

一橋大学審査学位論文

Doctoral Dissertation

**NEEDLING BETWEEN SOCIAL SKIN AND
LIVED EXPERIENCE:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF TATTOOING
IN DOWNTOWN TOKYO**

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社会的皮膚と生きられた経験の間に針を刺す
— 東京の下町における彫り物の民族誌的研究 —

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一橋大学審査学位論文

博士論文

一橋大学大学院社会学研究科博士後期課程

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their support during the course of this research project:

My supervisor, Professor Akira Okazaki, at Hitotsubashi University, Graduate School of Social Sciences for his guidance, patience and support throughout my graduate studies. Also, Professor Takashi Osugi for support and supervision when I first came to Japan and subsequent insights along the way.

In the field:

I would like to thank Asakusa Horiyasu, for opening the door to Japanese tattooing, and giving me my first insights into *horimono*.

The late Horikazu the First of Asakusa: for taking the time to share his lifetime of knowledge of *horimono* and opening his studio and home to me. Without the kindness and patience of Sensei and his wife, this thesis would not have been possible. For me, the world of *horimono* is a little less colourful without his presence.

I appreciate the time and patience extended to me by all the participants and locals at the Sanja Matsuri and Torigoe Matsuri who shared their festivities and knowledge. And, to all the tattooed and non-tattooed people who shared their thoughts, opinions and experiences of *horimono* and tattooing.

I would also like to acknowledge that much of my graduate research and study (2006-2011, 2012-2013) was funded by the Japanese Government, *Monbukagakusho* Scholarship.

NOTES

NOTES ON LANGUAGE

In this thesis, transliteration of Japanese words into Roman letters follows the modern Hepburn method, with the extended vowel expressed by a macron above the letter, e.g. Ō. Place names with Anglicised versions are an exception; for example Tokyo, rather than Tōkyō. Japanese words used in the text, such as *horimono* and *matsuri*, are italicised and accompanied by an explanation and Japanese characters at first usage where relevant. Japanese words commonly incorporated into the English lexicon, such as *yakuza*, are not italicised. Event names and places follow Japanese usage. For example: Sanja Matsuri rather than Sanja Festival, Sensō Ji rather than Sensoji Temple.

NOTES ON NAMES

Japanese names conform to the Japanese standard with family name written first, followed by given name. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of participants, aside from in the case of tattooists and officials identified by title.

NOTES ON TEXTUALITY

Ethnographic descriptions, examples, episodes and narratives devoid of analysis are indented and single-spaced.

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

It is not without reason that, throughout this thesis, I refer to Japanese tattoos by the term *horimono*. Early on in my research, I used the term *irezumi*, a combination of *ire* [入れ], the continuative form of the verb ‘to enter,’ ‘to go into,’ ‘to break into,’ and *sumi* [墨], ‘ink,’ ‘India ink’ or ‘Chinese ink.’ When talking about tattooing and while engaging with tattooed people *irezumi* is arguably the most commonly used word, as are variations of the written form.¹ Precisely because of the varied backgrounds and nuances of the written characters, participants in this project advised me that *horimono* [彫り物] is a neutral, more appropriate and respectful, term to use.

¹ 刺青、文身、イレズミ、いれずみ Refer to Van Gulik (1982) for detailed analysis of terms used for tattooing in Japan through history.

Horimono is a composition of *hori* [彫り], the continuative form of the verb *horu* [彫る] meaning ‘to engrave’ or ‘carve,’ and *mono* [物], meaning ‘object’ or ‘thing,’ nominalizing the prior verb. *Horimono* is not only used to refer to tattooing, it also denotes carving or engraving. For example, woodcarving is known as *horimono*. Similarly, *horimonoshi* [彫物師], formed by *horimono* with the added suffix, *shi* [師], for ‘master,’ ‘specialist’ or ‘teacher,’ can refer to tattooists and tattoo artists. A more literal translation would be, ‘tattoo masters’ and is similarly used for master wood-carvers, master engravers, and master sculptors. *Horimonoshi* may further be shortened to ‘*horishi*’ [彫師], which is the form I use in this thesis. It is worth noting here the mastery of tattooists is suggested in the use of the suffix *shi* [師], and further demonstrated by using the honorific term, *sensei* [先生], which translates as ‘teacher’ or ‘master.’ When addressing or referring to their tattooists, clients use *sensei* thereby showing both their respect and recognition of the tattooist’s position.

A final note on the terminology is the use of *hori* in the tattooists’ work name. Since the mid to late nineteenth century, work names have been prefaced with *hori* [彫], such as Horikazu: *hori* [彫] + *Kazu* [和].

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LIST OF WORDS

| | | |
|------------------------------|----------|--|
| <i>aku</i> | 悪 | bad / evil |
| <i>bonji</i> | 梵字 | Sanskrit characters |
| <i>botan</i> | 牡丹 | peony |
| <i>Binzasara-mai</i> | びんざさら舞 | Binzasara Dance |
| <i>Daigyōretsu</i> | 大行列 | great parade |
| <i>Daimyō-hikeshi</i> | 大名火消 | Daimyō Lord's fire men, fire-fighters |
| <i>deshi</i> | 弟子 | apprentice |
| <i>Edokko</i> | 江戸っ子 | child of Edo |
| <i>fundoshi</i> | ふんどし | loin cloth |
| <i>hanamimisogi</i> | 鼻耳削ぎ | removal of nose and ears |
| <i>hanten</i> | 半纏 | festival coat |
| <i>hare</i> | 晴れ | purity |
| <i>hari</i> | 針 | needle |
| <i>hikeshi</i> | 火消 | fireman, fire-fighter |
| <i>honsha-mikoshi</i> | 本社神輿 | <i>mikoshi</i> belonging to main shrine |
| <i>horimono</i> | 彫り物 | tattoo / Japanese tattoo |
| <i>horimonoshi / horishi</i> | 彫物師・彫師 | tattooist |
| <i>horu</i> | 彫る | to carve; to engrave |
| <i>inu</i> | 犬 | dog |
| <i>ipponjime</i> | 一本締め | ceremonial clapping pattern: 3-3-1 |
| <i>irebokuro</i> | 入れぼくろ | inserted mole / tattooed mole |
| <i>ireru</i> | 入れる | to insert |
| <i>irezumi</i> | イレズミ、入れ墨 | tattoo |
| <i>jigoku-e</i> | 地獄絵 | 'picture of hell'; genre of woodblock print |
| <i>jimushitsu</i> | 事務室 | office |
| <i>jōbikeshi</i> | 定火消 | regular firemen |
| <i>Kami</i> | 神 | 'Gods' or 'spirits'; are awe-inspiring and possess qualities out of the ordinary |
| <i>Kannon bosatsu</i> | 観音菩薩 | Bodhisattva Kannon |

| | | |
|-----------------------|------|--|
| | | Goddess of mercy |
| <i>Katsugi-te</i> | 担ぎ手 | carrier |
| <i>kashira</i> | 頭 | head; lead |
| <i>keidai</i> | 境内 | precinct, grounds of temple / shrine |
| <i>kegare</i> | 汚れ | pollution; impurity |
| <i>kishobori</i> | | pledge tattoo |
| <i>machibikeshi</i> | 町火消 | town firemen |
| <i>machi-mikoshi</i> | 町神輿 | portable shrine of neighbourhood |
| <i>mikoshi</i> | 神輿 | portable shrine |
| <i>miyadashi</i> | 宮出し | bringing out of spirits in portable shrine |
| <i>miyairi</i> | 宮入り | return of spirits to main shrine |
| <i>momiji</i> | 紅葉 | maple |
| <i>momohiki</i> | 股引 | fitted pants often work with <i>hanten</i> |
| <i>mon</i> | 紋 | crest |
| <i>namakubi</i> | 生首 | ‘severed head’ |
| <i>nomi</i> | 鑿 | chisel |
| <i>onsen</i> | 温泉 | hot spring |
| <i>sanbonjime</i> | 三本締め | ceremonial clapping pattern: three sets of 3-3-1 |
| <i>Sarutahiko</i> | 猿田彦 | Shinto <i>kami</i> , ancestor of teaching |
| <i>senkan-mikoshi</i> | 千貫神輿 | 4 tonne portable shrine (from Japanese weight: 1000kan = approx. 3753kg) |
| <i>sentō</i> | 銭湯 | bath house |
| <i>shitamachi</i> | 下町 | downtown or low-town |
| <i>shōenzumi</i> | 松煙墨 | from burning pine resin; gives a blue tinge |
| <i>soto</i> | 外 | outside |
| <i>Suikoden</i> | 水滸伝 | novel: The Water Margin |
| <i>sumi</i> | 墨 | ink |
| <i>tatū</i> | タトゥー | tattoo |
| <i>Tekomai</i> | 手古舞 | Geisha dance |
| <i>Tengu</i> | 天狗 | long-nosed Japanese goblin |

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|---|
| <i>uchi</i> | 内 | inside |
| <i>Ujiko</i> | 氏子 | parishioner, tutelary |
| <i>ukiyo-e</i> | 浮世絵 | ‘pictures of the floating world’ genre of woodblock prints |
| <i>wabori</i> | 和彫り | Japanese style tattooing |
| <i>wafū</i> | 和風 | Japanese style |
| <i>yōbori</i> | 洋彫り | Western style tattooing |
| <i>yuenzumi</i> | 油煙墨 | from burning rapeseed oil, paulownia oil or sesame oil, gives a deep black |

INTRODUCTION

“Most of my clients are old.”

“About how old?”

“50s or 60s...or there about...”

“You mean, *now* they are 50 or 60 years old?”

“No. When they start coming to me, when they start being tattooed. Once they’ve gotten older they make the decision to come and get the *horimono* they’ve always wanted.”

“Why?” I ask intrigued.

“They want to get it before they die.”

“Before they die?”

“Yes, they want to become beautiful before they die,” says Horikazu as we chat in his studio waiting for his client, a former banker, to arrive.

Three and a half hours later, I am leaving Horikazu’s² studio conflicted. What I heard and witnessed on this afternoon of March 28th 2008 raised serious questions about the fundamentals of tattooing: who, why, and when? One conversation makes little dent in the argument, but this anecdote was one in a steadily accumulating body of field-notes contradicting widespread assertions about tattooing in Japan. Instead of confirming the portrait painted of contemporary *horimono*, [彫り物] the large-scale decorative tattoos often referred to in English as ‘traditional Japanese tattoos,’ as the domain of a secretive underworld, what I was experiencing was meshing with other aspects of the historicised Japanese tattoo. Emerging before my eyes was something vibrant, visible, and as much a part the fabric of Japanese society as ink is to skin within *horimono* – intricately embedded.

Some form or other of body decoration and alteration, whether it be non-permanent as in body paint, piercing and adornment with masks, clothing or makeup, or permanent as in tattooing, cicatrisation³ and body shaping such as neck elongation and skull moulding, is observed in virtually every culture around the world at some point in time. The meaning of, or reasons for, such practices depend on the specific social and cultural contexts in which they occur. This view is informed by a broad understanding of the body, and thus how it is treated, being both culturally and socially constructed (Foucault 1973, 1979). This research project is concerned with one such treatment of the body – that of tattooing – in one specific social and cultural context – the *shitamachi* [下町], or downtown area, in Tokyo.⁴ Specifically this thesis explores the world of *horimono* through fieldwork carried out in the Asakusa area of

² Known by his workname, *Shodai Asakusa Horikazu* [初代浅草彫和] Horikazu the First of Asakusa.

³ Cicatrisation, also known as scarification, involves the cutting of the skin followed by provocation of the wound to form raised keloid scar tissue.

⁴ Translation and usage of the term *shitamachi* is not without problem as discussed by Waley (2002).

Tokyo between 2006 and 2013. Coming from the understanding that tattooing was once an integral part of the everyday *shitamachi* cityscape, I attempt to tease out *horimono* from the depths of history, navigating the intricately embedded relations that tie *horimono* to both networks of people and today's *shitamachi* Tokyo. Tattoo has been an issue, not only as a social phenomenon, but also attracting attention in the field of art. In my case, I also address the relationships between tattooed persons, tattooists known as *horishi* [彫り師] and *horimono* itself, and suggest some issues concerning the ontological status of *horimono* and the question of lived experience.

This introduction is intended to situate my ethnographic study. I begin by introducing the background setting of *shitamachi* Tokyo where my research takes place. Next, I discuss previous research: first, on tattooing in general, and second, on Japanese tattooing. Then I discuss the fieldwork carried out along with the arguments I raise, before finally outlining the structure of this thesis.

BACKGROUND

Shitamachi Tokyo

Horimono is both historically and contemporaneously related to Tokyo's *shitamachi*; an area that today encompasses Adachi, Arakawa, parts of Chiyoda, Chūō, Edogawa, Kōtō, Sumida, and Taitō wards. Roots of contemporary tattooing practices can be traced to this area where *horishi* [彫師], tattooists, emerged to meet the demands coming from the entertainment and prostitute quarters of the Shin-Yoshiwara⁵ as early decorative tattoos, in the form of love pledges and amulets, were etched on the bodies of courtesans and their patrons. Demand grew with the development of small pictorial tattoos and *horishi* resided and plied their trade in the narrow confines surrounding the licensed quarters and the surrounding *shitamachi* domain of the townsfolk of Edo. Traditionally, the domain of the lower classes,⁶ artisans, construction workers, craftsmen and the like, people today continue to maintain small

⁵ Shin-Yoshiwara *Yūkaku* [新吉原遊郭] 'New' Yoshiwara pleasure quarters, a licensed prostitution area in Edo era Tokyo, coinciding with present day Taitō Ward, Senzoku 4-chō-me [台東区千束4丁目]. Originally situated in Nihonbashi, Chūō Ward, the *Bakufu* government resituated the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters following the Great Meireki Fire [明暦の大火] in 1657. The present day Taitō Ward site was selected as the new because at the time it was on the periphery of the city, north of Asakusa.

⁶ Based on Confucian class structure, Edo society was highly regulated and stratified: beneath the emperor, shogun and ruling *daimyō* feudal lords were four classes in ascending order of importance from 1) samurai, 2) farmers, 3) artisans, and 4) merchants. Artists and merchants were collectively known as *chōnin*, townspeople (Shively 1964-5: 123).

workshops and an older style of business that remains heavily reliant on interpersonal relations; amongst these people are *horishi*.

