families' bereavement.

4.1.1 Bereavement of losses of spouses and children

Calderwood and Alberton's research showed some examples of the bereavement process for parents. They hint at some mutual points among their twenty participants. They described the bereavement process by using authentic voices of the emotional states and experiences that bereaved parents had and continue to have.

Souza's research demonstrates transitions in the social lives of bereaved spouses. My main participants, Novi and Asuka, did not experience the bereavement of spouses. However, the loss of a spouse means the loss of a family member. Therefore, I will take Souza's research as a help to connect to my research subject of the loss of children to understand the social life of the bereaved.

4.1.2 Joint identity

Calderwood and Alberton, and Souza's research showed one obstacle against reintegrating into the new normal such as "joint identity". When people experience bereavement, the social environment for the bereaved is dramatically changed. Souza says, 'How does the survivor relate to—particularly those friends who the bereaved became acquainted with through the deceased spouse?' (2017: 66).

One participant of the research of Calderwood and Alberton says what was not helpful for the bereaved parents was 'Not seeing anyone grieve, I think that was the biggest. The fact that I do not know if it was over and done for them, or if they had not grieved, or if they were holding it in, or if they were doing it in private ….' (2023:29). The bereaved parents also said that the unhelpful thing they experienced was 'to try to make the bereaved feel better' (29). Some people say, 'You have another baby', and 'I know what you are going through because I lost my mother' (29). This urging or empathy for the bereaved parents sometimes made them uncomfortable. Klass says the sense of isolation of the bereaved parents in their community since they cannot share enough of their grief (1997: 152, 153). This kind of interaction leads to the change or end of the friendship of the bereaved parents (Calderwood and Alberton 2023: 30).

Like the participants of Calderwood and Alberton, there are some difficulties in reintegrating into the community because of the lack of enough empathy or understanding for the bereaved parents. Asuka's difficulty in talking about Ryo's death especially would be related to this joint identity.

4.1.3 Shared grief

One of Souza's informants, a man named James, who experienced the loss of his wife 'developed a relationship with a woman whose husband had died. They married, and both gave up their households to begin a new life together. They spent their time together doing many of the things that he and his deceased wife had wanted to do during her life with him' (Souza 2017: 64). Sue, a woman who lost her husband, 'began to attend daily religious services and in this way met a group of women who were mostly widowed' (Souza 2017: 64). James and Sue's examples help to explain the construction of Asuka and Novi's bond through sharing their experiences of the bereavement of their children.

Calderwood and Alberton mentioned the new relationship's importance, 'they were beginning to meet new people and form friendships with people who understood. Those friends who understood were helpful for the recovery from grief' (Calderwood and Alberton 2023: 30).

Klass also mentioned the importance of sharing pain with those who experienced the bereavement of children, ‘Sharing the pain also means sharing ways to relieve some forms of the pain, especially in the parent’s social world’ (1997:157).

4.1.4 Continuing bond

Souza writes about a woman named Sally who lost her husband, as a case study of a kind of unsuccessful confronting of grief. She is disabled, and her husband used to take care of her. Compared to James and Sue, she had a more complicated adjustment process (Souza 2017: 65). Even though she gained support from volunteers and friends after the death of her husband ‘she insists that the only thing that could bring her joy would be her husband. Although she has managed to develop a new normal she rejects its importance or value’ (Souza 2017: 65). From this it is possible to imagine that Sally felt her mentality was not reintegrated enough even though her physical life has no problem.

Souza points out that one of the reasons why Sally was not able to accept the new normal was related to the absence of ‘ritualized or acceptable ways to recognize the social changes that are necessitated during bereavement’, and ‘the bereaved are left to manage the process on their own’ (Souza 2017: 66). Calberwood and Alberton mentioned that the bereaved parents felt helped when seeing friends and family got involved in the preparation of the funeral for their deceased children (2023: 29). It indicates the communal funeral’s significance.

Nonetheless, Calderwood and Alberton’s work does not indicate the communal funeral as a complete solution with a clear-cut outcome in the whole process of grief. They added that all their participants described that they are still in the process, and most described there are incidents of “grief bursts” (35). One participant indicated, twelve years after the death, ‘I know some people say I am stuck—in my grief but I do not really think I am stuck in it. I just think you never really do get over the death of your child. You learn ways to cope with it. And that’s all I can say. You learn ways to cope with it’ (35). This clearly shows that the process is not done by a clear-cut as ‘The bonds between parents and children are complex, so transforming the bond can be a long and exhausting task’ (Klass 1997: 165).

Klass describes the importance of feeling a continuing bond through some social representations such as a Japanese *mizuko kuyo* (a ritual for miscarried or aborted children))(1997: 171) and Japanese ancestor worship(172). Souza concluded that a new normal does not eliminate their continued bonds with the deceased spouses but also finds new meaning in life (2017: 65). Calderwood and Alberton also mention, ‘we found that the bereavement process for bereaved parents

does not end, and often includes a continuing bond with the child and occasional moments of grief' (2023: 36). This indicates the importance of the continuing bond and that some Japanese traditional communal rituals have a significant effect on processing the grief of the bereaved people to help them find the new meaning of life.

4.2 Self-determination in mortuary rites with social resistance

Klass, Souza, Calderwood, and Alberton show the difficulties with joint identities, the value of support from gaining alliance and the importance of the ritualistic acts for continuing the bond.
In this section, I will explore how individuals approach decision-making when it comes to continuing bonds, particularly those who may not be able to process their grief in a conventional manner. Kalich and Brabant's study (2023) on anomie and deviance sheds light on alternative methods of coping. Moreover, the Japanese perception of individualism versus collectivism plays a crucial role in determining mortuary rites and the alternative practice of scattering ashes, which is not considered conventional.

4.2.1 Stereotype and individual grief processing

There is the danger of forcing the bereaved to reintegrate in conventional ways, such as people saying 'I know what you are getting through' (Calderwood and Alberton 2023:29). This leads to the discussion of every person's individual expression of grief. The tendency to reintegrate into a new normal in a particular conventional way, sometimes makes the subjects uncomfortable.

Kalich and Brabant have an example of a man who still greets the front of the grave of a deceased child on the way to his work, even after four years passed. His aunt told him urgently that he should stop greeting the child because that's "abnormal" (2006: 234). This means the aunt expected the man to be satisfied by having a burial funeral and the passing of several years without the deceased. The aunt says that he already had a clear-cut idea about appropriate conventional rituals and therefore, she couldn't understand why he was still showing some attachment to the deceased boy child. Kalich and Brabant's point of researching grieving rules is about reconsidering 'responsibility/blame for the failure to recover in a timely fashion' (2006: 227). This implies that those who embrace grief demand to digest it through appropriate processes and timings individually.

4.2.2 Anomie and deviance

Kalich and Brabant use the term "deviance". They point out that this concept can be changed and re-changed only at society/a group level, not individuals (2006: 231). 'Deviance suggests a warning to

persons, that they may need to choose a safe place in which to do it, a place where their grief will be not judged as good or bad but merely their way of expressing/behaving'(2006: 232).

Another concept the two anthropologists show is "anomie" which "exists when norms for some reason are not perceptible". This appears when 'social regulation of desire is absent, the individual is left to live in a chaos that can become an existential horror' (Kalich and Brabant 2006: 232). Experiencing bereavement means a dramatic change, and people lose their "norms", which creates an anomic situation.

> *The bereaved experience a sudden change in status, even when the death is anticipated. Norms for feeling and action may no longer be perceptible as anomic conditions take hold. Existing norms may hinder or prevent necessary grief work. Thus, the bereaved individual is confronted with a situation in which the prevailing norms are compatible with the individual needs or in which there are no norms (233).*

The description of deviance indicates that if there were "safe places" to do deviant actions, the bereaved people's grief would be less[5] . Nonetheless, if you confront grief beyond "norms", it's essential to consider individualism and collectivism since there could be a risk of violating others in a collectivistic perspective.

4.2.3 Decision-making with individualism and collectivism in Japan

To scatter the ashes, is a form of self-determination. This is a key to the practice since it is still recognised as an alternative way, and there are no clear social regulations. How do people generate motivation to adopt an alternative way, even with anomie in Japan?

Anthropologist Mathews wrote about the pursuit of a life-worth living in Japan. He says *ikigai* means 'that which makes one's life worth living' (2012: 33). There are two different concepts for *ikigai*. 'A matter fully playing one's social role' and 'the pursuit of one's own individual meaning (self-realisation)' (33,34). Mathew mentions that new funerals, such as scattering ashes, can be the final form of the deceased's self-realisation. Since 'In company and family, self-realisation was only a dream. But in death—self-realisation can be pursued' (37). These two terms derived from "*ikigai*" could apply to collectivism with "a matter fully playing one's social role" and individualism with

---

[5] About a bereaved girl who expressed her grief by shattering a window, 'Sometimes in grief and griefwork, we need to punch things, throw things, even break things. It is critical to find a safe place in which to do so. It is also critical to be affirmed and to not be judged as abnormal'(Kalich and Brabant 2006: 235).

“the pursuit of one’s own individual meaning” from the social psychological realm (33). Ogihara mentions that there is praise of individuality in Japan however, even though the adaptation to individualistic culture is a considerable influence, there is persistent collectivism left in Japanese society (2017: 9). From the psychological department, there is an explanation about collectivistic culture, ‘—people from non-Western cultures are more likely to possess a “collective self”. —Thus, people from collectivistic cultures view the “person” not as an autonomous being with abstract qualities, but in terms of specific relationships to significant others’ (Rhee, Uleman, Lee, Roman 1995:143). This tells us in a collectivistic culture people do not have autonomy, but relationships with others are indispensable.

Ogihara also mentions that ‘a high need for uniqueness was negatively correlated with income, current life satisfaction, anticipated life satisfaction, and satisfaction with personal relationships in Japan’ and that, ‘Japanese people recognise that individualism may injure close interpersonal relationships’(9).

Therefore, the standing point of the alternative way is recognised as individualistic, and most people try to avoid it since the Japanese ideal still lays on the praise of the conventional within a community. Those who cannot adapt to ordinary schools, companies and society, would feel some struggles in their lives. This can imply the harshness towards Japanese bereaved people with complicating grief. Hence, the alternative way tends to appear as social resistance as opposed to collectivism.

4.3 Bereavement and self-determination in analytical issues such as the Japanese perception of convention, grief, scattering ashes, and ancestor worship by employing the theories introduced.

4.3.1 The conventional communal mortuary rite

Mortuary rites in Japan in previous times used to depend on *Danka-Seido* (parishioner / temple system). It led temples to monopolise the management of mortuary services in placing families’ graves. Therefore, the families continued having mortuary rites in the same villages (Shimane and Tamagawa 2011: 95). This can explain why the traditional funerals were village-based and family-based. ‘The bearers of traditional funeral rituals were kinsmen, local community, and company relations and networks when the ritual was based on the collective unit of the household or family rather than individuals’ (Inoue 2012: 125). This strongly presents Japanese recognition of death from a collectivistic perspective (Ogihara 2017).

Kurihara explains villagers' funerals in a traditional sense. 'In a traditional village community, there existed many groups which functioned to maintain a traditional life. Funerals were significant rituals for the community, supported by various groups. When a person in the village died, the groups undertook all the jobs concerning the funeral — informing his/her death to the village people, making instruments to be used in the funeral, inviting guests, proceeding with the funeral program, the cremation, the burial etc. There existed a strong group of people who mourned over the death of acquaintances and took responsibilities for the funeral' (Kurihara 1997: 133). This describes the significance of the community's effort for each death of a member.

According to Rowe: 'When you buy a grave in Japan today, what you are buying is the right to use the land in perpetuity (*eitai shiyoken*). The system is premised on the concept of continuous, direct descent, localized family that is still implicitly enshrined in civil law'(2003: 96). This implies that people think maintaining the perpetuity of family or community is always prioritised over individual will (Ogihara 2017). Communal mortuary rites may have the advantage of allowing people to share their grief in a community plus the security of continuity and perpetuity, including one's own death and most importantly, allowing people to have shared grief (Souza 2017, Calderwood and Alberton 2023, Klass 1997). There is also a risk by forcing people to conduct the rites as a convention (Calderwood and Alberton 2023, Kalich and Brabant 2006).

4.3.2 Reasons for scattering ashes

The disappearance of communal funerals in villages created Japanese mortuary rites in anomie, which created some free choices in styles, one of them being ashes disposal. When Taguchi surveyed those who chose the scattering of ashes, he expected their reasons would be related to the 'revival of animism in one of its primordial forms, a return to a naive and primordial view of the other world". However, most people responded that "having a grave would be a burden for family members to take care of' (2010:17,19). This shows the practicality of the activity in the current social phenomenon of a low fertility rate together with an ageing population, and respecting the future children inheriting the land as well as the responsibility of caring for family graves.

There is another reason to choose to scatter ashes. Usually, after the cremation, the ashes are stored in an urn and placed under the gravestone (Taguchi 2010: 14). Yasuda wrote an episodic story about when he lost his friend. 'The friend used to say that he wanted to go back to nature when he dies. However, now his ashes are in an urn, and he might be crying in the darkness in the urn' (1991: 41). Taguchi's research showed that people who practice the scattering of ashes have an image of the grave as dark, narrow, and a small word place (Taguchi 2010: 15). Prendergast, Hockney and

Kellaher, offer another reason for ‘acts of resistance to traditional sites of disposal and associated modernist practices’ (2006: 886). They argue that bereaved people try to retain something of their deceased, in order to avoid the depersonalising effects of institutional arrangements and professional control. The depersonalisation of the funeral is a key to understanding Asuka’s decision to scatter Ryo’s ashes.

4.3.3 “Tears make a flood” in Japan

As Ogihara (2017) explained, the Japanese concept of ‘*ikigai*’ motives of life, still lies in collectivism. This aspect even appears in the ways of crying. Kim researched the emotional expression of grief in social and cultural implications in Japanese death rituals. When he attended a funeral in a rural area in Japan, he saw that most people strained not to cry in public at the funeral. Kim stated that at one funeral, he saw middle-aged female guests ridiculing a sobbing widow because the widow was supposed to entertain the guests and not sob (2015: 21).

The structure of Japanese mortuary rituals does not focus on the individual grief of the survivors, but rather to reinforce social ties. Survivors need to invite many guests and entertain them. From his research, it is possible to surmise that Japanese people care more about the “reaffirmation of family solidarity and enhancing the social status of the surviving relatives” (Kim 2015: 20). Kim adds that, ‘Showing “inner feelings” to outsiders indicates that a group is not strong enough to take care of its family matters or hardships, and therefore the “sense of security” or “stable condition” of the inside group may be weakened’(2015: 22). This tendency of prioritising the reaffirmation of family or the collectives is related to how Miko and villagers in Ibuki’s reaction towards hesitation to talk about their personal bereavement and also Asuka’s hesitance in talking about Ryo’s death to Ryo’s friends for not to make friends feel uncomfortable (Ogihara 2017).

4.3.4 Degree of intimacy with the deceased

The level of “intimacy” is an essential measurement for expressing grief. The reason why individuals feel an attachment to the ashes is because of the level of intimacy with the deceased. Kim described the most tragic scene from his fieldwork, the funeral of a 45-year-old man named Yoshida, who committed suicide (2015: 26, 27). Yoshida’s mother was wailing over the death of her son. Compared to his mother, Yoshida’s sister showed less weeping, and his brother-in-law did not show any salient grief towards Yoshida’s death. Kim explained this as the level of intimacy. Yoshida was the only son and used to live with his mother before his death. Therefore the mother had more

opportunities to talk with the son and more attachment. When there is intense intimacy with the deceased, dealing with grief can be more difficult.

This can be related to what Inoue mentioned that the first (as in I), the second (as in he/she) and the third (as in they) deaths referred to Jankélévitch's categorisation, 'Following his(Jankélévitch) usage, - deceased as a first category and his/her family and intimate friends as the second category, but excludes the third category of others who are not related to the deceased' (in 2012: 126). Following this, it is possible to analyse the Yoshida's mother felt Yoshida's death in the second death or nearly the first death since Yoshida used to be a part of the mother's body. To the contrary, the brother-in-law perceived Yoshida's death as closer to the Jankélévitch's third, since they are not blood-related. Kim said that 'it is dependent on how long the survivors and deceased have been actually entangled by sharing' everyday life (27). Kim and Inoue's insights are helpful in understanding how Asuka felt about the Ryo's first funeral which was conventional.