In today's geographical division of the *shitamachi*, there remains a notable concentration of *horishi* compared to other areas of the metropolis of modern Tokyo. Studios of tattooists practicing the traditional style of Japanese tattooing are listed below in Figure 1⁷ and mapped out in Figure 2 over the page. As can be seen, there is a concentration of traditional *horishi* to the central left section of the map, coinciding with the territorial *shitamachi*. Another notable concentration of *horishi* is to the west in Nakano, Suginami, Mitaka area that is not as clear on the map.

TRADITIONAL HORISHI IN TOKYO, 2008-2009

| Name | Ward | Name | Ward |
|---------------------|--------|------------|-------|
| 浅草入墨道場 ⁸ | 台東区 * | 刺青芸術工房龍元洞 | 港区 |
| 浅草初代彫和 | 台東区 * | 板橋初代彫ひろ | 板橋区 |
| 浅草彫和若 | 台東区 * | 彫薔薇 | 板橋区 |
| 浅草彫やす | 台東区 * | 初代彫俊分家 | 世田谷 |
| 初代彫和歌 | 台東区 * | 刺龍堂 | 世田谷区 |
| 初代浅草彫長 ⁹ | 台東区 * | 彫とく | 新宿区 |
| 四代目彫一 | 荒川区 * | 新宿初代彫りあい | 新宿区 |
| 浅草彫和彦 | 荒川区 * | 和芳友 | 渋谷区 |
| 四代目彫一門彫すう | 荒川区 * | 彫ひと一門彫こく | 渋谷区 |
| 刺青工房彫きょん | 荒川区 * | 彫猿 | 北区 |
| 二代目梵天一門日暮里梵天 | 荒川区 * | 初代彫姜 | 北区 |
| 彫和歌一門彫匠 | 足立区 * | 彫久 | 練馬区 |
| 初代彫一分家彫哲 | 江戸川区 * | 二代目梵天一門 彫晃 | 品川区 |
| 二代目江戸光 | 江戸川区 * | 賽天刺青彫房 | 文京区 |
| 初代彫俊東京本部 | 豊島区 | 彫徳一門 彫百 | 葛飾区 |
| 池袋初彫藤 | 豊島区 | 三鷹彫なお | 三鷹市 |
| 骸骨屋 | 豊島区 | 初代彫風華一門 | 三鷹市 |
| 彫はる | 豊島区 | 彫徳一門 彫純 | 武蔵野市 |
| 二代目梵天一門大和梵天 | 杉並区 | 彫徳一門 彫祐 | あきる野市 |
| 彫徳一門 彫智 | 杉並区 | 彫徳一門 彫剛 | 府中市 |
| 関東彫中野初代彫佳 | 中野区 | 町田梵天 | 町田市 |
| 針真堂 | 中野区 | 初代彫桃一門 | 福生市 |
| 彫玉二代目梵天一門 | 中野区 | 四代目彫政一門彫智 | 立川市 |
| 彫徳一門 彫龍 | 中野区 | 彫獣 | 八王子市 |
| 彫徳一門 彫のり | 中野区 | 八王子二代目彫巳乃 | 八王子市 |

Figure 1: Traditional *Horishi* in Tokyo 2008-2009
*denotes *shitamachi*. Source: Produced by author.

⁷ Although I attempted to be thorough in this survey, there is some difficulty in finding where *horishi* are practicing. Also, the definition of 'traditional' *horishi* is not so clear as will be shown in Chapter Two. Some of these *horishi* in the list tattoo use machine only, others also do western-style [洋彫り], characteristics that to another tattooist may suggest they are 'tattooists' rather than '*horishi*.'

⁸ The *horishi* here, known as Murasumi [村角], only works in Tokyo every couple of months.

⁹ Said to have retired.

In Taitō ward [台東区], home to 188 thousand residents¹⁰ packed into 10.08 cubic kilometres, in the district of Asakusa [浅草] where I carried out fieldwork for this research project, there were seven *horishi* residing in the area. Of these seven, five were actively working within less than 5 kilometre radius of each other.¹¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is also a high *yakuza*¹² presence in this area. *Yakuza* are best recognised as being heavily tattooed and there is a large degree of conflation between the two with *horimono* often equated with *yakuza* and criminality. This tendency is found in public commentary, legal and academic reference. Interestingly, however, only a small number of clients, these days, identify directly as *yakuza*, and *horishi*, or at least participants in this project, estimate the vast majority, or between 80 to 90 per cent of their clients, are ‘honest’ citizens. Although the periphery of the occupations of these clients – in the construction, workmen or entertainment industries – to *yakuza* businesses must also be noted. What is virtually unanimous, however, is the both the *horishi* and clients sense of tradition in *horimono* and being tattooed in this manner, with these designs. This tradition comes hand-in-hand with the geographical and conceptual *shitamachi*.

So, to what exactly does *shitamachi* refer? The Tokyo *shitamachi* is as much a territorial space as it is a conceptual construct. Since the term emerged, both what and where the boundaries of *shitamachi* are have changed significantly together with the development and spread of the sprawling metropolis that is present day Tokyo. According to Waley (2002), the term ‘*shitamachi*’ emerged under Tokugawa rule (1600-1868) not long after Tokugawa Ieyasu’s unification of Japan. At this time political and military power shifted to the city of Edo (founded in 1590) present day Tokyo, and *shitamachi* was used to designate the centre of the city, particularly, the area at the centre of the city where the townspeople, artisans, craftsmen and the like, resided in close confines. This ‘low area’ was in contrast to the ‘hilly’ *yamanote* [山の手] area to the west of Tokyo Castle where samurai resided. These understandings of territory remained relatively intact for the following 200 years until the fall of the shogunate. This historical *shitamachi* area is indicated in Figure 3.

¹⁰ 「住民基本台帳による町丁名別世帯人口数」2013年3月『台東区市役所』。

¹¹ Horicho the First of Asakusa, Horikazu the First of Asakusa, Horikazuwaka, Asakusa Horiwaka, Asakusa Horiyasu.

¹² Sometimes called ‘Japanese mafia’ in English, I use the term *yakuza* to refer to members of Japan’s Organised Crime Groups, or *Bōryokudan* [暴力団] literally, ‘violent groups,’ or *Shitei Bōryokudan* [指定暴力団] for those designated as such under the law. To be specific, I use ‘*yakuza* groups’ when the people are the focus, and *bōryokudan* where the organisation itself is emphasised.

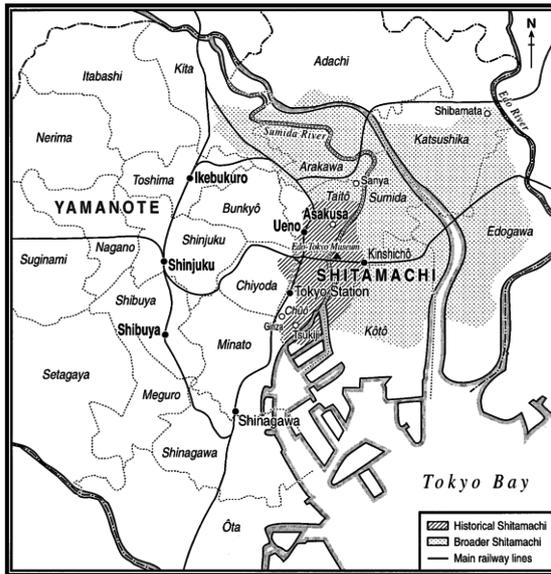


Figure 3: Historical *shitamachi* and changing *shitamachi* of the 1950s to 1970s.
Source: Whaley 2002: 1539.

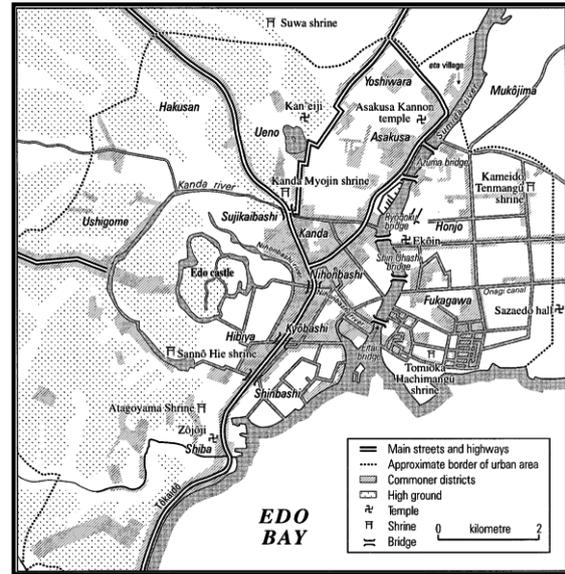


Figure 4: Map of Tokyo/Edo, early to mid 19th century. Source: Whaley 2002: 1535.

During this extended period, under Tokugawa, when *shitamachi* referred to the ‘centre of Edo’, that there was a large degree of conflation between ‘*shitamachi*’ and ‘Edo’ in reference not only to the city itself, but also as a metaphor for the townspeople who inhabited the area (Waley 2002: 1535). In other words, *shitamachi* as place was closely associated with the people, known as *Edokko* [江戸っ子], children of Edo, and their distinctive characteristics of rebelliousness and bravado, and sense of style and swagger, known as *iki* [粋].

The first shift in conceptualisations of *shitamachi* closely followed the establishment of Tokyo as modern capital following the fall of the shogunate and return to Imperial rule in 1868. As Tokyo developed and modernised under the reigns of emperors Meiji (1868-1912) and Taishō (1912-1926), *yamanote* came to be associated with modernising Tokyo, while *shitamachi* retained an association with the earlier feudal Edo era society and city of ‘Edo.’ The period of rapid modernisation ushered in during the Meiji period and development of the business districts around the geographical centre of the city, saw *shitamachi* slowly pushed outwards to the northeast as illustrated in Figure 4, to an area already associated with entertainment districts and distinct areas of poverty.¹³ Subsequently, as *shitamachi* edged closer to the margins of the city, as did its inhabitants become more polarised from the residents of the *yamanote* area.

¹³ To the north were both the Yoshiwara licensed prostitution area, execution grounds and enclaves of

The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, and more recently the firebombing of World War II (1939-1945) further shook up the visual conception of *shitamachi*.¹⁴ In the wake of extensive damage, *shitamachi* came to be associated with crowded backstreets and multi-family housing while the city regrouped and rebuilt (Dore 1958). An association of close-knit community stems from both from early Edo feudal period associations and post-quake/post-war conditions (ibid). This meant that by the post-war period, *shitamachi* was recognised as encompassing the area to the north and east of the city centre, as well as the area of land stretching along Tokyo bay, making quite a change in perception of *shitamachi* from ‘centrality’ to ‘marginality.’ In other words, corresponding with urban social changes, the delineation of *shitamachi* started to become less related to geography or topography, and more to do with conditions and attributions.

Shitamachi, Paul Waley says, has become ‘internalised, divorced from the physical world and positioned within the mind’ (2002: 1542), with *shitamachi* these days conceptualised as a space evoking a collective memory that is nostalgia for the past, and an historical identity. It is now a place and space most often seen as representative of ‘traditional’ Japan and celebrated in this manner – most notably with consumer goods such as crafts products and food, as well as books, films and festivals.¹⁵ A ‘*shitamachi* boom’ of the 1980s led to primary tourist destinations focussing on Edo and *shitamachi* culture such as the Edo-Tokyo Museum (opened 1993) in Ryōgoku, Sumida Ward, *Shitamachi* Museum (opened 1980) in Ueno Park, Taitō Ward, and Edo Tokyo Traditional Crafts Museum in Asakusa, Taitō Ward. These destinations aim to educate about ways of the past, painting a portrait of a by-gone era. They also create an image and atmosphere on which tourism in the area both recreates and relies, that of ‘traditional Japan.’ Following the lead of such establishments and the promotion of ‘*shitamachi* culture’ from the 1980s, businesses, particularly in the tourist hub of Asakusa, overtly highlight tradition and history of the Edo period. On the other hand, as previous studies have shown, *shitamachi* residents and businesses continue to maintain ‘traditional’ practices, along with old social norms

outcast groups, such as *burakumin* who were marginalised through their occupations associations with death and blood. These included leather workers and tanners, butchers and those who handled the dead.

¹⁴ Although the United States carried out small-scale raids on Tokyo in 1942, the concentrated firebombing and extensive damage of Tokyo occurred later, between November 1944 and August 1945.

¹⁵ The focus in the tourist hub of Asakusa on ‘traditional’ goods and ‘old Japan’ warrants special mention. Many businesses play on these notions as a marketing tool oriented towards the large numbers of international tourists that come to the area to experience ‘traditional Japan.’

in everyday life.¹⁶ These aspects, coupled with distinct language patterns, are at the core of a set of characteristics thought of as defining the area today (Kondo 1990: 57-75; Waley 2002: 1536).

Contributing to the historicized image of *shitamachi* today is an array of woodblock prints, picture and reading books, travel notes of foreigners from this time, along with kabuki plays based on historical events or characters illustrating scenes of everyday life in the city of Edo. Amongst these, are depictions and descriptions of *horimono*, suggesting *horimono* were an integral part of everyday *shitamachi* life during earlier times (Bird 1973 [1880]; Salway 1896; Van Gulik 1982, 78-83). *Horimono* were once indicative of, and celebrated as, an affirmative *shitamachi* identity. Considering the continued emphasis on a distinct *shitamachi* culture and identity today, it is pertinent to question *horimono*'s position and role in light of these notions. In this thesis I will demonstrate how there is a dynamic, symbiotic relationship between *horimono* and the notions of *shitamachi* defined here.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

On tattooing

Since the 1980s, tattooing practices predominantly in the West, and more recently a renewed focus on non-Western practices, have been receiving much attention within the social sciences. This increased interest in tattooing, and more broadly the decorated body, runs parallel with a renewed interest in the body itself. Within the social sciences this has been in response to, and attempts at, bridging the problematic body/mind dichotomy that continues to plague Western-centric conceptualisations of the body (Lock and Farquhar 2007; Schildkrout 2004). A visible increase in popularity of body modifications, especially piercing and tattooing in the West, emerging from the hippy movement of the 1960s, becoming popularised via the music and entertainment industry in the 1960s and 1970s, before the arguable swing into mainstream acceptance of these practices by the 1990s through the influence of non-Western practices, further necessitated a rethinking of modified bodies in postmodern terms (Atkinson 2003b; DeMello 2000; Sanders 2008 [1989]).