4.3.5 Perpetuity, *Sosen* and a sense of "we"

Reading the characteristics of the household and ancestor worship, one can tell that "perpetuation" is key for them. To maintain the relay of the household, both the effort of the ancestor and the living are necessary. 'In Japanese ideals, the living and the departed are full of mutual affection. Hostility is suppressed. The success or failure of any individual redounds to all. Therefore the living should be grateful for the legacy left by the departed and the ancestors, while the departed and the ancestors should be pleased to hear that their line continues to prosper' (Plath 1964: 309).

Ancestors are not visible as no one in the family alive has ever met them, 'The only thing that clearly sets them apart from the myriads of gods and souls is their concern for the continuity of their household line. They do worry lest the living grow negligent'(Plath 1964: 312). This dynamic is essential to pass on the ancestor from one generation to another. The relationship between individuals and the whole recalls the World Cup 2022 news about Japan's fans cleaning up the stadium after the win over Germany (BBC 2022). Many said Japanese people are well educated for leaving no stains or traces in respect of the space. This made me think about the dynamic of the ancestor - I was proud of them as if I were a part of them. I imagined that our ancestors worried that living people would grow negligent if Japanese people did not make a collective effort.

Klass explained, '*Sosen* can be a large group, including lineal ancestors, deceased children, relatives outside the formal hereditary line, and non-relatives such as a teacher or friend' (Klass 2001: 744). Klass's classification of *Sosen* (ancestors) as not only blood-related made me aware of

the interconnectedness of everything related to one individual, like the collectivistic perspective (Ogihara 2017).

Suzuki, the Japanese anthropologist, says, 'The scattering of ashes goes further —not only does it express the devaluation of household ancestors, it indicates the denial of ancestors per se. The performance extends the production of pure individual memories to the point of embracing the deceased as an "antecedent", and not as an ancestor of a specific family or a household' (1998: 182). Suzuki's idea is to perceive the deceased as an individual entity and embrace one as an "antecedent" leads to a discussion about the "expansion" of individual death from an animistic perspective. Klass referred to words from the wife of psychiatrist John Bowlby (attachment theory) to explain the animistic approach to perceiving his death (2001: 742)

> *Instead of being shattered, I felt comforted. He seemed secure in my heart and I knew that I could carry him about with me for the rest of my life. I have this sense of continuous companionship. I am never lonely. —I feel that John has both expanded—into the world of total freedom, together with the winds, the sea, the hills, the flowers—and contracted into my heart (Bowlby 1991: 5).*

Prendergast, Hockney and Kellaher employed the concept of "dryness" and "wet" to describe the substance of the ashes that would make the deceased rapidly acquire a "new body" (Prendergast, Hockney and Kellaher 2006: 883). They argue that cremating the body into ashes would make the body a "tangible substance" as no more rotting and resemblance of flesh, therefore bereaved people experiencing diminishing "sorrows and danger" (2006: 884).

> *—as dust rather than bone, ashes are a fluid material which can be divided up, flung to the winds, strewn across the earth, or scattered into both the flow of a water course and the ebb of a tide (2006: 884).*

They suggest that ashes are ambiguous and fluid since their formlessness, the flow of fluidity whilst "bone" dry, makes a symbol of polysemy and multi-vocality, and its unchangeableness as not decaying anymore helps the bereaved to better accept their grief (2006: 884). Their research showed how they interpreted the ashes as fluid and unchangeable, which relates to how my subjects treated them differently at the altar, at the graves or in scattering.

These concepts of "antecedent" from Suzuki, Klass and Bowlby are not constrained within the household or other social systems and respect the continuing bond with the deceased. Prendergast, Hockney and Kellaher's perception of ashes as fluid and unchangeable leads to a sense of "we" beyond the boundary between the deceased and the bereaved. This might be the intention that Novi and Asuka wanted to express by scattering the ashes.

5. Ethnographic description and analysis

5.1 Bereavement

5.1.1 The first funeral of Ryo

Asuka said that she was not satisfied with the first funeral right after the Ryo's death. She showed me how systematic it was to hold a conventional funeral with a commercial company. An email on Asuka's phone mentions the date and time of the scheduled funeral ceremony with systematic phrases written in a bright orange colour. (see appendix 4). Included was an advertisement suggesting prolonged ceremonies in the future.

The film, "The Funeral" (1984), directed by Itami Juzo, suggests attitudes about funeral traditions that may give us some insight on why Asuka was not satisfied with a commercial funeral. The film begins with the death of a man, his daughter and her husband, as the protagonists try to organise a non-conventional funeral. The daughter and her family are city-dwellers, living in Tokyo. The man's wife lives in retirement in their second home. Their household separate, no longer related to their original region or village. This means they can no longer conduct one communal funeral. However, the comedic part of this story is that the protagonists try to create a funeral according to the traditional way. There is a discussion about the right amount of payment to monks, 'How much do you usually pay for a monk?'. A funeral company coordinator answers by wearing a pair of sunglasses hiding his eyes which shows some suspect feeling. 'It is not decided, it is up to you', he answers. 'But if I need to say, around 100,000 yen to 200,000 yen'. The wife says, 'Please let me know the exact amount, to be honest!'. The company coordinator replies, 'The appropriate amount for your grade of home would be about 200,000 yen'. He leaves the house as soon as he said the price. This demonstrates the lack of experience in organising funerals by those not living in villages. Therefore, funeral companies can take some advantage of it. The couple's family follows the shape of the conventional funeral. However, they seem not to know the exact meaning and origin of every activity of the tradition. In the end they organise as the funeral company coordinator commands.

Such a fishy conversation with the funeral coordinator implies the reasons Novi and Asuka chose not to ask funeral companies or institutions to scatter the ashes, as they did not feel intimacy (Inoue 2012, Kim 2015). Rather, it was depersonalised (Prendergast, Hockney, Kellaher 2006). Shimane and Tamagawa read the film as criticism towards the current "convention done by just paying condolence money" as the commercial funerals are for the sake of following the conventional norms (2011: 94). Like in the film, the apparent capitalisation of the funeral made Asuka uncomfortable (Itami 1984).

Asuka showed me some photos of the funeral and told me, ‘The funeral company prepared everything; the coffin, the altar, the flowers and the time and date’. ‘At least I got to place Ryo’s favourite doll', she told me. In the photo, the green frog doll which Ryo had since he was little, was sitting on a chair as if his soul was in the doll, looking at his own funeral (see appendix 5). The doll was the only thing which expressed Ryo’s personality. The other objects were for performing the conventional funeral. This impersonal mortuary rite left Asuka questioning the meaning of rites in anomie (Kalich and Brabant 2006).

This raises the question of the morality of implementing the mortuary rites as a business, which we are reminded of by the fishy businessman in Itami’s film (Itami 1984). Also, Asuka didn’t feel the unity of the clan through the commercial funeral since the family who attended didn’t live with Ryo. Ryo didn’t like flowers, but they put flowers in for the sake of prioritising the convention. Asuka felt the degree of intimacy (Inoue 2012, Kim 2015) around her was not that high. She felt, ‘That was only for the sake of duty for people living in conventions’ (Kalich and Brabant 2006). This suggests that the current commercial funeral may decrease the intimacy level of the deceased in the clan. Asuka felt people around her urged her to decide everything as soon as Ryo died. Of course, the body has a limitation in holding its form. However, the rite’s automation ignores the grief process (Kalich and Brabant 2006). From these experiences, Asuka gained some insight into the value of scattering the ashes, such as suggested by Prendergast, Hockney and Kellaher’s, ‘acts of resistance to traditional sites of disposal and associated modernist practices’ (2006: 886).

5.1.2 Ryo’s will and Asuka’s process of dealing with her grief

Before Ryo’s death, he wrote down some possibilities, likes and dislikes for imagining his plan on paper. He mentioned, ‘I do not want anyone to be sad because of me’. After reading this, Asuka decided not to mention his death to his friends. Therefore, some of his friends maybe still believe that Ryo is alive. This suggests that Ryo did not want to affect other people’s emotions, like crying can affect the solidarity of the community itself (Kim 2015).