As noted elsewhere (Atkinson 2003b: 56) a critical juncture of tattooing related research came with sociologist Clinton Sanders seminal work, *Customizing the Body: The art and culture of tattooing* first published in 1989. Sanders' work on American tattooing charts the early stages

¹⁶ For details see Bestor (1989, 2004), Dore (1958), Kondo (1990), Waley (2002, 2010).

of the shift from deviant practice to ‘art’; from a practice almost exclusive to one (lower) strata of society, that is, working class, sailors, bikies and criminals, into a practice more inline or acceptable to middle class sensibilities. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, he analyses how tattoos are considered deviant or normative within certain social interactions, disputing the common trope that tattoos are social symbols of disaffiliation. This shift from deviant to normative / craft to art, Sanders shows, was facilitated by a number of significant changes to the process of tattooing itself. In particular, advances in technique, imagery and tools, expansion of styles of tattooing, as well as changes to ways of business within the industry from mass produced ‘flash’¹⁷ to custom design. The influence of Japanese tattooing techniques and practices played a significant role in these changes, via cross-cultural exchange between Japanese and American tattooists in the 1960s (DeMello 2000: 72-75; McCabe 2005; Sanders 2008 [1989]: 13; Yamada 2000).

However, while Sanders research was significant in its detail and analysis, it was the treatment of the subject, modern, Western tattooing practices, as an academically viable research topic that was perhaps the most significant of all. As Sanders notes in the preface to the revised and expanded edition published in 2008, *Customizing the Body* played an important role in increasing interest and legitimacy of academic research on body modification as well as paving the way for further research on the topic.¹⁸ Also, while engaging issues of tradition, deviance and notions of community, *Customizing the Body*, looked beyond mere categorisation.¹⁹ Such

¹⁷ ‘Flash’ refers to pre-drawn tattoo designs that may be mass-produced for the customer to choose to have tattooed without customisation. These days ‘flash’ albums and designs are mostly used to inspire personalized tattoos, rather than being tattooed as is onto the client as was once the process.

¹⁸ For example see the works of Atkinson (2002, 2003a, 2003b), DeMello (2000), Irwin (2003), and Kosut (2006a, 200b).

¹⁹ There is a significant body of work now available on a number of themes: Commodification: Bengtsson, Otsberg and Kjeldgaard 2005; Blanchard 1991; Mosko 2007; Murray 2006; Schouten and McAlexander; Vail 1999.

Deviance: Atkinson 2002, 2003a; Braunberger 2000; Kosut 2006a; Myers 1992; Phillips 2001; Roberts, Owen Kock and Armstrong 2002; Riley 2006; Thorn, Senn and Hawkes 2004; Wohlrab, Rammsayer, Stahl and Kappeler 2007b.

Resistance and control: Atkinson 2003a; Baron 1989; Beeler 2006; Fox 1987; Gengenbach 2003; Lentini 1999; Pitts 2003; Sanders 1988; Vale and Juno 1989.

Social/Identities: Broome 2006; Cole 2006; Farnell 1999; Fisher 2002; Hardin 1999; Gotch & Scutt 1974; Jones and Kang 2007; Kosut 2006b; Kuwahara 2005; Langman 2003; MacCormack 2006; MacKendrick 1998; Muggleton 2000; O’Hanlon 1995; Pritchard 2000; Reischer and Koo 2004; Rosenblatt 1997; Synnot 1993; Turtiainen and Oksanen 2005; Van Wolputte 2004; Wohlrab, Stahl and Kappeler 2007a.

History & Custom: Blom 2005; Brain 1979; Caplan 2000; Colson 1997; Ebin 1979; Govenar 1981; Hambly; Schwartz 2006; Tietjen and Barker 2002.

categorisations have previously proven problematic in their tendency to pathologise the human experience of tattooing; a tendency that still lingers in discussion of the Japanese subject.

On Japanese tattooing

In previous research on Japanese tattooing, two aspects are identifiable. First, is a focus on tradition and history. For example Tamabayashi (1995 [1936]) and Van Gulik (1982) provide rich analysis and historical detail of the development and emergence of tattooing in Japan. Both of these works focus on early practices. The more recent work of Yamamoto (2005) on the other hand, discusses contemporary practices, as do popular culture reference materials on tattooing (Kitamura 2005 and 2008; Kitamura and Kitamura 2001; Koeplinger and Kitamura 2008; McCabe 2005; Poysden and Bratt 2006). In this research focussing on tradition and history, conflicting representations of the status of contemporary tattooing or *horimono* is a problematic characteristic. For example, *horimono* are discussed as a ‘tradition,’ with some implication of widespread sensibility towards them (Kitamura 2001, 2005, 2008), effectively disregarding historicised notions of criminality that continue to play a significant role in understandings and treatments of tattooing in Japan.

The second distinctive aspect of previous research is a focus on semiotic and symbolic meaning of the tattoo design or the tattooed body. Van Gulik (1982), for example, discusses in detail structural functionalism of tattoo motifs of the Edo period, while Kitamura looks at the link between motifs and *ukiyo-e* [浮世絵] ‘pictures of the floating world.’ Other more recent work emphasises *horimono* as criminal markings (Atkinson 2003b: 39; DeMello 2000: 72-72; Kaplan and Dubro 1986; Poysden and Bratt 2006). While public or general commentary on tattooing in Japan tends to posit *horimono* as synonymous with *bōryokudan*/yakuza identity and criminality, and reference to *horimono* in the majority of academic research highlights the connection, I argue that doing so ignores historicised normative practices of tattooing. There is a clear need instead for a balanced approach between the two aspects. Furthermore, references to everyday experiences of tattooing receive scant attention, and a question remains regarding how the two aspects, of history and tradition, and of semiotic and symbolic meaning, play out corporeally in terms of identities and social interactions. In other words, how do tattooed persons, or non-tattooed others, actually experience tattooing and tattoos today?

A small but growing body of work seeks to address these issues. Popular media such as tattoo magazines,²⁰ newspaper articles (Ito 2010; Mansfield 2003; Mitchell 2014; Okazaki 2007, 2008, 2010; Richie 2000; 2001; 2002; 2005), interviews (Kawaguchi 2007; Koeplinger and Kitamura 2008; Koyama 2004, 2007; McCabe 2005), and autobiographies or artwork compilations being produced by journalists or Japanese tattooists themselves (Hladik 2012; Nakano 2002, 2004; Poysden and Bratt 2006; Shodai Horihito²¹ 2004), also suggest a more diverse clientele and a less stigmatised or more open practice, which in itself is not new. I suggest this is not a new phenomenon; rather, it is the situation of a broader array of realities and experiences gaining a voice. The works produced by *horishi* in particular illustrates this from an insider perspective. Photographic albums and design books provide valuable detail into the visual aspect of Japanese tattoos, while personal histories by the likes of *Horicho* (Nakano 2002; 2004), *Horihito* (Shodai Horihito 2004) and *Horijun* (Matsushima 1978) provide the human face.²² As does Saito (斉藤 1999, 2005), delving into motivations to being tattooed.

Approaches to Japanese tattooing take either one of two trajectories: focus on the image, or focus on the body that is tattooed. In either case, there is a tendency in both academic scholarship and public discussion where *horimono* are interpreted or ‘read’ through a social and cultural lens that posits them, more often than not, as signs or symbols of group association or disassociation and, furthermore, in notions of identity formation. In the Japanese context, this plays out as *horimono* being seen or ‘read’ as a sign of yakuza membership or a criminal identity. This view presumes a historically resonant social status which is deeply embedded in contemporary Japanese consciousness and based on two primary factors: firstly, the historical practices of tattooing of criminals for punishment and deliberate ostracisation; and secondly, the more recent yakuza penchant for engaging *horimono* for ostentatious or nefarious purposes.

The process of getting tattooed, and the associated endurance and perseverance of pain along with commitment,²³ mean *horimono* are often presented as a ‘rite of passage’ (Turner 1969; Van Gennep 1960 [1909]) into the criminal world. The permanence of *horimono*, coupled with its historicized association with criminality, implies that once tattooed the wearer gives up one’s

²⁰ For example, the Japanese magazines such as *Tattoo Burst*, and *Tattoo Tribal* provide a wide range of information including history, biographies of tattooists, details of tattoo events and current trends.

²¹ This is a ‘work name,’ the name under which the author tattoos. Some tattooists prefer to keep their name from media or publication, as in the case of Horikazu, with whom I carried out my fieldwork. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Three.

²² See also Kitamura (2005, 2008); Kitamura and Kitamura (2001); Mandelbaum (2008); McCabe (2005); Okazaki (2007; 2008); Yamada (2009).

²³ Commitment is seen both in financial terms as well as time.

past life,²⁴ and enters another; thus symbolizing a lifetime commitment to the group. Consequently, pain, stamina and patience required to endure the tattooing process are qualities that *horimono* are said to both represent and/or be embodied by the wearer (Atkinson 2003; DeMello 2000; Hill 2003; Kitamura 2001, 2005, 2008; Mansfield 1999; McCallum 1988; Richie 1980). In this light *horimono* becomes a badge of communal membership creating a binding involvement with a group (Richie 1980: 60).

Horimono in these terms are symbolic of breaking with one group on one hand, and on the other gaining some trait from what the image symbolizes/represents: *bōryokudan* affiliation, criminality or more specifically, related to the image of the *horimono* itself. On the latter, images may be thought to have functions based on the image, that is qualities *horimono* are said to instil in the wearer such as strength, perseverance, determination, or provide some efficacious qualities like protection, wealth, happiness and so forth (DeMello 2000; Hill 2003; Kitamura 2001, 2005, 2008; Mansfield 1999; McCallum 1988; Richie 1980; Van Gulik 1982). Discussing Edo era firemen's tattoos from a structural functional perspective Van Gulik details the relationship between *horimono* images such as dragons, and their protective qualities in relation to fires.²⁵ In such cases, images and what they symbolise are presented as reasons for being tattooed. In other works, *horimono* have variously been explored as beautification and as a means of creating a strong identity by structuring the amorphous self to borrow Richie's words. (Richie 1980: 65, Van Gulik 1982).

In this thesis, I do not intend to disagree entirely with the observations introduced in previous research on Japanese tattooing nor dominant public opinions. Indeed, I will illustrate how experiences of *horimono* do follow the familiar symbolic or semiotic trope. What I more concerned with, however, are incidents where experiences of *horimono* do not fit this frame. This occurs particularly when the subject and object distinction becomes subverted. It is with these understandings of *horimono* in mind, that I began fieldwork on tattooing in Japan.

²⁴ In the autobiography *Yakuza Moon* (2006) Tendo Shoko, the daughter of an ex-yakuza, describes being tattooed was an empowering act enabling her to make dramatic changes, breaking away her *bōryokudan* past.

²⁵ I will return to this point in the concluding chapter.

FIELDWORK AND ARGUMENTS

In terms of methodology, I began my research with structured interviews and guided conversations like the one transcribed above. Preparing questions based on previous research, recording audio of my meetings, I initially set about trying to understand and define contemporary practices of *horimono*. These interviews and conversations revealed two things. Firstly, as already noted, I began to see a side of *horimono* and tattooing that did not meld with extant research; and secondly, while revealing much about the fundamentals of tattooing, formalised interview questions elicited contradictory information. That is, what I was seeing and experiencing around me was something else entirely to answers elicited through direct questioning. A case in point is *yakuza* connections. It is one thing for an interviewee to state their occupation as labourer in response to an interview question, and another to wait for them outside the office of a Designated Criminal Organisation²⁶ while they go about their business. In light of these observations then, although I continued to record focused interviews and discussions, I found much interesting and useful data was gleaned from ‘hanging out’ and engaging in an informal setting in the *horishi*’s studio or over dinner or drinks in a nearby establishment.

After living in Tokyo for four years (2006-2010) and travelling around the city to do fieldwork, conduct interviews, and attend festivals and tattoo related events and conventions,²⁷ I moved to Asakusa in early 2010. My aim with this move was to better immerse myself in the everyday life of the *shitamachi* area and engage with tattooists and tattooed people within this everyday setting. As outlined above, *shitamachi* Tokyo has a significant connection with *horimono*, and from the outset was a point of interest in my research on tattooing in Japan. It was, however, a fortuitously random happening that ultimately guided my move to Asakusa – an introduction to the ‘traditional Japanese tattooist,’ *Shodai Asakusa Horikazu* [初代浅草彫和], Horikazu the First of Asakusa in June 2007.²⁸ From the outset, Horikazu not only opened the door to his studio, he also welcomed me into his life and the lives of his family, friends and clients.

²⁶ *Shitei bōryokudan* 「指定暴力団」 groups recognised by law as criminal organisations.

²⁷ As part of my fieldwork on tattooing I attended both Sanja Matsuri and Torigoe Matsuri seven times each, between 2006 and 2013 except for 2011 when they were cancelled due to the Tohoku Earthquake. Also, I attended the *King of Tattoo* event held annually over three days in September in Ebisu, Tokyo in 2007 and 2008, and *System Hardcore*, a tattoo and fetish event held in Roppongi, Tokyo in November 2006.

²⁸ This initial meeting is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

For sixteen months, from January 2010 to May 2011, I resided in Asakusa a ten minute walk from Horikazu's residence and studio, and fifteen minutes from the bustling tourist hub that surrounds the precinct comprising the Buddhist temple, Sensō Ji [浅草寺], and Shinto shrine, Asakusa Jinja [浅草神社]. The majority of my fieldwork, therefore, centers on Horikazu, his family and clients, and two festivals – Sanja Matsuri and Torigoe Matsuri – that occur annually in the area. As such this thesis should not be considered a study of Japanese tattooing in general. Rather, it is a focused study of *horimono*, tattooing, and how it is experienced in context, in one corner of *shitamachi* Tokyo, Asakusa.²⁹ Before going any further, I should comment on my portrayal of Horikazu, *horimono* and the *shitamachi* area. The aspects of orientalism, of exoticising the other and portraying the east (non-western other) in essentialist terms, hinder balanced representations and understandings. Yet, many of the terms and conditions that characterise orientalism are precisely those participants in this project themselves projected.

I should also mention here a lack of images of both the tattooing process, and the scenes from Horikazu's studio. Initially I was reluctant to take photographs. On one hand I was already thought of as looking through a lens, that of an Australian (ie non-Japanese) female, and after a while, it was easier to just 'drop by' rather than my presence being a formality. On the other hand, Horikazu carefully documented his work and people who came by, me included. My fieldwork with Horikazu ended with his passing from liver cancer in November 2011, a time I was out of the country. Following his death, I continued looking into tattooing practices, but now with more focus on the community engagement in the Sanja Matsuri and Torigoe Matsuri, which I attended seven times each.

This ethnographic fieldwork I carried out between 2006 and 2013 – including the sixteen months with Horikazu and the festivals – reveals that lived experiences of *horimono* and the process of tattooing may penetrate more than just the surface of the skin. *Horimono* may instead be experienced in ways unlike the dominant visual-centric readings of the image or decorated, 'inscribed' body suggest. In particular, when experienced as talismanic, apotropaic and other 'supernatural' physical manifestations *horimono* not only contradict the above noted conventional readings of the tattooed body but also the presumed formations of identity that come hand in hand. Thus, *horimono* and the process of tattooing raise questions about the ontological boundaries of the actors involved. This thesis traverses this gamut, from social

²⁹ To supplement this fieldwork with Horikazu, I met with Asakusa Horiyasu, Horicho and Horiwaka who also operate in the area.

status to ontological status, of experiences of *horimono*, where through an ethnographic exploration of contemporary practices I show how *horimono* is neither one nor the other.

I should be clear from the outset, this thesis is not a theoretical study of *horimono*, neither is it a conclusive history. Rather, within this thesis, I present an ethnography of experiences of *horimono*, addressing the following three points. The first aim of this thesis is to clarify the contemporary situation, or how *horimono* exist and under what conditions tattooing is practiced in the geographical confines of Tokyo's *shitamachi* in the present day. Taking as a starting point the historical importance of *shitamachi* in the development and evolution of *horimono*, this part of the investigation is concerned primarily with the fundamentals of tattooing practices. With questions asked including: who is tattooing and who is being tattooed? What form does this tattooing take, and why? Here, my primary concern is not to elucidate reasons for tattooing, neither is it to analyse the symbolic aspect of the images in any detail. I suggest such questions of "Why did you get tattooed?" or "What is the meaning?" are inherently slippery. Because answers to such questions are characteristically temporal and bound by context, they are changing and evolving over time and in light of other experiences.³⁰

Rather than asking why people tattoo or chose certain images, I contend that it is more insightful to look into the context and networks of relations in which the experience takes place, which brings forth the second aim of this thesis: to ascertain the relationships formed through *horimono* and the process of being tattooed, delving into lived experiences of *horimono*. By 'lived experiences', I refer to the multiple ways people, wearers of *horimono*, and *horishi*, Japanese tattooists, as well as non-tattooed people experience *horimono*. My usage of the term 'lived experiences' in this thesis draws on Michael Jackson who writes: "understanding involves exploring the *indeterminate* relationship between experience and episteme, process and product, and not assuming an *isomorphic* relationship between them (2005: 35)." Following Satre and Merleau-Ponty he argues experience is the site for "exploring the reasoning that people consciously adduce when explaining and justifying the actions, or when manipulating and imagining their relations with others (ibid. 37)." In experiences of *horimono* and being tattooed confusion arises between subject and object. The individual does not control this experience, instead it is learned via experience, via *horimono* and the networks of relations it encompasses.

³⁰ See discussion in Chapter Four of this thesis.

With this in mind, I consider the process of tattooing. The process of tattooing, involving the breaking of skin and the insertion of ink to permanently modify the biological body, together with the resultant *horimono* and the tattooed body/person, invite a range of questions relating to how one experiences these breaking or making of boundaries. It is judicial then to ask the following questions. What, or how, social relationships are formed between and/or via *horimono*, the people who are being tattooed or have been tattooed, and their *horishi*? How do tattooed people relate to their *horimono*/tattooed body, or conversely, how do others relate to *horimono*/the tattooed body/person? And, more importantly, what does this mean in terms of (personal) identity formation and the way one may experience or conceptualise the boundaries of their *horimono*, bodies and self/selves?

The third aim is an extension of the above: to clarify the (nature of any) relationships between *horimono* and *shitamachi* both as a geographical area as well as a conceptual construct. What role does *horimono* and the process of tattooing play in *shitamachi* Tokyo particularly in regards to the formation of *shitamachi* identities on a macro level? An important consideration here is the public display of *horimono* at two annual festivals held in the area – Sanja Festival in May and Torigoe Festival in June. Given that *horimono* are generally covered or unseen in the public sphere of everyday life, festivals provide a unique space and place where *horimono* and the tattooed body may be ‘shown’ or ‘seen,’ and thus interact with and be experienced by people who would otherwise have no contact with *horimono*.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One will outline the history of Japanese tattooing. This is not an exhaustive history of tattooing in Japan as it does not discuss Ainu or Okinawan practices at all, rather it is an outline provided to illustrate the historical and social background on which contemporary discourse on *horimono* is based, highlighting the communicative role of *horimono* and the connection between *shitamachi* area and culture in the emergence and development of *horimono*. In particular focus is on development of *horimono* so that later on I can discuss how *horimono* fits and acts reflexively within the narrative of historicised notions of *horimono* and *shitamachi*, and what this potentially means for understandings of both *shitamachi*, *horimono* and the identity of those tattooed with *horimono* today; issues which will be further explored in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Two introduces the process and practice of tattooing. Based on ethnographic fieldwork this chapter will provide information on the techniques of tattooing, describing the operation,

the setting and briefly mentions the images. As my concern in this thesis is with lived experiences, I do not delve into the rich symbolism of the images and motifs used in *horimono* in any depth. Instead, I mention the symbolism where necessary to further understand the experience. Closely following the discussion on techniques of tattooing is Chapter Three looking at the life of Horikazu the First of Asakusa. Here I present the life history of Horikazu and his position within the production of *horimono*.

Chapter Four switches tone, examining *horimono* from the micro level exploring the different kinds of ‘lived experiences’ of *horimono*. That is the different kinds of ways *horimono* and tattooed bodies are experienced by those tattooed with *horimono*, *horishi* (tattooists), as well as observers. It is shown how there is a wide array of experiences resulting from views of *horimono* as semiotic ‘texts’, symbolic imagery, and visual marker of ‘identity’ to experiences of *horimono* as apotropaic, talismanic and other physical manifestations that appear to transgress or contradict visual-centric interpretations.

Faced with experiences that appear to be outside of the familiar symbolic or semiotic frameworks, I have been inspired in this chapter by the theories of art and agency proposed by Alfred Gell (1993, 1998, 1999; Thomas and Pinney 2001). Although, not without problem,³¹ Gell’s emphasis on understanding ‘things’ within the network of relations in which they are produced, prompted me to rethink the way in which we view *horimono* and/or the tattooed body or tattooed person. Taking the view of *horimono* as an ‘agent’ imbued with a semblance of personhood and intentions, leads me to question how lived experiences are produced in relation to ontological aspects of the body, tattoo, and self.

Following the micro level exploration of lived experiences of *horimono* in Chapter Four, Chapter Five focuses on how lived experiences play out on a macro level, in the public sphere. This chapter explores *horimono* and the tattooed body in the context of two annual festivals – Sanja Matsuri and Torigoe Matsuri – discussing the impact on conceptualisations and formation of a collective ‘*shitamachi* identity.’ Focus in this chapter will be on two specific aspects contributing to both representation and experience of *horimono* and the tattooed body in the public sphere: that of law and public display. These aspects are discussed in terms of ‘boundaries’ and notions of ‘power.’ This chapter is not intended as a comprehensive study of

³¹ See Leyton (2003) and Morphy (2009).

Japanese festivals, *matsuri*, but rather, this chapter offers an ethnographic account of *horimono* and power in actual circumstances.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICISING TATTOOING – OF CRIMINALITY AND COMMUNICATION

Some form or other of body decoration and alteration is embedded within the social systems of virtually every culture around the world at some point in time. Such practices may variably be non-permanent as in body paint, piercing and adornment with masks, clothing or makeup, or permanent as in tattooing, cicatrization and body shaping such as neck elongation and skull moulding. Of these, tattooing is the most wide spread form of permanent body decoration (Brain 1979; Ebin 1979; Hambly 1925; Sanders 1989). In Japan, tattooing has a long and varied history. My intention in this chapter is to lay present a history of tattooing so as to uncover the roots of contemporary understandings of *horimono*. As such, I do not discuss Ainu tattoo or Okinawan practices. Rather, I aim to show how *horimono* developed into what it is, to show the connections between criminality and communication. The first section positions Japanese practices in relation to world-wide practices in antiquity, before going into detail about the earliest practices in Japan. In the second section I present the background of punitive practices. Then I turn to the emergence of decorative tattooing. Finally, I finish up with an overview of today's practices.

TATTOOING IN ANTIQUITY

Archaeological evidence, in the form of tattooing implements and ochre found in southern Africa indicates the possibility of tattooing being practiced 100 thousand years ago in the middle Stone Age (Deter-Wolf 2013). A tattoo toolkit found in France dates to at least 18 thousand years ago (ibid) while figurines from the Jōmon period (12,000~300 B.C.) found in Japan bare facial markings thought to show tattoos. While comparatively more recent carved figures from European sites dated 6000 B.C. along with Egyptian figurines crafted around 2000 years ago, show facial and body markings etched into the stone and ceramic (Sanders 1989: 9) possibly indicating how early tattoos may have looked on two other continents.

Mummified remains support these material objects. The oldest human remains with deliberately preserved tattooing are around 8000 years old. Found in Peru, this mummy is tattooed along the upper lip (Deter-Wolf 2013). Other tattooed remains have been found in central Europe, North Africa and on the cusp of Asia in Siberia. Perhaps the most well known is 'Ötzi the Iceman' found in 1991 in the Ötz valley on the border area between Italy and

Austrian, dating from 4000~5000 B.C. The so-called Iceman is marked with around 57 carbon tattoos of simple dots and lines on his lower spine, behind his left knee and on his right ankle coinciding with pressure points indicating the possibility of therapeutic tattooing (山本 2005: 69-71). A priestess of Hathor, Egypt, with tattoos on the abdomen dating to 2000 B.C. is one of a number of mummies bearing tattoos that have been found at multiple sites through Egypt. Pazyryk remains in Siberia are more detailed still, showing many intricately tattooed images of sheep, fish, cats and goats (Sanders 1989).

How tattooing practices spread in Antiquity becoming a worldwide phenomenon remains contested with two dominant streams of thought. One hypothesis is that tattooing practices emerged as a progression from body painting, arising independently in various cultures and locations around the world. Another hypothesis is that tattooing developed in one culture and location then spread around the world via human contact. On this second hypothesis, drawing on archaeological evidence, Hambly (1925), in his classic survey of tattooing practices the world over, puts forward the suggestion that tattooing spread from Egypt and the Middle East towards Asia around 2000 B.C. where Japan is then thought of as a major pivot in spreading the practice, with the possibility Ainu carried their tattooing south to the Pacific. Alternative explanations are that Samoan seafarers encountered tattooing on their westward travels, taking it with them to Polynesia. Alternatively, did Polynesians pass on the practices through their sea voyages to the Americas? Otherwise, tattooing may have come from the East, brought by travellers from South America to Polynesia based on evidence of tattooing in Aztec, Inca and Mayan cultures; a thought supported by mummified the remains found in Peru.

In any case, tattooing has been a worldwide form of body modification since at least 1000 B.C. This is the point I wish to make here: while the extent to which ancient practices can be linked uninterruptedly to the varied tattooing cultures thriving today is surely debatable, what is not is the impact the practices, and subsequent histories, have on modern tattooing, and contemporary bodily practices and realities. As Levi-Strauss (1963: 258) writes, ‘external connections can explain transmission but only internal connections can account for persistence.’

Discontinuous histories of tattooing, like in the case of Japan, occur for various reasons: contact with other peoples and cultures, changes to controls, regulations or authority, trends in decorating or adorning the body. Following an understanding of the body, and how it is treated, as socially and culturally constructed as argued by Foucault (1973, 1979), we can then see these aspects, of cultural flows, laws/regulations, and concepts of beauty explicitly marked or worn on bodies through tattooing, or other forms of decoration and adornment.

Archaeological evidence in Japan

Archaeological artefacts and written records, of both Chinese and Japanese origin, provide evidence of tattooing in Japan. The earliest of which dates from the Jōmon period (ca. 12,000 B.C.–300 B.C.). Named for the rope-patterned ceramic-ware of the period, Jōmon Japan is characterised by a semi-nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyle and small-scale crop cultivation. While McCallum (1988: 110) notes a correspondence between cultural patterns in Jōmon Japan and other Neolithic centres around the world, a unique feature of Jōmon culture is its highly developed ceramic work. Jōmon ceramics are recognised as having five distinct periods – Initial, Early, Middle, Late and Final (Befu 1971: 12-16) with the earliest radiocarbon dated to 12,000 B.C. Vase like vessels and figurines called *dogū* are the main remaining types of ceramics.

Facial markings on these *dogū* figurines provide the earliest evidence of tattooing practices in Japan. Since *dogū* portray human beings, the facial markings on them have been interpreted as actual facial markings of the time. The facial patterns are also similar to markings found on artefacts from other cultures, such as Taiwan, South East Asia and the Pacific Islands. These cultures are recognised as having practiced tattooing, leading to assertions that tattooing was similarly practised in Jōmon era Japan (McCallum 1988: 111; Yoshioka 1996: 7-26). However, as McCallum points out, while some *dogū* have definite markings in the mouth area suggestive of the mouth tattoos of the Ainu and Maori peoples practiced in the 1900s (Figures 5-7) (McCallum 1988: 110-15), the relevance of *dogū* to the history of Japanese tattooing is questionable, as it hinges on different theories of the origins of Japanese people.



Figure 5: *Dogū* facial marking
Source: Yoshioka 1996: 11.



Figure 6: Ainu woman with mouth tattoo Source: Van Gulik 1982: plate 119.



Figure 7: Maori woman with *moko* facial tattoo Source: Ebin 1979: 23

Van Gulik (1982) and McCallum (1988) interpret the archaeological evidence of tattooing differently based on their adherence to different origin theories. On one hand, Van Gulik (tentatively) suggests the possibility of a continuous history of tattooing from Jōmon to the present day. He highlights the possible relations, evolution, or cultural transference between Jōmon people, present-day Japanese and Ainu, particularly noting the similarity of Ainu tattoo patterns to Japanese patterns and their similarity in the customary functions of early tattooing (Van Gulik 1982: 259-263). McCallum (1988: 133), on the other hand, argues that Van Gulik's hypothesis should be 'approached with caution' citing a lack of evidence concretely linking different cultures and peoples, namely Jōmon, Ainu, and present day Japanese. This discussion is based on what he terms 'the horse-rider theory of origin;' the idea that present-day Japanese came on horses across the Korean peninsula from China and as such, Jōmon people and Ainu are not related to the present-day Japanese. Consequently, he sees the history of tattooing in Japan as fragmentary – as a number of unrelated customs. Regardless of perspective, as the ensuing history shows, the various encounters with other cultures had significant impacts on the production of cultural meanings of tattooing in Japan.