When Asuka prepared food for the children at her NPO site, I filmed her cooking. At that time, I knew that the children there were not supposed to hear about Ryo’s death because they were his friends. I tried to avoid asking Asuka about Ryo at the NPO site. However, Asuka asked me, ‘What do you think about not talking about the death of Ryo to the children?’, while she was cooking. I reasoned that Asuka was trying to expose herself even in Ryo’s familiar place, to overcome joint identity. Asuka started to cook chicken and the sound of sizzling meat covered her voice. She told me:

I do not want to be defined as a pitied mother, and also I do not want to be labelled by other people. I do not mind talking to Haru (the author) or people who do not know Ryo, but not to other people who knew Ryo. I wonder why I divide an okay line and a not okay line. And I wonder how other people would feel about not knowing about Ryo's death, and I somehow feel sorry for those who still do not know.

Initially, Asuka did not want to talk about Ryo's death because of the joint identity. However, she often questioned whether she should overcome this fear. Asuka eventually found out that the reason why she divides people into the okay line and the not okay line, depends on whether or not the person is judging her with conventional standards (Kalich and Brabant 2006). This reminded me of a story Haruki Murakami talked about when he did not get the Akutagawa prize. He was not disappointed about the decision. However, he needed to react to those who gave him condolences. He wrote about the pains of reacting to that (2015: 70). Murakami wanted to spend an ordinary day without thinking about the prize, however social standardisation made it difficult as most people thought they needed to treat him as if he regretted the decision. Murakami said that whatever he said at the time was taken as "regret". This is precisely what Asuka was struggling with. She is trying to accept Ryo's death as something that is supposed to happen at some point because every human being dies in the end. So she did not want to see people showing "regret" about Ryo's future. She could talk about her grief to one of her colleagues who never met Ryo. The reason being that the colleague had no bias toward Ryo and Asuka.

Another important division of the okay and not okay lines is shared grief. Asuka could talk about her grief to Novi and Novi's mother because those people have experienced the loss of people close to them. Therefore they have their own definition of loss other than the conventional ones.

5.1.3 Novi and Asuka's shared grief

Asuka's feeling was anomie since the first funeral did not resolve her grief. She also struggled with expressing her grief to other people with Ryo's will of "not to be pessimistic". Novi has experienced several mortuary rituals by himself, and also he dealt with the death of Fuki two years before Asuka's experience of Ryo's death. Therefore, Novi became a teacher for her. Novi also said, 'Because we experienced the deaths of Ryo and Fuki together, I could explore the meanings of life and death in more diverse ways'. The sharing of feelings towards Fuki and Ryo together made them find new meaning, like James and his wife and Sue and her widowed friends (Souza 2017).

5.1.4 Fuki's handmade funeral

Novi showed me some photographs of Fuki in a handmade album. The album had some notes about how everyone felt about Fuki from birth to death; when Fuki was in her mother's belly, when her brother met her for the first time, and the funeral they had. Novi and his ex-partner organised a funeral by themselves without asking the commercial company. The funeral venue was filled with colourful flowers; every participant brought one flower each. The reason why Novi asked the participant to bring the flower was because Fuki's image was a flower. The funeral was not following conventional ways but was full of respect for Fuki. Conducting the funeral was not "the sake of duty as people living in conventions", but rather like the father of the deceased son deciding not to follow his aunt's conventional view (Kallich and Brabant 2006). Novi told me that he had no regrets about the funeral because he could organise everything by himself.

5.1.5 Novi's father and grandfather's ashes

After the death of Fuki, Novi wanted to scatter her ashes on a mountain from which Fuki's name originated. Novi got this idea from his father, who scattered his father's ashes (Novi's grandfather's ashes) at some memorial places. When Novi's father passed away, Novi, his mother Dorothy and his siblings scattered his ashes. Novi's father started this tradition because he used to say, 'I do not want to be in ancestral graves'. Novi's father refused to continue his study at university and instead became a musician.

Novi's father had a socially resistant stance (Yasuda 1991). Therefore, he felt strange following the convention and he also wanted to go back to nature. His soul was somehow inherited by Novi, who was following the tradition. When I visited Dorothy, she took me to his altar and there was his urn. Dorothy asked Novi, 'If I want my ashes to be scattered with my husband's ashes in the future, can you do that, Novi?'. Dorothy also had a strong viewpoint that the ashes should not be in a narrow, small space (Taguchi 2010). She wishes to be together with her husband by being scattered with his husband's ashes in the air.

'It would be interesting if my son inherited the tradition of scattering my ashes when I die', Novi said. This raises the spectre of "ancestor worship" since this tradition is not forced by social conventions or village tradition. However, if this is a duty like "inheriting the ancestral grave" (Rowe 2003), the son would feel the burden of implementing the practice for his father (Taguchi 2010). Novi might not force his son to do the same since his idea about the mortuary rite is individualistic (Ogihara 2017) and expresses his "*ikigai"*(Mathews 2012). The surprising point is that the scattering

of the ashes is an uncommon practice, however, it has been inherited by two generations by the eldest sons, similar to ancestral worship.

5.2 Scattering ashes

5.2.1 Scattering Ryo's ashes under a tree

5.2.1.1 Belated appearance to the ceremony

Asuka and Novi scattered Ryo's ashes in March and June of 2022. I was invited to attend the ceremony in March. When I attended the scattering of Ryo's ashes, they told me, 'We will meet up at 7:30 am', however, they did not show up until 8:20. While waiting, I looked up at the gloomy sky and thought, 'They might still be thinking about whether today is the best day to do it or not?'. It was not a sunny day; there were no cherry blossoms yet. The end of March is the period of budding of cherry blossoms, and they were expecting that flowers would bloom by the day of the scattering. They wanted to scatter Ryo's ashes under a tree to make him closer to his favourite flowers. Novi and Asuka seemed, 'There shouldn't be any attempt to control nature. When Ryo calls us, we conduct the rite'.

They were late meeting with me for the ceremony, implying they prioritised their own ways more than social norms. They followed how they felt on the day and figured out whether it was the best day to conduct this. This is connected to the experience of the man who greets the grave of his child daily from Kalich and Brabant. The man did not prioritise his aunt's opinion in the end. He followed his accustomed way of visiting his child's grave (Kalich and Brabant 2006: 234).

Asuka scattered the ashes of Ryo with her hand without hesitating. It was finished in a second. As seen in my film, Novi and Asuka were laughing at Asuka's clumsiness and they said, 'If Ryo were doing this rite, he would do the same (because Ryo was clumsy as well)'.

5.2.1.2 The safe place/space

After scattering the ashes, she and Novi joined hands and prayed. They said, 'Finally, we could do it'. They told me that they had made another attempt a year before to scatter Ryo's ashes. At that time, they felt the public surrounded the place. Therefore, they gave up on doing the ceremony. It took them a while to find a "safe place" to conduct their ritual (Kalich and Brabant 2006).

Novi told me that the location they chose for the first attempt was on an island. However, the location was surrounded by tourists. 'Finding an appropriate place is difficult', as Novi explained. This suggests that most spaces in Japan are owned as divided spaces and present a considerable risk if local people feel disturbed or discordance from such a ceremony (Kitamura 2021, NHK 2019).

5.2.1.3 The ashes in Asuka's body and a reincarnated coot

After scattering the ashes, Novi was taping a tea can containing ashes, and Asuka was folding the ashes in a handkerchief. They had this conversation:

Novi: Some people feel that the ashes are disgusting and impure.

Asuka: Of course, because it's from human bones.

(They were folding some equipment in bags)

Asuka: Actually, I ate the Ryo's ashes.

Novi: What?

Asuka: I thought that's what kind of taste he is.

Novi: Does it taste something?

Asuka: Nothing, it tasted like stones.

Asuka tasted Ryo's ashes to ensure the actuality of his death. This shows Asuka might have been trying to transcendent the boundary between Asuka and Ryo, as Ryo used to be a part of Asuka's body. This implies the continuing bond through bringing the part of the deceased into her body (Souza 2017, Calderwood and Alberton 2023, Klass 1997).