Perhaps more importantly is that Jōmon people are known to have decorated their bodies (山本 2005: 74-75). Archaeological excavation has revealed ornamental hairpins, combs, rings, necklaces and hip decorations. These decorations were made from various different materials such as a variety of stones, shells, bones, horn, teeth and ceramics. Furthermore, there is evidence Jōmon people modified their teeth. Human bones have been found revealing incisor teeth, or canine teeth that were removed, along with pointed incisors similar to the manner in which the teeth on hair combs from the period were also filed down. Rather than just decoration, Yamamoto suggests the possibility that these practices were some form of rite of

passage or indication of group belonging (2005: 75). In light of these practices, the possibility of marked *dogū* indicating tattooing appears more plausible, as emphasised by Takayama (1968).

Further archaeological artefacts, cylindrical ceramics known as *haniwa*, clay rings, from the *Kofun* period (A.D. 250-A.D. 538) are also evidence of possible tattooing early tattooing. There are wide range of *haniwa* such as houses-models, animals, or objects of everyday use, as well as representations of human figures (Van Gulik 1982: 264). There are three interpretations of *haniwa*, which were found in the large tombs that give the era its name.

Firstly, Van Gulik (1982: 266), suggests that *haniwa* markings are body painting and thus are essentially related to tattooing; an interpretation based on the hypothesis that painting the body was the initial phase of a process of body modification that culminated in tattooing in light-skinned populations and in scarification in darker-skinned ones. This thought rests on the view that painting, tattooing, and scarification all served the same intended functions of putting the human soul in harmony with supernatural forces and ensuring continuity between this life and the next (Hambly 1925: 294).

Secondly, McCallum views the marks on *haniwa* as paintings and subsequently excludes them from the history of tattooing. Finally, Yoshioka Ikuo (1996: 62-76) and Donald Richie (1980: 11) take the opposite view to McCallum, considering the *haniwa* markings to be representations of actual tattoos. Richie writes, ‘Japanese scholars date the beginning of tattooing in Japan around the third century B.C. on the evidence of “distinct facial tattoo” on clay *haniwa* figurines’ (ibid).

Although the validity of early artefacts showing actual tattooing remains contested in the literature, the important point to grasp is that body modification in some form, either tattooing or painting, existed thousands of years ago. Early artefacts, *dogū* and *haniwa* provide evidence of such early practice. The purpose of marking the face at this time is unclear. However, Chinese dynastic histories and Japanese written records provide hints to interpretation.

Written records

Chinese dynastic histories provide the earliest written records of tattooing in Japan. These records correspond to Japan’s Yayoi period (300 B.C.-A.D. 300), which was characterised by the beginning of rice agriculture, by town formation and, importantly, by a steady increase in

cultural transference from China.³² Records in The Book of Han, *Kan-sho* [漢書] mention tattooing in Japan, but as Yamamoto (2005: 76) points out, the most detailed record is the *Gishiwa Jinden* [魏志倭人伝]. The *Gishiwa Jinden*, (*History of the Wei Empire*) is part of the *Annals of the Three Kingdoms* [三国志] compiled by Shou Chen (233-279), describing ancient Japan. These descriptions are found in a section within *Gishi*³³[魏書] entitled “Account of the Eastern Barbarian,”³⁴ or *Tōi* [東夷] in Japanese, and are detailed observations of everyday life reported by travellers to Kyushu and western Japan (Van Gulik 1982: 246-247; 山本 2005: 77-78).³⁵ The depiction here is of customary tattooing:

As for the men, whether high or low³⁶, they all tattoo their faces and bodies. Ever since ancient times, the envoys who came to China all entitled themselves grandees. A son of Shao-k’ang, sovereign of Hsia, was invested with the fief of K’uai-chi; he had his hair cut short and his body tattooed in order to ward off the harm of evil dragons. Now the Wa, who are familiar with swimming and who are skilled in diving down into the waters in order to catch fish and clams, tattooed their bodies as a means to drive away large fish and waterfowl. After some while, the tattooings became merely ornamental. The body tattooings of the various countries differ from each other, some being applied on the left side, some on the right side, some are large, some are small, the differences based on the distinctions of social class. (Taro in 1979: 197-198 in Van Gulik tr. 1982: 247; see 山本 (2005: 78) for a modern Japanese translation.)

Translating Yamamoto’s (2005: 78) modern Japanese rendition of the passage, this becomes ‘adult men’ and ‘children.’ Yamamoto, noting the difficulty in direct translation, refers to Yoshioka Ikuo who suggests this refers to the body size rather than adults and children based on the understanding of tattooing in many parts of the world as a rite of passage whereby children would be marked on adulthood. Another view is the *Gishiwa Jinden* passages note only local differences of tattooing (山本 2005: 79).

³² The introduction of Buddhism to Japan from China in the first half of the sixth century saw many delegations made up of students, priests and scholars travelling between Japan and China.

³³ Van Gulik notes the *Wei-chih* as *Gishi* in Japanese. The record quoted from the *Wei-chih* is found in the section - “Accounts of the People of Wo” (*Wajin-den* in Japanese) - of the chapter entitled *Tung-I chuan* (*Tōi-den* in Japanese), “Accounts of the Eastern Barbarian.”

³⁴ Translation by Van Gulik (1982: 246)

³⁵ McCallum cites the Wei kingdom as being in the years A.D. 221-265.

³⁶ Translating Yamamoto’s (山本 2005: 78) modern Japanese rendition of the passage, this becomes ‘adult men’ and ‘children.’ Yamamoto, noting the difficulty in direct translation, refers to Yoshioka Ikuo who suggests this refers to the body size rather than adults and children based on the understanding of tattooing in many parts of the world as a rite of passage whereby children would be marked on adulthood.

The *Gishiwa Jinden* records the third to fourth century Japan, corresponds with the Yayoi period and beginning of the Kofun period. Forty pieces of pottery and stoneware depicting tattooed faces have been found dating from this period. The patterns depicted on these artefacts are spread wide around Japan, found in artefacts from Kyushu, Chūgoku, Shikoku, coastal areas of Ise Bay, and Kanto regions of Japan.

Similar short record in the *Sui Shu*³⁷ (A.D. 629-A.D. 636) notes tattooing amongst the *Wa*³⁸ people. “Both men and women paint marks on their arms and spots on their faces and have their bodies tattooed” (Van Gulik 1982: 247). The History of the Later Han Dynasty [後漢書]³⁹ (A.D. 22-220) compiled around A.D. 45 shares a similar passage “The men all tattoo their faces and adorn their bodies with designs. The position and size of pattern indicate the difference of rank” (ibid).

These written records illustrate customary tattooing practices. Markings are either for decoration, protection or a visible sign of social status and protection. Coupled with archaeological artefacts, tattooing appears to have been a normative custom of *Wa*. Comparison with other tattooing cultures show parallel practices. For example in Polynesia the men had intricate designs tattooed on their legs and buttocks for protection when swimming and fishing (Gell 1993). The Dyak men of Indonesia used tattoos to indicate their status and bravery as hunters (Hambly 1925: 219). Therefore, the *Gishiwa Jinden*, and *Sui Shu*, and references may be taken to indicate that tattooing was also a normative custom in south-eastern Japan.

Japanese written records on tattooing are similar to those found in the Chinese dynastic histories. Whether similarities in the text reflect paralleled observations of similar or related practices, or if they simply reflect the earlier record, particularly from the *Gishiwa Jinden* remains an open question. (McCallum 1988: 114-115; Van Gulik 1982: 246-251). What can be noted, however, in the Japanese records to which focus now turns, is a change in view of tattooing – from that of customary mark to criminal mark; change corresponding with increased Chinese influence.

³⁷ *Sui Shu* – History of the Sui Dynasty – refers to the Sui dynasty of A.D. 589-618 edited between A.D. 629 and 636 (Van Gulik 1982: 247-248).

³⁸ ‘*Wa*’ in Chinese dynastic histories, is generally interpreted as being south-eastern Japan – including the south-eastern area of Honshū, Kyūshū and the Ryūkyū Islands.

³⁹ *Hou Han Shu* in Chinese is the account of the Han dynasty that governed the entire empire from A.D. 25-220. Although the period of history is earlier than the Wei dynasty in the *Gishiwa Jinden*, the *Hou Han Shu* was not compiled until A.D. 445, making the text later in terms of compilation.

Japanese records

The earliest Japanese historical records spanning both the Late Yayoi and Kofun eras refer to tattooing practices. Namely, there are two references to tattooing in the *Kojiki* [古事記], (A.D. 712) and three in the *Nihon Shoki* [日本書紀], (A.D. 720). The *Nihon Shoki*, compiled in A.D. 720, traces the history of Japan from its legendary origin from the Sun Goddess Amaterasu to the end of the seventh century. It is the second-oldest extant chronicle of the history of Japan. McCallum (1988: 116) suggests that the *Nihon Shoki* is ‘governed by dominant imperial ideology based on a Confucian prototype with fictitious reference to a supreme emperor.’ In contrast, the oldest extant written history of Japan, the *Kojiki*, emphasises the mythological origins of Japan. It should be noted here that while the *Nihon Shoki* was compiled later than the *Kojiki*, it actually refers to earlier history. Therefore, in this chapter, *Nihon Shoki* records will be discussed first.

The earliest *Nihon Shoki* reference to tattooing is from the 27th year of the reign of the legendary Emperor Keiko (A.D. 71-130), equivalent to A.D. 97:

27th year, Spring, 2nd month, 12th day, Takenouchi no Sukune returned from the East Country and informed the Emperor, saying: “In the Eastern wilds there is a country called Hitakami. The people of this country, both men and women, tie up their hair in the form of a mallet, and tattoo their bodies. They are of fierce temper, and their general name is Emishi. Moreover, their land is wide and fertile. We should attack them and take it.” (McCallum 1988: 116)

This record suggests that the traits of the *Emishi* – their appearance and tattoos – differed from those of the writers of the *Nihon Shoki*. McCallum infers from this that the *Emishi* still engaged in the aforementioned customary tattooing. He concludes that the writers do not ‘read’ the tattoo as a symbol of status or as a talisman. Rather, they see it as symbolic of savagery. This example indicates the beginning of the decline of the customary mark, with the first sign of negative sentiment toward the tattoo.

A record from the reign of Emperor Richu in A.D. 400-405 indicates the use of tattooing as a punishment.

1st year, Summer, 4th month, 17th day.

The Emperor summoned before him Himako, Muraji of Azumi, and commanded him, saying: “Thou didst plot rebellion with the Imperial Prince Nakatsu in order to overturn the state, and thy offence is deserving of death. I will however, exercise great bounty, and remitting the penalty of death, sentence thee to be tattooed.” The same day he was tattooed near the eye. Accordingly the men of that time spoke of the “Azumi eye.” (McCallum 1988:116)

This is the first written record of Japanese origin that notes non-customary tattooing. Van Gulik suggests that the ‘Azumi eye’ refers to the mark of a slave as practised in China around this time, and not to the position of a tattoo near the eye (Van Gulik 1982: 7-9). In this case, this record would be a clear sign of the influence of Chinese punitive tattooing practices.

The final reference to tattooing in the *Nihon Shoki* is from the 11th year of the reign of Emperor Yūryaku (A.D. 467), and clearly equates tattooing with punishment:

Winter, 10th month. A bird of the Bird-department was bitten by a dog belonging to a man of Uda and died. The emperor was angry, and tattooing him on the face, made him one of the Bird-keepers’ guild. (McCallum 1988: 117)

These records from the *Nihon Shoki* clearly trace the decline of early tattooing in Japan from custom, to the mark of a slave, to the mark of a criminal – the man of Uda is punished with tattooing. He is marked and thus stigmatised. We can assume he is stigmatised by the fact that the previous examples, particularly the first entry in the *Nihon Shoki*, indicate that tattoos were associated with barbarianism and slavery. In addition, in this brief example the exclusionary/inclusive aspect of the punitive tattoo can be seen. The man of Uda is now identifiable by his tattoo as one of the Bird-keepers’ guild; never again will he be identified only as the ‘man of Uda’. Records from the *Kojiki* follow a similar pattern of decline.

The first account of tattooing in the *Kojiki* is in reference to the time of ‘Emperor’ Jimmu.⁴⁰ The tattoo marks in this account are viewed as strange, but not as implicitly negative:

Then, when O-kume-no-mikoto announced the emperor’s will to Isuke-yori-hime, she saw the tattooing around the eyes of O-kume-no-mikoto; thinking it strange, she sang

“Ame-tutu
Tidori masi toto”

Then O-kume sang in reply:

“The better to meet
Maidens face to face
Are my tattooed eyes?” (McCallum 1988: 117).

The second record from the *Kojiki*, in the reign of Emperor Ankō (A.D. 453-456) equates tattoos with criminality, as the thief is tattooed: “When they arrived at Kariha-I in Yamashiro, as they were eating their provisions, an old man with a tattooed face came along and seized their provisions”(ibid).

⁴⁰ Jimmu is seen as the true founder of the Japanese state. He led his followers from Kyūshū through the inland sea to Yamato, the Japanese heartland (the Kansai region) (McCallum 1988: 117).

Interestingly, these records from the *Kojiki* parallel those in the *Nihon Shoki*, beginning with depictions of tattooing for customary purposes and ending with the association of tattoos with slavery and criminality. As this decline in the status of tattooing coincides with increased cultural transfer from China and appears to mimic the negative view of tattooing held by the Chinese, Van Gulik (1982: 8-9), McCallum (1988: 117-118), and Yoshioka (1996: 62-76) suggest that punitive tattooing and the negative view of customary tattooing were not primary innovations of the Japanese. Yoshioka (1996: 62-67) further questions the accuracy of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* references, arguing that there was no punitive tattooing in Japan at the times mentioned. Instead, he suggests, the writers mistook as punitive tattooing, what had actually been customary tattooing.

Regardless of the varying perceptions of its origins, it is clear that tattooing in Japan – customary, punitive or otherwise – has a long history, beginning in prehistoric times. If the archaeological artefacts do represent tattoos, Japanese tattooing is one of the oldest in the world.

PUNITIVE TATTOOING

Examples of punitive tattooing are cited in the written histories mentioned above, though these may have been customary tattoos that were perceived as punitive marks. In any case, it seems clear that punitive tattooing was a secondary innovation passed from China (McCallum 1988: 109-118; Van Gulik 1982: 10). From the seventh century on, however, the scarcity of further examples suggests a decline in the use of such practices.