Novi showed me a sports bag which Ryo used to use. Discolouration from Ryo's perspiration on the handle reflected an actual materiality of Ryo's body which reminded me of his actual existence in the past. It made me deeply think about the cycle of life and death. It was uncanny to imagine Ryo holding the bag containing his own ashes. I felt the bag was Ryo alive still now, like reincarnation.

After the conversation, the two found a black coot appearing on the water. And commented that the way the coots swam was like Ryo's movement. It was like they believed in reincarnation, a spiritual sign, or the interconnectedness of the circle of nature of antecedents (Suzuki 1998, Klass 2001).

5.2.2 Revisiting of the site where Fuki's ashes were scattered

5.2.2.1 The day was hot, and the day was cold

Asuka and Novi used to hike to greet Fuki on the mountain with Ryo as an annual rite. They hiked two times after the death of Fuki in 2018. Novi, Asuka and I revisited the mountain in 2022. We revisited the mountain on the same week as Fuki's death date.

When we arrived, Novi shared uncomfortable feelings about the transition of the site, since there were tourists around the site and it not as quiet as expected. And also, the site was fenced. Novi and Asuka could not touch the actual ground where they scattered Fuki's ashes. There was discordance in Novi for a while, but the atmosphere changed when Asuka found a kite.

Asuka: Ah, there is a kite.
Novi: Oh yeah, it's been flying around for a long time.

It was as if they confirmed the spiritual presence of Fuki in the kite to commence the ritual of the day. They seemed they were ready for the rite. Before the ceremony, they opened a bag and they were searching for Buddhist beads for Asuka, which they didn't find. Nevertheless, they ended up not finding the bead. That made Novi irritated because he wanted to commence the rite in his own way. After some silence they started the ceremony:

Novi: You forgot the beads, so Asuka, please start this ceremony carefully
Asuka: (Opening a package of salt and eating the salt)
Novi: You eat salt always, haha! Why do you eat this?
Asuka: It is instead of drinking sake[6], hehe

Observing the rite, I could witness Novi's irritation towards the changes of the site and also the process of eventual acceptance. First, this showed that not having a grave means there would be a risk of having no access to the site in the future. But it was solved by the imaginary existence of Fuki as a kite. Second, the forgotten Buddhist beads brought the risk of upsetting the ritualistic order. It was solved by changing the order and some humour.

Their flexibility showed two different attitudes; Novi wanted people to keep the place quiet and away from people, but it was difficult since the mountain was not owned by him. This individualistic *ikigai* cannot live in the social norm, however, recognising the kite in the sky as Fuki is a free choice (Ogihara 2017, Mathews 2012). Believing in the sense of reincarnation and spirituality of antecedents is not invading others' beliefs (Suzuki 1998, Klass 2001, Bowlby 1991).

[6] According to Asuka, a Shinto believer, she thinks salt is used for purifying and sake is used for communicating with the deceased.

5.2.2.2 Growing together

The day we hiked was sunny and recorded around 30 degrees. On the way up, we were sweating. Novi said, 'The day we scattered Fuki's ashes was very cold. And we were almost blown away by the strong wind, and the ashes were blown away in the second'. The two seemed surprised by the temperature of the day.

Asuka told me this time was better than the previous, as she could follow Novi's walking pace. Novi was amazed by Asuka's change of vitality. It made them proud of themselves, as if it were the symbol that they could survive with the grief they had. After the rite, Asuka told me about her ambition for the next year, 'I'll start walking to train my legs for the next year'. I felt that through having these rites, both Novi and Asuka are confronting grief and growing together. And also, the continuation of the rite creates a new meaning of life (Souza 2017) and is like counselling for "grief recovery" (Suzuki 1998).

5.2.3 Different opinions about scattering ashes

When I googled *Sankotsu* (scattering the ashes in Japan), one of the results was 'Whether everyone does this practice or not'. This implies that the practice's standing is "alternative", and many people are afraid of implementing it. My grand-aunt Chie decided to have a "scattering of ashes funeral" in the future. That decision surprised my grandmother, Miko, because she has a conventional view of funerals with the idea of perpetuity. Miko told me, 'I was surprised that she decided not to have a grave'. Locals in Maibara had the same ideas as they wondered, 'Is there anyone who really carries on the practice? I thought that it is illegal since nobody does it'. From this, it is possible to sense that things "nobody does" are often avoided (Ogihara 2017).

Novi inherited the tradition of scattering the ashes from his father. For Novi, it is natural to carry on. However, checked the law and found discovered the ambiguity. With the absence of laws in mind, and with statements from officials, Novi decided to implement within the acceptable extent, his religious and spiritual beliefs (Kitamura 2021). Novi followed his "*ikigai"* with an individualistic sense rather than a collective one (Ogihara 2017). 'After I experienced several deaths,' Novi explained, ' I started to realise that I should listen to my voice more since I have only one life' (Mathews 2012).

5.3 Harmony at funerals in the villages

A man named Takahashi from Kozuhara, said that cremation for fugitives was the best way to vanish every record of people. To protect the ancestors, they needed to cremate bodies. In that era, burial

funeral was standard. However, thinking about the next generation, people cremated bodies and did not make graves but mixed the ashes with the soil. Takahashi was proudly saying, ‘The action of cremation was made for the future children and also for respecting the ancestors’ for protection from enemies. There is a sense here of respecting the perpetuity of families (Plath 1964) and protecting the community (Ogihara 2017).

In a local area of Ibuki, I observed a ceremony for sending condolence (*Kuyami*) (Taguchi 2010:14). Fukunaga suggested I observe the ceremony after interviewing him. Fukunaga was invited to the ceremony, so we decided on a time to meet up. We decided that I would come without a camera. Fukunaga was wearing a traditional black suit and he was wearing a *kesa* (Buddhist scarf). He said, ‘It just takes five minutes so that you can wait here'. At least 10 people were coming. Some numbers of the family were greeting the guests. I was waiting for Fukunaga as if I was a granddaughter in front of the house of a bereaved family. Fukunaga finished the ceremony in precisely five minutes. He showed me how he found the information for the neighbour’s funeral on his phone. There was a website showing who died in the residing region (condolence column *Okuyami-ran*). Fukunaga told me that there is an announcement system in regions by speaker broadcast to request neighbours’ help preparing funerals (Kurihara 1997). According to the locals in Ibuki, all neighbours need to go to greet the family of the deceased. I was surprised to learn that if a newcomer did not join the ceremony, the newcomer would have a risk of being ignored since some regions are very strict about customs. This clearly shows the strong presence of collectivism and tries to maintain the solidarity of the community (Ogihara 2017, Kim 2015).

5.4 Altar

5.4.1 My grandmother’s altars

Every morning and evening, my grandmother serves two bowls of rice at her home. One bowl is for her husband’s traditional ancestral altar, the other is for a shelf for her family. As Plath explained, there are three conceptions of the spirits at her altars; her husband’s is categorised as "the departed”, her husband’s ancestors as “the ancestors” and her family members as “the outsider” (Plath 1964). My grandmother said, ‘Their urns are not at the altars because they are in graves in their original remote villages far from her home’.

Miko’s husband and his ancestors’ altar are in a wooden traditional, beautifully decorated box, in a particular room with lightened candles and incense. She got the ancestral altar because of the inheritance of the household (Plath 1964). This means that she followed the conventional reasons more than her individualistic reasons. To the contrary, the one for her family is on a bookshelf

without any candles or incense. She made the homemade altar because she wanted to communicate with her family members, particularly Ki-bou. She showed the altar hesitantly compared to the altar for her husband, his family and his ancestors – as if hesitating to be individualistic (Ogihara 2017). This shows that she is generally not allowed to show attachment to the household she used to belong to.

When I asked Miko if I could open the urn of my grandfather at the grave, she told me, 'I think that not so many people do that therefore you should avoid doing that'. This shows that the collectivistic keeps the status quo by respecting the harmony inherited from one ancestor to another (Plath 1964, Ogihara 2017).

5.4.2 My grand-aunt's altar and sisters

I was invited to my grand-aunt Chie's house. Listening to a conversation between Miko and Chie, I could see how Chie believed in scientific proof. 'I do not believe in any afterlife or reincarnation', she said. Miko eventually told me that Chie is planning to ask a company to scatter her ashes because she does not believe in an afterlife. For Miko, the decision surprised her since it was not conventional (Ogihara 2017). Chie told me that she is not religious; however, she believes in spirits in every single thing, which is the Shinto way. This can explain why she chose ashes disposal as becoming everything in fluidity (Prendergast, Hockney and Kellaher 2006).