The *horimono* practiced today is relatively unchanged from what emerged on the backs of those who wore little clothing, labourers, firemen, carpenters, palanquin carriers and messengers during the Bunka-Bunsei period (1804-1829) (Van Gulik 1982: 41; Yamamoto 2014: 89). Immortalised in *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints and travellers tales, the decorative form and style of Edo era *horimono* not only characterises Japanese tattooing today, but also associated character of people of this time, carries over in ideas or distinctions of *shitamachi* character. This development of decorative tattooing that we recognise today, followed a prolonged period of minimal tattooing and adornment in general, and extensive punitive practices.

Minimal practice 600~1600

Written records suggest tattooing as a form of punishment fell into disuse after the Taika reforms of 645⁴¹ at a time of significant social and political change Japan. Following the Taika coup d'état of 645 came the beginning of a conscious emulation of China, centralisation of power, and institutionalisation of privilege for the emerging aristocratic class (Hall 1991: 26). Possibly as a result of Heian period ideals of beauty characterized by a distinct lack of adornment, which were influenced by Confucian thought also from China, there is little evidence of tattooing practices during the 1000-year period between 600-1600. That is not to say it was not practiced at all. The first codification of feudal law, Jōei Code⁴² of 1232, aimed at protecting the interests of the courts governing the conduct of the aristocracy (Hall 1991: 92) mentions punitive tattooing (Van Gulik 1982: 10). Also, the discovery in 1587 of 500 tattooed warriors of the Satsuma⁴³ Clan of Kyushu (Maeda 1962: 188; 吉岡 1996: 78) is a significant incident given the austere beauty aesthetic of the times. These marks were only noted after the warriors were killed in battle so the origin of the marks can only be supposed as an influence of Kyushu's proximity to China or the Ryukyu's where customary tattooing was practiced. Alternatively, they may have been non-customary marks, some form of punitive marking 吉岡 1996: 78).

Official punishment: Tattooing in the Edo period

Practices of permanently marking criminals, slaves or groups of people for punishment and purposes of identification by tattooing or branding are noted around the world as a form of social control. For example slaves and prisoners of war in ancient Greece and Rome were tattooed (Jones 2000: 1-16), while criminals in Burma were paraded in public after having their offence permanently written into their foreheads (Hambly 1925: 229). Perhaps most well-known is the more recent tattooing of concentration camp detainees by the Nazis during the Second World War. Closer to Japan, in China tattooing was broadly used to identify slaves, criminals, and military men (Reed 2000: 361).

⁴¹ The Taika coup d'état of 645 signaled the beginning of Japan's conscious emulation of China, the start of the centralisation of power, and the institutionalisation of privilege for the emerging aristocratic class (Hall 1991: 26). The Taika Reforms were issued in accordance with these social and political changes.

⁴² The Jōei Code of 1232 (*Jōei Shikimoku*) was the first codification of customary 'feudal law' in Japan (Hall 1991: 92). The Jōei Code principles protected the interests of religious institutions and court proprietors, and stipulated the conduct of warrior aristocracy to be regulated by *shōen* law.

⁴³ From the Satsuma area of southern Kyushu, present day Kagoshima.

In Japan, tattooing was recognised as an official punishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate by 1670, in conjunction with other corporal punishments⁴⁴ such as the amputation of ears and nose known as *hanamimisogi* [鼻耳削ぎ]. After the suspension in 1709, and subsequent abolition in 1720 of *hanamimisogi*, tattooing became the foremost punishment for crimes such as flattery with ulterior motives, fraud, extortion, and dealing in stolen goods (Van Gulik 1982: 10-12). This punitive tattooing was generally confined to larger cities and domains under direct control of the Shogun.

Style and positioning of punitive tattoos varied according to geographic area and crime, thereby indicating the jurisdiction and offence. For example, in the city of Edo during the Kambun period, around 1870, the character *aku* [悪] meaning bad, evil or inferior was inscribed on the forehead while in 1743 thick black lines were applied above the elbow on the left arm with subsequent lines being added for additional offences. In the Chikuzen region *inu* [犬], dog, was progressively tattooed on the forehead. That is, one offence resulted in the first stroke 一, the second stroke 十 being added with another offence, and the character completed with a third conviction, 犬 (11-12). Figure 8 illustrates punitive tattoos from various regions.



Figure 8: Punitive tattooing in various regions. Source: Koyama 2003: 124.

⁴⁴ Based on the 'five punishments of China,' (Hesselt van Dinter 2005: 62; Van Gulik 1982: 9) execution, tattooing, cutting off the nose or ears, removing the feet, and castration, laws of Edo period Japan was characteristically strict and corporeal.

Acts of involuntary tattooing as a form of punishment are not only permanently identifying but also guarantee stigmatisation and ostracism. Van Gulik (1982: 12-13) suggests punitive tattooing in Japan was a mark of shame with respect to the group, making it highly effective as a preventive measure. However, at the same time tattooing was being used for punishment communicating the criminal status, voluntary tattooing in the form of pledges communicating personal relations and ideals began to appear. It is here that the communicative aspect of tattooing as a normative or positive practice emerges from and in parallel to this backdrop of criminality.

DECORATIVE TATTOOING

Pledge tattooing

Dating from the mid-eighteenth century, pledge tattoos thought to be a predecessor to the larger, more elaborate *horimono* developed. Consisting of a small dot reminiscent of a mole, *irebokuro* [入れ黒子], literally ‘inserted mole,’ were placed on the hand between the thumb and forefinger in the position where hands meet when clasped together (Figure 9). Pledge tattoos in the form of names or words, known collectively as *kishobori* [起請彫], such as *inochi* [命], life, and *chiyo* [千代], literally ‘one thousand years,’ or ‘a very long time,’ were tattooed on the upper arm or inner thigh (Figure 10) (玉林 1995 [1936]: 12; Van Gulik 1982: 25).

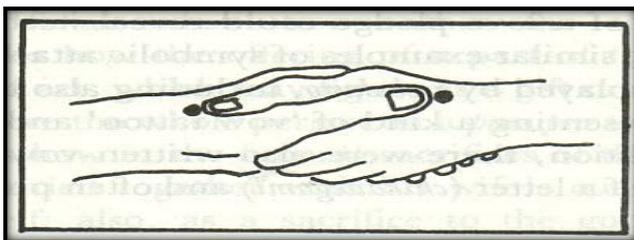


Figure 9: Above: *Irebokuro* on hands. Source: Van Gulik 1982: 25.



Figure 10: Right: Woodblock print depicting a *kabuki* character revealing *kishobori*. Source: Van Gulik 1982: plate 4.



Figure 11: Moxa burning tattoo removal. Source: Van Gulik 1982: plate 9.

These pledge tattoos were commonly found amongst courtesans wishing to show devotion to a lover or patron. While the permanence of the tattoo was purported to indicate the permanence of the courtesan's devotion,⁴⁵ these tattoos were removable by moxa burning or cutting (Figure 11) as depicted in woodblock prints of the time. One particular courtesan reportedly changed the name on her arm seventy-five times (Seigle 1993: 192-193). Although proprietors considered

irebokuro/kishobori inelegant and high-ranked courtesans were encouraged to avoid tattooing, demand was enough for the first tattooists to set themselves up nearby the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters.

Pledge tattooing was not limited to courtesans, and is thought to have been common amongst priests. Novelist Ihara Saikaku writes about the pledge tattooing between a priest and his lover in the well-known novel of the time, *Life of an Amorous Man*:

The rest of the story came to Yonosuke's ears long afterwards in Edo at a gathering of men devoted to love among homosexuals – a gathering at which confessions were freely made. On that occasion Sansaburo made a clean breast of life with the priest. He even had the word Kei tattooed on his left arm as proof of his devotion to the priest, whose name was Keisu. This, therefore, is not fiction but a true story.
(Saikaku tr. Hamada 1963: 149)

Another popular pledge that is still seen today shows religious sentiment also. *Namu Amida Butsu* [南無阿弥陀仏] and *Namumyōhōrengekyō* [南無妙法蓮華經] pledging devotion to

⁴⁵ Other signs of devotion were pulling out fingernails, cutting the tips of fingers off, or cutting hair (Seigle 1993: 193-4).

Amida Buddha started to become popular with well-known *otokodate* [男伊達] the so called street nights having them during the Empō-Tenna era (1673-1861).

Horimono

Tattooing, in the form recognised today as *horimono*, was evident a little later, from the end of the eighteenth century, and was identifiable in its current form by the Bunka-Bunsei period (1804-1829) (玉林 1995 [1936] ; Van Gulik 1982: 41; Yamamoto 2014: 89). *Horimono* at this time, clearly resembled the common clothing of the time, the shape coinciding with the short workman's coat.⁴⁶ Workers often worked in little more than a *fundoshi*, loin cloth, as an early traveller notes “cloaths tuck'd up above their waste, exposing their naked backs to the spectator. Early traveller to Japan, Isabella Bird (1905: 259) notes the parallel with clothing in her comment on a palanquin carrier deeming his ‘panoply of tattooing sufficient clothing.’



Figure 12: Edo style *horimono* clothing the body of a *betto*, groom. Source: Beato [photographer] in Cortazzi 1995: 76.

⁴⁶ This style in the shape of a worker's cloak or jacket is known today as *Edobori* or *Tokugawabori*.

It was not only the shape and usage of *horimono* to clothe the body, there was also a parallel in designs particularly between firemen and their fire protection coats (Figures 13 and 14).



Figure 13: Edo era Firemen's coat decorated with a sea dragon and Susanō-no-mikoto. Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art < <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1983.158a>>



Figure 14: Fireman tattooed with dragon motif. Source: Van Gulik 1982: plate 71.

During the developing and flourishing of decorative tattooing, firemen, *hikeshi* [火消し] were the most widely tattooed group. Closely constructed wooden buildings particularly in the crowded (Edo era) *shitamachi* area meant fires were both numerous and devastating. For example, the legendary Meireki fires of 1657, raged out of control for three days destroying nearly all of the *daimyō* mansions in Edo and parts of the *shōgun*'s castle, while between 1710 and 1719, fires destroyed over 1000 wards.⁴⁷ *Hikeshi* then were vital in the defence of the city. Described as unruly ruffians, they were renowned for their dandyism and penchant for fighting, an expression grew to symbolise both the character of both the blazing city and the firemen: *kaji to kenka wa, Edo no hana*,⁴⁸ [火事と喧嘩は江戸の華] ‘fires and fights are the pride of Edo.’

As the most widely tattooed group it is worth taking a closer look at the firemen of Edo. Following the Meireki fire of 1657 (Van Gulik 1982: 64), efforts were made to control the unruly firemen, and they were organised into groups by district, with set jurisdictions and governing protocols (玉林 1995 [1936]: 152-8). Three distinct fire brigades were formed

⁴⁷ For detailed figures of wards destroyed by fire during the Edo period, see M. Nishiyama and G. Groemer (1997: 29)

⁴⁸ Van Gulik (1982: 66) translates this phrase as ‘the pride of Edo are fiery and boisterous’ noting *hana*, flower, means ‘the pride’ or ‘the elite’ in reference to the Edo firemen, while *kaji*, fire, describes the ‘hot tempered countenance’ of the Edo firemen. Alternatively, Nishiyama and Groemer (1997: 29) translate the phrase as ‘the pride of Edo are fiery and boisterous.’

jōbikeshi [定火消] regular firemen, *daimyo-hikeshi* [大名火消] in charge of protecting Tokugawa temples and granaries (Sand and Wills : 52-53) and a town firemen, *machibikeshi* [町火消].⁴⁹ The final group of men, comprising workers mainly house builders, carpenters, labourers, and the like who had protective talismans⁵⁰ such as dragons and serpents, along with crests, *mon*, identifying their group, *gumi* displayed on their fire-coats. Figure 16 shows Edo period firemen wearing fire coats standing with their companies *matoi* [纏] banner,⁵¹ indicating the group to which they belonged. Organisation was essential in attempts to manage both the fires and firemen. Around ten thousand men were organised first into ten associations with each association further broken down into smaller groups, for a total of forty-eight groups⁵² (Sand and Will 2012: 52-53; 玉林 1995 [1936]: 156; Van Gulik 1982: 65-66).

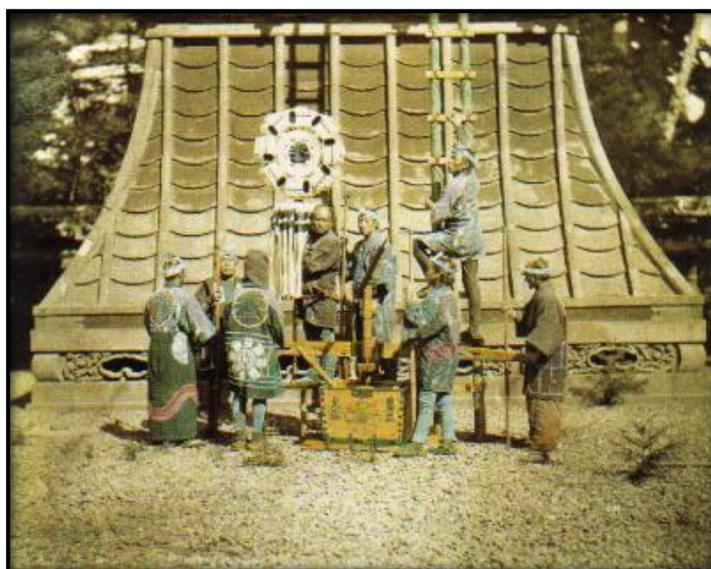


Figure 15: Firemen of Edo wearing fire coats emblazoned with the groups crest. Source: Von Stillfried [photographer] in Cortazzi 1995: 30.

Amongst the firemen, tattoos were useful for identification and also intimidation in the many fights that flared up between groups. According to the Kaei Records (1848-1853)⁵³ over ten

⁴⁹ Forming mid-17th century, and given formal status by the Shogun in 1718 (Sand and Wills 2012: 53).

⁵⁰ Van Gulik (1982: 113-178) gives a detailed structural functional analysis of the talismanic properties of the firemen's tattoo, suggesting that the dragon-snake symbolism favoured by the firemen parallels folk religious beliefs in the rain bringing properties of these creatures. I will return to this point, the correspondence between protective imagery of the firemen's tattoos in the Conclusion: Looking Forward.

⁵¹ Carried to the scene and positioned of the groups attendance (Sand and Wills 2012: 53).

⁵² Sand and Wills (2012: 53) note 47 groups.