She has a conventional Shinto alter for communicating with her husband, as mentioned in Plath's "the departed" and not "ancestor" (Plath 1964: 301). The reason why she has the Shinto altar is because of her husband's religion. She said, 'I do not believe in the religion and ancestors, but I wanted to respect my deceased husband's preference'. The fascinating part was that Chie was serving her husband's favourite coffee in his personal coffee cup. That's a very different expression than Miko's altars. Since Miko was serving rice and tea as her conventional ritual, Chie was serving the coffee as if her husband was still alive. This is strongly connected to the intimacy with her husband in the second death (Inoue 2012).

There is some resistance towards conventions from Chie, which can be related to, as she claims herself, being "non-religious". Chie showed scepticism when Miko talked about spiritual encounters. According to the sisters, their mother was religious, and Miko felt she was helped by religion a lot. Therefore, Miko started to believe in the collectivism of the religious community. To the contrary, Chie was sceptical about religious services and therefore started to find her own way to scatter her own ashes and became more individualistic (Ogihara 2017). Thus, even though they grew

up in the same household, the two showed different "*ikigai"* (motivations for living) (Mathews 2012). Miko's *ikigai* focusing on collectivism and Chie's on individualism.

5.4.3 Asuka and Novi's collaboration at the altar

Asuka and Novi's room has an altar. Every morning they have rituals of joining their hands at the altar. They placed Ryo's urn, which is coloured black because it was his favourite colour (See appendix 6). Next to it is a small pink flower-patterned urn, which is for Fuki (See appendix 7). The reason why they keep the ashes at the altar is probably so that they can be scattered with their own ashes in the future. Dorothy told me that her plan is to ask Novi to scatter her ashes with her husband's so that they become connected. Because of the fluidity and unchangeable entity of ashes (Prendergast, Hockney and Kellaher 2006), they can be preserved for a long time and can become a part of nature together in the future.

At the altar, I noticed that Ryo's favourite snacks - raisins and potato chips - were placed there. When I went to visit, I made sure to bring those same snacks as a way to honour Ryo's memory. Asuka would always put the snacks out, and it became a natural part of our routine for greeting the deceased. I believe that this small act of respect is important to do first when visiting the home of someone who has passed away. After paying our respects, we would enjoy the snacks and have conversations, which showed how the connection between the deceased and the bereaved continued on (as discussed by Suzuki 1998, Klass 2001, Bowlby 1991).

The communion with the deceased children supports Novi and Asuka's relationship, this relates to Souza's case of James (Souza 2017). The altar is a collaboration between Novi and Asuka. Novi placed Fuki's urn aside to respect Ryo (the altar is originally for Ryo) and he chants the Buddhist sutra for them. Asuka serves a bowl of rice and placed flowers, in respect to Fuki. Recently they bought a wooden box for Ryo's urn. Asuka and Novi are still developing the altar in their own ways. 'The altar's style may change later, it's always emerging'. There is an apparent strong presence of the continuing bond among Novi, Asuka, Ryo and Fuki (Souza 2017, Calderwood and Alberton 2023, Klass 1997).

5.4.4 The shape of the rice in a bowl

Through researching the traditional funerals in the Ibuki region, I started to understand their concern about the dismissal of their culture. A local person named Fukunaga, said, 'The funeral used to be the chance to inherit the culture of the region by teaching how to cook and make instruments for funerals, but nowadays, we do not have communal funerals. We ask commercial companies to take

care of deceased family members. We want our grandchildren to be interested in our culture. But they left for the cities'. This comment clearly shows the transition in the styles of funerals, and also Fukunaga's regret for dismissing the tradition of the region.

However, I found that some parts of the culture would still be transmitted. Ando in Ibuki told me that he serves two bowls of rice with the first scoops from a pot every morning when he wakes up. He showed me the shape of the rice as a triangle and told me that the altar is for his ancestors and Buddhist priests (see appendix 8). The reason for the first scoops is to serve the tastiest parts to the ancestors.

When I showed a video of Asuka greeting Ryo and Fuki at the altar, Asuka told me, 'I feel ashamed of showing my bowl of rice since the shape is not the proper one'. According to Asuka, my grandmother's way of greeting at the altar and her bowl of rice is more appropriate and prettier than hers in the video. From the conversation, I felt her respect for the convention. Also, Asuka and Novi's everyday routine of greeting the altar shows that without realising the tradition inherited, they are following the tradition in some way, including respecting their antecedents or ancestors (Plath 1964, Suzuki 1998).

5.5 Avoidance of death and death in circulation

When I asked about personal experiences of bereavement, local people in the Ibuki area, were hesitant to explain. One of the locals, Marumoto, said, 'When you talk about bereavement, the sadness comes to me, therefore, I do not usually talk about the loss of my husband'. Taniguchi followed, 'Weeping or remembering my husband is done by myself in front of the altar or grave'. My grandmother Miko hesitated to talk about the death of Ki-bou to me. Mainly because there was a risk of changing the relationship between the grandmother and the granddaughter. Talking about the experience of loss can easily influence people. There is a hesitation to show sadness in public so as not to contaminate the community (Kim 2015).

Novi and Asuka, on the other hand, try to change the concept of death to be a part of the circulation of life. Novi said:

Personally, I feel the conventional ways are okay from the perspective of grief care and human society. Bereaved people can confront grief. But it does not satisfy me enough. At the end of the day, human beings are just animals. Of course, we are a part of nature. We are supported by nature. But I feel like an outsider because human beings forget about circulation. I want to bring back a person's life to the circle of life at the time of our death by scattering the ashes.

Asuka said

I always imagine that I am stepping on the ground that Ryo became.

From this perspective, Novi's will for scattering ashes is connected to the concept of "*Sosen*" from Klass, and the "antecedent" from Suzuki (Klass 2001 and Suzuki 1998). Novi and Asuka try to perceive the deaths of Fuki and Ryo as a part of the cycle of nature as if relaying the extended household as a whole human being or nature. This leads people to imagine the invisibility of life and death.

Conclusion:

While researching this subject I had been following the concepts of "scattering the ashes" and "reintegrating to the deceased" for years to know how people find their own ways to deal with their grief, especially when there are no appropriate cultural or social settings. There were various examples I was able to witness. Novi followed the personal tradition inherited from his father to scatter Fuki's ashes, Miko has an altar for her separated family's ancestors to greet, Chie serves coffee in her husband's cup, and Asuka eats the ashes of Ryo. They all appeared as a cross connection of the four quadrants (Koda 2012), and also not fully following the conventions but reusing the conventions showed the "hypo subjective" (Boyer and Morton 2021) approaches.

There are some alternatives to organising conventional funerals. Scattering of ashes is one of the alternatives to floating in anomie as there is no precise regulation. Thus, people sometimes have disputes and problems over their activity because of the different perceptions of the ashes. Some towns created laws in order to prevent confusion as a result of the collective objective perspective (Society "Those") (Koda 2012). Not everyone agrees with alternatives, but the methods do not rely on existing institutions or commercial companies. Asuka and Novi adapted some conventional ways and combined them with their own alternative ways for personalising the rite from an individual objective perspective (Behaviour "That") (Koda 2012), such as serving sake and eating salt to the deceased and joint hands after scattering ashes by hands. The scattering of the ashes seems inspired by some existing conventions reflecting the culture collective subjective perspective (Culture "We") (Koda 2012). Such as *okitsusutae* (Yanagita 1929) to let go of the deceased without attachment, people in Kozuhara used to mix the ashes with soil right after the cremation to mingle the materiality of the people and *syukotsu* to interact with the bones as a final greeting to the deceased (Shimane and Tamagawa 2011). They create and recreate their own way of living with a continuing bond with their deceased children as antecedents in the cycle of nature, in fluidity and unchangeability as a psychological solution to individual subjective perspective (Psychology "I") (Koda 2012). Through trial and error, people learn to create and recreate to change the shape of the activity. Through writing this ethnography, I felt the non-static nature of mortuary rites in Japan. As my supervisor suggested, this is an "emerging ethnography". It is constantly emerging.

Hyposubjects are squatters and bricoleuses. They inhabit the cracks and hollows. They turn things inside out and work with scraps and remains. They unplug from carbon gridlife and hack and redistribute its stored energies for their own purposes. (Boyer and Morton 2021: 15).

In this study, I explored how individuals in Japan cope with grief through alternative mortuary rites and personal traditions, particularly when conventional funerals and social settings are not available or adequate. Through ethnographic fieldwork and analysis, I identified various examples of scattering ashes, creating altars, and personalising rites that reflect individual, cultural, and historical perspectives. I found that these alternative methods allow individuals to create and recreate their own ways of living with a continuing bond with their deceased loved ones, offering a psychological solution to grief and loss. However, I also noted that these alternative methods are not always accepted by society, leading to disputes and problems. Overall, this study suggests that mortuary rites are not static but constantly evolving, reflecting changes in society, culture, and individual needs.

Through the fieldwork, my way of seeing strongly connected to the circulation of death and life. That influenced me to look at ants carrying the dead ants as a kind of funeral. Withered leaves created soils as a process of grief, and my foods consisting of once live cells create my body as a continuation of life. Even plastic used to be fossil fuels made of the remains of living material of the past. The boundary between human-made and nature became blurred as well because it is always in circulation. Probably this sense of being aware of the existence of death next to our lives is the healing process of grief, as is joining hands at the altar and touching the actual bodies, as ashes in our hands.

No one can avoid grief at some point in their lives, not only concerning the loss of people, it can also be an ambiguous loss (Boss 1999). People in front of grief often lose social regulation and are left in anomie. Create, and recreate the mortuary rites to “squat” in ephemerality. I hope this research will be helpful for those who feel grief to find their own way - even off-grid. Boyer and Morton (2021)’s words follow:

Tap it. Make your own infrastructure. Tap it. Build your own pathetic little device that everybody can laugh at because it is not going to change the world. But now you’re off the grid. That’s another injunction: become your own infrastructure(44).

Bibliography

BBC. "World Cup 2022: Japan's Fans Clean up Stadium after Win over Germany." BBC, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/63735823.

Becker, Carl. "Aging, Dying, and Bereavement in Contemporary Japan." *International Journal of Group Tensions volume,* 28 (1999): 59-83.

Boss, Pauline. *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*. Harvard University Press, 1999. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjhzrh4.

Bowlby, Ursula. *Reactions to the Death of my Husband, Bereavement Care,* (1991): 10:1, 5.

Boyer, Dominic, and Timothy Morton. *Hyposubjects: On Becoming Human.* Ccc2 Irreversibility. United States: Open humanities press, 2021.

Calderwood, Kimberly A., and Amy M. Alberton. "Understanding the Bereavement Process: Voices of Bereaved Parents." *Illness, Crisis & Loss* 31, no. 1 (2023): 23-39. https://doi.org/10.1177/10541373211030491. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/10541373211030491.

Confederation College. "Intercultural Business Communication." 2021, https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communications/chapter/high-low-contexts/.

Fujiwara, Satoko. "Problems of Teaching About Religion in Japan: Another Textbook Controversy against Peace?." *British Journal of Religious Education* 29, 1 (2007): 45-61.

Hishita, Kensuke, "Q. なぜ、法事は3回忌、7、13、17、23、27・・・と3と7のつく年に勤めることが多いのですか? (Why Is It That Legal Services Are Often Served on the 3rd Anniversary of the Death of a Person, 7, 13, 17, 23, 27... And in the Years with 3 and 7?). " higan.net, 2007, https://higan.net/now/2007/08/q-27/.

Inoue, Haruyo. "Contemporary Transformation of Japanese Death Ceremonies." In *Death and Dying in Contemporary Japan*, edited by Hikaru Suzuki: Routledge, 2012.

Itami, Juzo. "お葬式 (The Funeral) ". Japan, 1984.

Kalich, DeAnn, and Sarah Brabant. "A Continued Look at Doka's Grieving Rules: Deviance and Anomie as Clinical Tools." *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 53, no. 3 (2006): 227-41. https://doi.org/10.2190/FVTR-T8EV-3TQ6-QAJC.

Kami, Masahiro. "日本人がコロナに延々翻弄され続ける残念な理由 今回の感染症法改正はまるで芯を食っていない (The Unfortunate Reason Why the Japanese Continue to Be at the Mercy of Coronas for So Long. This Revision of the Infectious Diseases Act Is Not Eating Away at the Core). " Toyo Keizai 2022.

Kim, Hyunchul. "Making Relations, Managing Grief: The Expression and Control of Emotions in Japanese Death Rituals." *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (2015): 17-35.

Kim, Satbyul. "SHIZENSO, Invisibilized Death Rituals." *Religion and Society* 23 (2017): 111-18. The Japanese Association for the Study of Religion and Society.

Kim, Satbyul, and Maiko, Jinushi. 葬いとカメラ*Tomurai to Kamera.* Vol. 2, Tokyo, Japan: Sayu-sha, 2021.

Kitamura, Etsushi. 墓地埋葬をめぐる現状と課題の調査研究(*Research on the Current Situation and Issues Surrounding Cemetery Burials). 2020.* Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Klass, Dennis. "Continuing Bonds in Resolution of Grief in Japan and North America." *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, 5 (2001): 742-63.

Klass, Dennis. "THE DECEASED CHILD IN THE PSYCHIC AND SOCIAL WORLDS OF BEREAVED PARENTS DURING THE RESOLUTION OF GRIEF", *Death Studies* (1997), 21:2, 147-176, DOI: 10.1080/074811897202056

Koda, Retsu. "Afforested Burial as a Practice of the Impersonal Approach:(Practices of Transcendental Joy of Giving in "Morininaru" (Afforested Burial)", Mini-Symposium, the 33rd Symposium on Life Information Science)." *Journal of International Society of Life Information Science* 30 (2012): 118-22.

Kurihara, Toshie. "Urbanization and Changing Funerals in Japan." *the XXIVeme Conference Societe Internationale de Sociologie des Religiouns* (1997): 129-40.

Madden, Raymond. *Being Ethnographic.* Vol.1 Oliver's Yar 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2010.

Maibara-city. " 人口の推移(国勢調査の結果から) (Population (Based on Census Results))." Maibara-city, 2021, https://www.city.maibara.lg.jp/soshiki/seisaku/kohotoukei/profile/tokei/985.html.

Mathews, Gordon. "Death and 'the Pursuit of a Life' Worth Living in Japan." In *Death and Dying in Contemporary Japan*: Routledge, 2012.

Merriam-Webster, "squatter." 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/squatter.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. "平成12年 人口動態統計の年間推計 (2000 Annual Estimates of Vital Statistics)." 2000, https://www.mhlw.go.jp/www1/toukei/12nensui_8/index.html.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. "令和2年版 厚生労働白書 (Annual Report on Health, Labour and Welfare 2020)." (2020): https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/000735866.pdf.

Murakami, Haruki. *Novelist as a Job* 職業としての小説家. Japan: Shinchosha, 2015.

Nae, Niculina. "Quo Vadis? Japanese Youth and the Burden of Living." *Euromentor* VIII, 7 (2018): 15-25.

NHK, a team of reporters. *Samayou Ikotsu* さまよう遺骨 (Wondering Ashes of Deceased). Japan: NHK 2019.

Ogihara, Yuji. "Temporal Changes in Individualism and Their Ramification in Japan: Rising Individualism and Conflicts with Persisting Collectivism." *frontiers in psychology* 8 (2017): 1-12.

Plath, David W. "Where the Family of God Is the Family: The Role of the Dead in Japanese Households." *American Anthropologist* 66, 2 (1964): 300-17.

Prendergast, David, Jenny Hockey, and Leonie Kellaher. "Blowing in the Wind? Identity, Materiality, and the Destinations of Human Ashes." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, no. 4 (2006): 881–98. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4092570.

Research Institute for Local Government, "散骨を規制する条例 (Ordinances regulating scattering of ashes)". (2023), http://www.rilg.or.jp/htdocs/img/reiki/127_sankotsu.htm.