⁵³ The official records of the Kaei period record an approximate total of 9000 firemen in groups 1 to 10, and around 1200 firemen in the Tokugawa *honsho* division (玉林 1995 [1936]: 158).

thousand firemen⁵⁴ were requisitioned to protect the city of Edo (玉林 1995 [1936]: 158), and given that tattooing was virtually universal amongst these men, it is reasonable to suggest that over ten thousand people in Edo had prolific tattooing. Additionally, as tattooing was also common amongst other tradesmen, the actual numbers of tattooed people were probably much higher (ibid).

The second most tattooed group of the Edo period were the palanquin carriers.⁵⁵ Like the firemen, they were an integral part of Edo life. They were prominent around the city and renowned for their competitiveness, their ostentatious nature, which coupled with picturesque tattoos, attracted customers. Along with chivalry, the ostentatious nature and prominent appearance typified the *otokodate*, ‘street night’ heroic ruffian character, of the time. Other tattooed groups were coolies and runners, wandering palanquin carriers (synonymous with roadside robberies), strongmen, boatmen, labourers, carpenters, gamblers, and thieves. Tamabayashi (1995 [1936]: 177-180) suggests that professional gamblers were aspiring merchants or warriors and therefore did not have tattoos, as there was by this stage in the development of tattooing an identification of tattoos with the *chōnin* ‘townspeople,’ the artists, craftsmen, merchants and so forth of the lowest order of social hierarchy. On the other hand, many common gamblers had tattoos, mainly because tattooists established themselves in the gambling environs (玉林 1995 [1936]: 179).⁵⁶ Tamabayashi further suggests gamblers did not have tattoos because they aspired to be like the tattooed bandits in popular fiction, rather they were people who already had tattoos and because of gambling problems became robbers (ibid: 179-180).

An increase in literacy at the time played an important role in the development and subsequent rise in popularity of decorative tattooing. This increased literacy meant the classic Chinese novel, *The Water Margin*, *Suikoden* [水滸伝] in Japanese,⁵⁷ written during the Yüan period (1279-1368) by Shih Nai-an and Lo Kuang-shung, was widely read. *Suikoden* tells a story of the heroic exploits of Sung Chiang and his followers known as the hundred and eight Liangshan

⁵⁴ A notable prevalence of tattoos was not paralleled in Osaka and Kyoto, where there were fewer fires and hence, less of a concentration of firemen.

⁵⁵ Koyama suggests that travellers to Japan noted palanquin carriers, groomsmen, and rickshaw drivers were one of the largest groups of people tattooed because they were the people with whom the travellers had most contact for transportation and may not have seen the firemen’s tattoos (小山 2010: 40).

⁵⁶ This is a significant point as present day yakuza are thought to have roots in gambling. The word ‘yakuza’ itself coming from the lowest hand in a game of cards.

⁵⁷ Translated as ‘All Men Are Brothers’ by Pearl S. Buck (1933) and ‘The Water Margin’ by J. H. Jackson (1937).

Heroes (Van Gulik 1982: 44-53; Kitamura 2000: 12-28; Hendry 2002: 24). The warriors, skilled in martial arts and wrestling, fought against corrupt officials. Not only were the characters heroic, some were dramatically tattooed⁵⁸. For example *Kyūmonryū Shishin* was tattooed with nine dragons (Figure 16), and the priest *Kaoshō Rochishin* was tattooed with flowers (Figure 17).



Figure 16: *Kyūmonryū Shishin* print by Utagawa Kuniyoshi. Source: Kitamura 2003: 52.

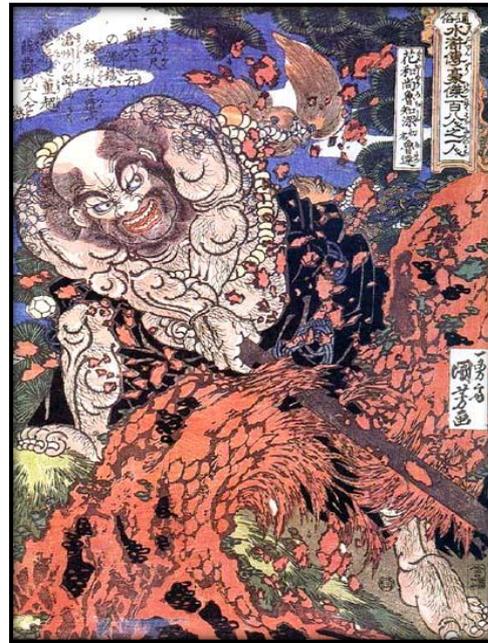


Figure 17: *Kaoshō Rochishin* by Utagawa Kuniyoshi. Source: National Museum of Japanese History <www.rekihaku.ac.jp/e-rekihaku>

After being brought to Japan in the beginning of the eighteenth century the novel was subsequently ‘Japanised.’ It was re-written and illustrated by many well-known Japanese scholars/artists of the time.⁵⁹ The famed *ukiyo-e* artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798-1861) designed many *Suikoden* prints, even adding tattoo motifs to a number of additional characters not tattooed in the original work (Van Gulik 1982: 50-1). Kuniyoshi himself was nicknamed ‘scarlet skin’ due to his own colourful *horimono* (Kitamura 2000: 13). The characters and exploits of the *Suikoden* struck a chord with the *chōnin* of the time, readily identifying with the ideals and actions of the characters. That many *chōnin* were tattooed in the same manner as the characters in the novel indicates an emulation of the heroic characters. The shape and style of

⁵⁸ See Van Gulik (1982) for details.

⁵⁹ For example, Kyokutei Bakin (1767-1848) and Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) began working together on a ninety-volume edition, *Shinpen Suiko Gaden*, ‘Illustrated New Edition of the Suikogaden’, in 1805. After a falling out, Hokusai continued to illustrate the work of Takai Ranzan. Ranzan and Hokusai completed the last volume in 1838 (Van Gulik 1982: 50-1).

horimono that emerged and flourished during this period, is unmistakably linked to *Suikoden* imagery, and is a trend that continues to the present day.

Print makers were the early tattooists of *horimono*, hence the overlap in language and parallels with in development of *Suikoden* prints and images of early *horimono*. Woodblock prints, along with Kabuki plays depicting historically based characters, incidents and stories of the time have immortalised both the style of tattooing and the distinctive character of the people who had the *horimono*. The aspects depicted in woodblock prints and Kabuki that of tattooed heroes who were also extroverts, gamblers or ruffians, continue to be influential today. Both woodblock prints and Kabuki characters still play a significant role in representations or understandings of *horimono* and decisions to become tattooed.

East and west meet

Following the end of the Tokugawa reign, and the so-called opening of Japan in 1868, the Meiji era is characterised by modernisation. A distinct emphasis was placed on presenting a ‘civilised’ image of Japan to the West, as foreigner travellers began to explore Japan. At this time, repeated attempts were made to prohibit tattooing because, as Charlotte Salwey (1896: 44) notes, “the first lesson in the advance of civilisation is that the body must not be exposed.” Although Salwey also writes of the end of tattooing: “the general use of clothing accepted in Japan and all Eastern stations has done away with the obligation of tattooing the skin or hiding the human form under a false covering” (ibid), it was not entirely the end. Prohibition of tattooing was difficult due to widespread popularity, and efforts to prohibit tattooing in 1811 and again in the Tempō reforms (1830-44) were met with little success (玉林 1995 [1936]: 115; Van Gulik 1982: 83-84). What the prohibitions did succeed in, however, was forcing the practice underground.

Official prohibition under the 1868 Meiji Laws and into the twentieth century led to those caught tattooing having their designs and tools confiscated, facing fines or incarceration (Kitamura 2000: 107; Van Gulik 1982: 85; 山本 2005: 144-149). If these proscriptions are what forced the production of *horimono* into secret locations, the Meiji Misdemeanour Law established in 1872 proscribing public undress, effectively slammed the door shut on the practice all together. Meiji Misdemeanour Laws prohibiting states of partial undress (loincloths or waistcloths) in urban, public spaces. Thus, effectively cloaking the naked body. More importantly, *horimono*, once prominent in the cityscape of Edo, was also covered along with the body.

Illegalising public undress had significant and long-lasting impact. In removing *horimono* from everyday visibility, normative associations of the tattooed body with firemen, labourers, carpenters, and palanquin bearers were also concealed. Kawano (2005: 151) argues Meiji Misdemeanour Laws criminalising public nudity effectively transformed the manner of seeing nude bodies, thus ‘altering Japanese discourses on nudity, eroticism, and gaze.’ This appears to have also been the case of *horimono*.

Paradoxically, while the Japanese government campaigned to stop the practice and saw tattooing as ‘uncivilised’, many visitors to Japan were actually seeking it out. Because of this, the Meiji prohibition was amended to apply only to Japanese, as Westerners coming to Japan found the tattoos fascinating and many got their own done in Japanese ports. Royal Navy Lieutenant Salwey for example wrote he was ‘most successfully tattooed’ with the ‘best curios I brought home’ (Salwey 1896: 143). Five members of the British Royal family were tattooed: Prince Albert (second son of Queen Victoria); Prince Arthur Duke of Conaught (third son of Queen Victoria); Prince Arthur’s eldest son, Albert Victor and second son, George who went on to become King George the Fifth (see 小山 2010 for details). Koyama has shown how this link with Royalty is what saved Japanese tattooing from being stamped out and lost altogether (ibid). This situation, presented a conundrum. On one hand, prohibitions had been put in place to present an image of Japan as ‘civilised’, yet foreigners were permitted and actively sought it out.

In the west at this time, tattoos were a status symbol of worldliness, indicating travels to far off places with sailors and visitors walking advertisements of the skill and mastery of Japanese *horishi*.⁶⁰ As word of Japanese tattooing spread, Japanese tattooists were enticed overseas to tattoo interested foreigners as in the case of Horichiyo who was paid a sum of \$12 thousand to go to America, while two others were sponsored by Samuel O’Reilly known to have patented the first tattoo machine (Sanders 2008 [1989]: 16-17); Kitamura describes a man called Sakata Kichisuke tattooing actresses in San Francisco (Kitamura 2008: 48), while Yamamoto (2005: 144) notes a number of Japanese *horishi* living and tattooing in Taiwan.

Prohibition of tattooing officially ended in 1948 with the Post-war constitution. After decades of prohibition and persecution, the practice had become synonymous with the ‘underworld; both the metaphoric ‘underworld’ and criminals and more literally, out of sight. The effects of many

⁶⁰ See Guth (2000, 2004) for discussions on cultural transferal, and cultural tourism.

years of suppression led Richie (1980: 32)⁶¹ and McCallum (1988: 125)⁶² to suggest tattooing in Japan was a dying tradition. However, while stigma remains, tattooing (both western style and Japanese) is slowly becoming more visible in Japan, and Japanese tattoos, particularly as *horimono* have become highly regarded internationally.

Japanese tattoos taken to the West on the arms of sailors and visitors alerted the world to the skill and mastery of the Japanese *horishi*. Then in the 1950s, a mutually advantageous friendship developed between a Japanese tattooist, Kazuo Oguri, known professionally as Gifu Horihide, and an American tattooist, ‘Sailor Jerry’ (Norman Keith) Collins, changing the shape of tattooing both in Japan and America⁶³ (DeMello 2000: 72-74; Hardy in Kitamura 2003: 108; Koyama 2003; Rubin 1988: 233-260; Sanders 2008 [1989] 18-20). Oguri and Collins exchanged designs, inks, techniques, and equipment. Perhaps most influentially, this friendship brought electric machines to Japan, and integrated designs to America. Cross-cultural exchange has had considerable impact on tattooing both in Japan and in the United States of America (McCabe 2005; Sanders 2008 [1989]).

With the introduction of electric machines came the new genre of Western style tattooing known as *yōbori* [洋彫り]. Western style tattoo [タトゥー] have become increasingly popular for youth as ‘fashion’ accessories and are generally considered to be less stigmatised than *horimono*. Conversely, while Western style tattoos are becoming increasingly visible in Japan, many Westerners are now also seeking out Japanese designs. Prominent Western tattooists also specialise in Japanese-style designs as well as the traditional hand methods,⁶⁴ and Japanese tattooists, such as the Horitoshi family have taken their skills overseas⁶⁵ to fill the growing demand for traditional Japanese tattoos (Maeda 2004:10-13).

⁶¹ Richie (1980: 32) writes, “tattooing is now becoming extinct, and what all the proscriptions put together could not achieve is now transpiring.” He suggests the reason for this is that tattoo masters trained in the traditional skills are now very few and have no students.

⁶² McCallum (1988: 125) suggests that “Japanese tattooing has lost its roots” and now has “little if anything to do with traditional Japanese culture.

⁶³ Following on, a number of other key American tattooists of the 1970s such as Don Ed Hardy and Cliff Raven built friendships with Japanese tattooists, Horibun (Yamada Bunzo) and Horiyoshi III (Nakano Yoshihito).

⁶⁴ American Don Ed Hardy, who in the 1970s and 1980s revolutionised American tattooing by produced large-scale custom designs reminiscent of the traditional Japanese tattoos. German, Alex Reinke, who trained under Horiyoshi III as ‘Horikitsune’ as part of the Horiyoshi family, runs “Horiyoshi III’s Holy Fox Tattoos” in Germany and also works regularly in Zurich Switzerland (Reinke <www.holyfoxtattoos.com>).

⁶⁵ Horitoshi is head tattooist and manager at *Studio 55* in New York City. *Studio 55* specialises in Japanese designs and traditional hand tattooing.

In Japan today, there are now two distinct streams of tattooing visible: the so-called ‘traditional’ *horimono* (also known as *wabori* [和彫り]) and the Western style tattoo, *tatū*. While there is some melding of motifs between the two practices, for the most part they remain separate. Because there is a small but steady increase in the number of young people being tattooed in the Western style and a growing number of tattooists specialising in western tattooing.⁶⁶ Furthermore, contra to Richie and McCallum’s suggestions that traditional tattoo is dying out, Horikazu and Horiyasu both note there is a growing number of young people seeking out *horimono* who are distinctly non-yakuza. In the case of Horiyasu, he sees an increasing number of foreigners amongst his clientele too.