Rhee, E., J. S.Uleman, H. K. Lee, and R. J. Roman, "Spontaneous Self-Descriptions and Ethnic Identities in Individualistic and Collectivistic Cultures." *Japanese of Personality and Social Psychology* 69, 1 (1995): 142-52.

Rowe, Mark. "Grave Changes Scattering Ashes in Contemporary Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 30/1-2, 85-118, no. Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture (2003).

Shimane, Katsumi, and Takako Tamagawa. "Development of Funeral Service and Funeral Industry after the World War 2." *Bulletin of Senshu University School of Human Sciences* 1, 2 (2011): 93-105.

Shinkai, Makoto. "すずめの戸締まり (Suzume No Tojimari)." Japan: CoMix Wave, Story, 2022.

Souza, Margaret. "Bereavement: An Anthropological Approach." *Death studies* 41 (2017): 61-67.

Suzuki, Hikaru. "Japanese Death Rituals in Transit: From Household Ancestors to Beloved Antecedents." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (1998): 171-88.

Suzuki, Hikaru. *Death and Dying in Contemporary Japan.* 1st edition ed. London: Routledge, 2012.

Taguchi, Hiroaki ."日本における他界観の持続と変容-自然葬を通して見える基層社会の危機- (Persistence and Transformation of the View of the Death in Japan: The Crisis of the Primitive Society as Seen through Scattering Ashes) (Final Lecture, 2009).". (2010).

Tanaka, Kimiko. "Limitations for Measuring Religion in a Different Cultural Context—the Case of Japan." *The Social Science Journal* 47, no. 4 (2010): 845-52. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2010.07.010.

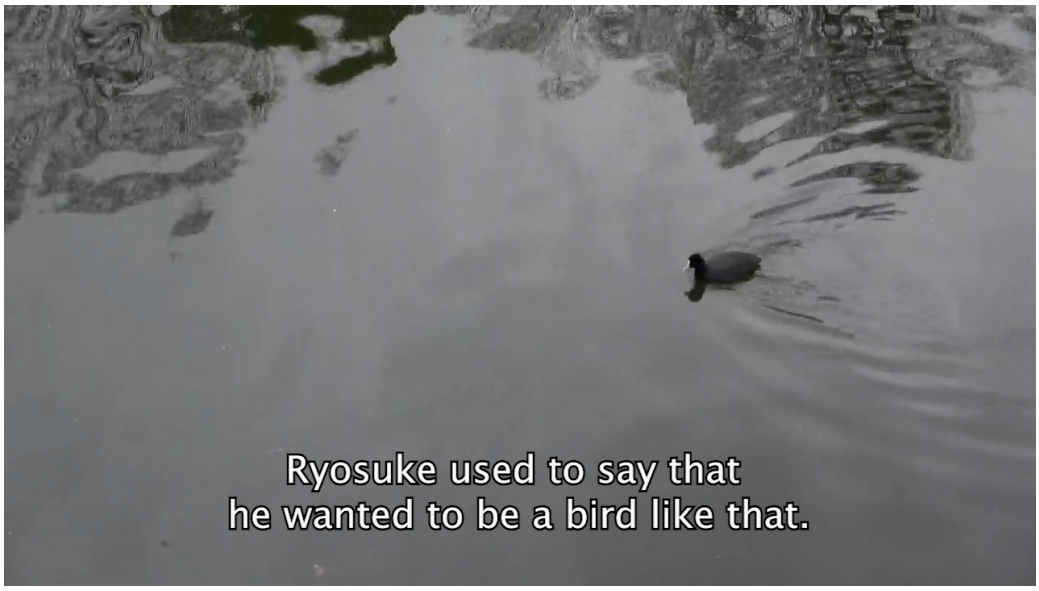
Tsutsumi, Yukihiko. "悼む人(The mourner)". Japan:Kino films, 2015.

Yanagita, Kunio. "*So-Sei No Enkaku Ni Tsuite* 葬制の沿革について (History of the Funeral System)." *Anthropology Journal* 44, 6 (1929): 295-318.

Yasuda, Mutsuhiko. *Haka Nanka iranai* 墓なんかいらないー愛すればこそ自然葬. Vol. 1: Yuhi-sha, 1991.

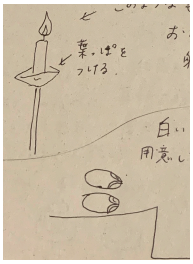
Yokoyama, Erica. "Long Burdened by Costly Funerals, Japan Embraces Simple Goodbyes." the Japan times, 2022, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/09/26/national/social-issues/funeral-costs/.

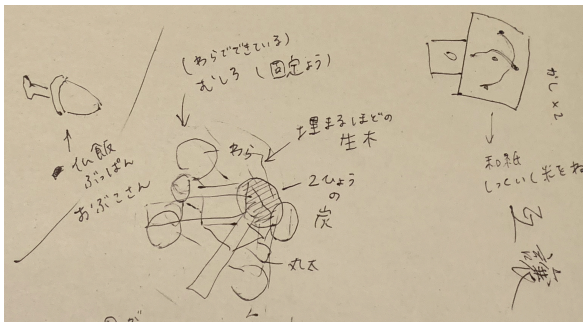
Appendix 1

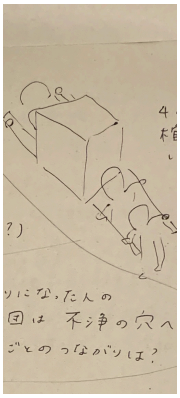


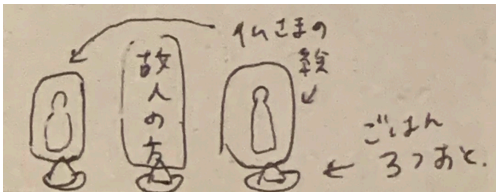
Appendix 2

Appendix3

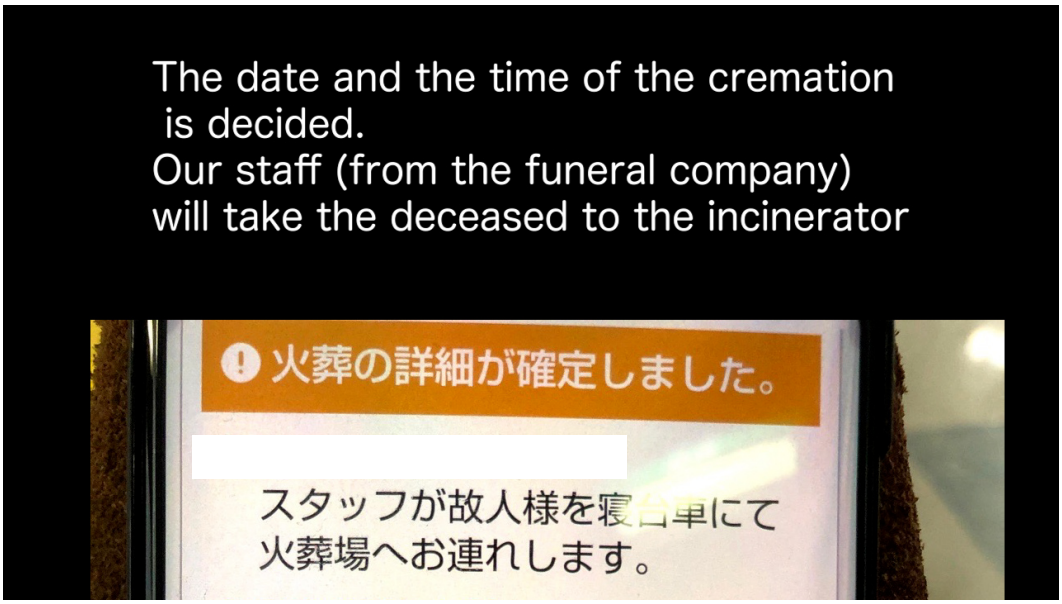

葉っぱを
つける
白い
用意し


(わらでできている)
むしろ (固定ょう)
埋まるほどの
生木
わら
2ひょう
の
炭
丸太
仏飯
ぶっぱん
おぶっさん
和紙
しっくいし紙を
夕餐


ツになったんの
団は 不浄の穴へ
ごとのつながりは?


仏さまの
設
故人の友
ごはん
ろうそく

Appendix 4



Appendix 5

Appendix 6

Appendix 7

Appendix 8