Tattoo conventions and events have been instrumental in facilitating the exchange of ideas and information, as well as raising the profile of tattooing in Japan and the profile of Japanese tattooing internationally. In 2000, the first *Tokyo Tattoo Convention* in 2000 was the inception of one of Japan’s most well-known *horishi*, Horiyoshi III, and the American tattooist known as ‘Permanent Mark.’ The event was tied up with stringent police restrictions leading to it being ‘invitation only.’ This meant the artists who attended were all invited artists from countries other than Japan, and was supposedly to prevent yakuza infiltrating the event (Burton 2001). Since this inaugural event, there are yearly tattoo conventions and events held in various places around the country.⁶⁷

Yakuza connection

Although there have been favourable developments in tattooing in Japan since the Meiji era prohibitions, tattooing remains stigmatised with tattoos most commonly associated with yakuza. Yamamoto (2005) reasons this is the result of proliferation of 1960s movies depicting tattooed gangsters.⁶⁸ According to Peter Hill (2003: 87) just over 70 per cent of yakuza were tattooed in

⁶⁶ Nakano Choshiro, known also tattooist ‘Asakusa Horicho’, says he predicted in 1988 that by the year 2000 there would be almost 9000 Western style tattooists in Japan, and only a handful of *horishi*, which has not been the case.

⁶⁷ I attended the *King of Tattoo* event 2007 and 2008, which is held annually over three days in September in Ebisu, Tokyo. An interesting observation about this particular event was the prominence of non-Japanese attendees. Also, in the two years I attended, there was no *horishi* in attendance all day. Instead they were presented as a special event only.

⁶⁸ The characters that are tattooed in such movies may be gangsters but they are not necessarily bad. Ian Buruma (1985 :170-179) suggests that Japanese-style tattoos are used to signify the difference between the good *yakuza* and the bad *yakuza*. He argues that *yakuza* movies are bound to strict patterns, one of them being the festival scene. In the typical festival scene, young men dressed in traditional clothing are participating in a festival by carrying a shrine on their shoulders. A foreign car, driven by a cigar-smoking fat man wearing a Western suit, interrupts the traditional scene. The bad group is established as the Westernised group and the good group as those following tradition. The gang of good *yakuza* display

the 1970s, 90 per cent of which were traditional hand tattooed, and the remaining 10 per cent done by machine. Later figures suggest that the 70 per cent figure remains the same today (ibid). Ostentation (53 per cent), intimidation (17 per cent) and curiosity (7 per cent) (Mugishima et al. in Hill 2003: 87) were the most popular reasons given for tattooing by yakuza. Some public displays of tattoos by yakuza perpetuate the stereotype of the tattooed criminal. Florence Rome notes that Korean yakuza groups can be differentiated from Japanese yakuza by the tattoo designs.⁶⁹ *Mon* [紋] (crests) of the affiliated *bōryokudan* are sometimes incorporated into a tattoo design (Fellman 1986: 11). The identifying nature of tattoos/*horimono* is clear with Horibun said to have regularly helped identify the corpses of murdered yakuza by their tattoos.⁷⁰

The association between yakuza, or more importantly criminality, and tattooing in Japan has led to the prohibition of tattooed people from many bathhouses as illustrated in Figure 18, *onsen* [温泉], (hot springs), public swimming pools and other recreation centres such as health clubs and sports clubs, which in light of the increasing popularity of Western style tattoos is increasingly problematic. Drug related problems and unruly behaviour in summer 2010 in Suma Beach, Kobe, prompted strict new laws to accompany bathing at the seaside. One regulation is no visible tattooing. Following this, on June 30 2014, Kamakura Prefecture issued a misdemeanour law regulating manner at the seaside.⁷¹ ‘Revealing tattoos to awe others’ was deemed illegal under the new regulation (関東弁護士会連合会 2014: 159).⁷² According to youth I spoke to, their biggest problem in being tattooed is the inability to frequent public *onsen*, recreation centres and swimming pools. However, the tattooed people I asked about this laughed at this, explaining how it was easy to go into the *onsen* or public bath, they just could not return. Apparently it is not so common to be told to leave mid-bathe or mid-stay, rather on leaving they are asked not to return to the establishment again.

traditional *bushidō* values, with the lone hero seeking revenge. The hero reveals his tattoo – a sign of his traditional beliefs and his devotion to the group – before nobly slashing away at the villains with his sword as they cut him down with bullets. The tattoos indicating the good, traditional *yakuza* are of course Japanese motifs.

⁶⁹ Florence Rome writes: “when he drops his kimono from his shoulders, you can see the tattoo. If he is tattooed with skull and crossbones, or severed heads dripping blood, he is Korean. If he is tattooed with samurai emblems or chrysanthemums or things of that nature, he is Japanese” (1975: 119).

⁷⁰ The recording of inmate tattoos is practiced in Japan and around the world. Because of the overtly coded nature of some of the tattooing, it gives insight into both gang affiliations and associations. (See Phillips 2001; Riley 2006; Sanders 1988; Schouten and McAlexander 1995)

⁷¹ [海水浴場におけるマナーに反する迷惑行為] (関東弁護士会連合会 2014: 159).

⁷² [他人を畏怖させる入れ墨を露出すること] (関東弁護士会連合会 2014: 159).

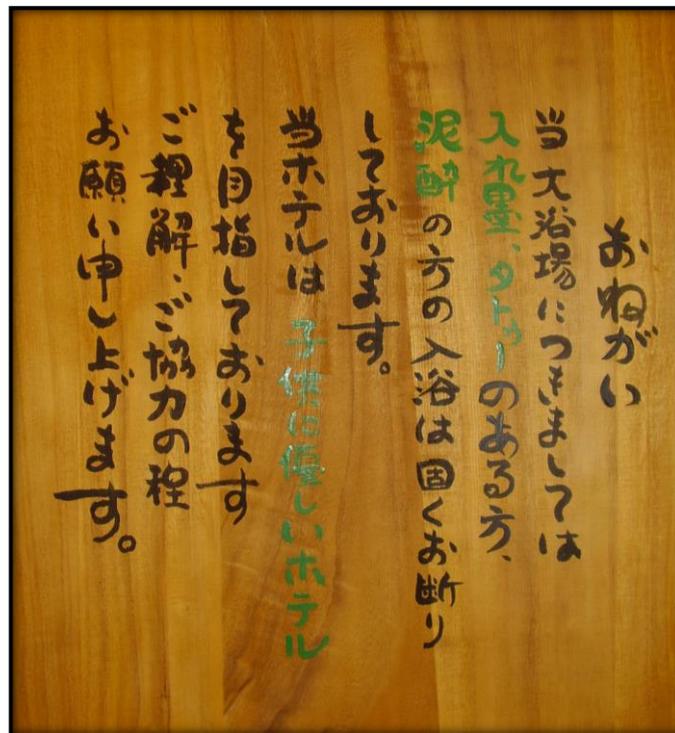


Figure 18: Sign prohibiting 'irezumi' and 'tatū' at a hotel *onsen*, Izu. Source: Taken by author.

The equation of Japanese *horimono* and criminality has spread worldwide. In the Philippines, immigration authorities at airports in Manila, Cebu and Mindanao have enforcing a 'no yakuza policy' that prohibits entry of Japanese with missing fingers or tattoos (Corbett 2002). Under this restriction, the Philippines has denied entry to a number of non-yakuza people with small tattoos (ibid). One such man could not enter the Philippines even after producing a legal document stating he had no criminal convictions. Similarly, the British Foreign Office warned soccer fans travelling to Japan to 'be aware that tattoos may cause offence' because in Japanese culture tattoos are associated with criminals. They advised soccer fans travelling to Japan for the world cup 2002 World Cup to keep their tattoos out of sight (Magnier: 2002). A recent symposium, *Rights of Self Determination and Modern Society: On the Paradigm of Tattoo Regulations*, held by the Kanto Federation of Bar Associations, September 2014, was a step forward in educating and addressing these issues in the lead up to Tokyo hosting the 2020 Olympics. Indicating changes in understandings and treatment of tattoo and *horimono* are perhaps on the horizon.

This chapter has shown the history of tattooing in Japan as characteristically fragmented and diverse, with the status of *horimono* today indisputably shaped by past practices. From official punishment marking criminals and outcasts, declarations of religious devotion or enduring love,

and protecting and adorning firemen/workers of Edo, through to ostentatious and nefarious displays of modern yakuza, the mix of conflicting practices of tattooing resonate in today's *horimono* in a lopsided manner. Aspects from the past, namely prohibitions and punitive practices, have become popularised in the present particularly through 1960s yakuza films, and supported by both localised notions of the body, and current legal cognisance. This slant towards synonymy/conflation with criminality has seen the communicative role of *horimono* that once also told the colourful story of the spirit, style and sensibilities, *iki*, of a certain peoples become overshadowed. But, if we were to illuminate these shadows by venturing into the *horishi's* atelier today what would we really see?

CHAPTER TWO

TECHNIQUES OF HORIMONO – PROCESS & PRACTICE OF TATTOOING

One week after setting an appointment by phone, the train I am riding pulls into the crowded Asakusa subway station on a damp grey December afternoon in 2006. Picking my way through the rabbit warren of exits bustling with tourists and commuters I emerge adjacent Asakusa's famed kaminarimon landmark clutching a crinkled map with hastily scrawled directions. "Hi there, wouldn't you like a rickshaw ride? See the sights from under some warm blankets?" one of the many rickshaw touts plying their services in front of the koban police box propositions in perfect American accented English. Declining, I shuffle west a few blocks past the eclectic mix of shop-fronts lining Kaminarimon-dōri where old tempura restaurants and Japanese sweet bean stores stand amongst ukiyo-e galleries with wares spilling out onto the footpath, and neon-signed fast food joints and convenience stores.

Ten minutes later I am standing in front of a non-descript apartment block in a quieter semi-suburban street just off another busy main road. As grey and foreboding as the winter sky that threatens rain above, the 1970s structure shows its age. With no advertisements or signage, I wonder, have I read the map correctly? Entering the unsecured lobby and scanning the mailboxes for a name, I see none, nor any other indication that the person I am here to meet is behind one of the non-descript apartment doors. Stepping out of a claustrophobic two person elevator, blinking to adjust to the dark narrow hallway, I catch a glimpse of two small bowls piled high with salt sitting either side of the door-number I am looking for; this may be the right place after all.⁷³

A petite, clean-cut man in a white t-shirt, clear skin protruding from his sleeves, answers the doorbell. With a brief introduction and cursory nod of his head I'm ushered inside. Taking off my shoes in the crowded entranceway, I step across the threshold into a small kitchenette and into the mansion studio of the award-winning, world-renowned tattoo master Horiyasu. With these steps – an Internet search, a telephone call and set appointment – I enter into the world of Japanese tattooing, a world that is often portrayed as being much harder to penetrate than the skin being inked.

This is my first encounter with a 'traditional' *horishi*: a meeting initiated by searching out contact details online. Through these contact details, I telephoned and set an appointment time and date to meet. Then, although there was a distinct lack of signage, following the instructions provided and with the map printed from Horiyasu's website, I was able to find my way to his studio with relative ease in a city where a plethora of narrow streets, little more than alleyways, go unmarked, and building numbers are assigned in order of establishment of blocks rather than the position on the street. My experience meeting Horiyasu for the first time is rather different

⁷³ Salt is used for purification purpose and common to the mansion studios I visited.

from Anthropologist Joy Hendry's experience fifteen years earlier. She writes of a vastly different experience:

[I]n order to meet my best informant in 1991, things were a little clandestine. A personal introduction from an artist in Oxford provided me only with a telephone number, and when I called I was instructed to take a taxi from the nearest station to a specific street corner, where I should phone again. I was then collected by the *deshi* (apprentice), who led me through several back streets and eventually up an outside staircase into a first-floor apartment (Hendry 2002: 26).

Although the studio of Horiyoshi III – Hendry's informant here – remains difficult to find it, it is now a well-publicized address. In the year 2000, less than a decade after Hendry's visit, Horiyoshi opened to the public 'Horiyoshi III Yokohama Tattoo Museum'⁷⁴ beneath one of his three studios (Horiyoshi III Official Website 2014). This unique museum is a treasure trove of tattoo paraphernalia displaying a priceless collection of machines, prints, tools, photographs and rare materials. Essentially a personal collection, the materials and resources are from not only Japan, but also other overseas tattooing cultures. Now, in 2014, the museum listed in popular English language tourist guides such as *Lonely Planet Japan* (2013: 186), is a recommended sight to see in Yokohama. Yet, somewhat unsurprisingly given the stigma still surrounding tattooing, Horiyoshi's Tattoo Museum goes unmentioned in the large volume of tourist guides on Yokohama in Japanese. This situation presents a similar paradox to lines such as the 'yakuza tattoo' or 'secretive world of Japanese tattooing' that continue to be claimed at a time when accessibility to tattoo masters, academic interest and, for better or worse, media reporting on *horimono* and western tattoo is arguably at an all-time-high.

Such paradoxes along with observable changes in the visibility and accessibility of tattooing over the past couple of decades raise important questions about the status of tattooing in Japan. Primarily, what tattooing practices exist in contemporary Japan? Relatedly, how do *horishi* navigate the changing social conditions surrounding tattooing outlined in the previous chapter? Lastly, and more broadly, how do people – both tattooed and non-tattooed – define Japanese tattooing today?

This chapter deals with these questions, presenting an ethnographic description of tattooing practices including the operation process, setting, techniques and tools. The previous chapter has illustrated the colourful history of tattooing in Japan and the often-conflicting forms and

⁷⁴ In Japanese Horiyoshi III's museum is called Tattoo History Museum: 「文身歴史資料館」.

positions it has occupied amongst various people at different times. Comparing and contrasting with these earlier practices, as well as those found in other cultural settings, the aim of this chapter is to define the practice and process of Japanese tattooing today.

To begin, I describe the process of tattooing outlining the operation and setting in which it takes place. Next, I introduce the business of tattooing, discussing the client relations that emerge from specific business models.

PROCESS OF TATTOOING

Operation

Behind the closed door of Horikazu's second floor studio, the first client of the afternoon lies prostrate on a towel, head tilted sideways, arms hanging loosely by his body. Sensei, as Horikazu is referred to, sits on the tatami matting at his client's side, legs crossed waiting on his wife, Akemi, to mix the required coloured inks. Akemi is working at a trolley stacked full with small vials of various shades of ink powder specially formulated for human skin. Picking through the array of plastic cups marked with each client's name she selects the one needed. Matching fresh ink with the remnants of the previous sessions by sprinkling a little of the coloured ink powder, adding a measure of purified water, she takes a natural fibre calligraphy brush promptly cutting it down to size. With a practiced hand Akemi prepares the contents of the cup. Much larger than the thimble sized liquid ink caps other artists seem to favour, the plastic cups lining the trolley in Horikazu's studio contain a careful mix of colours, each one selected to suit the skin tone of the client, complementing and enhancing the design they form on exertion under the skin.

"I'll need that one with the wooden handle. It's in the bag I took to Hokkaido," Sensei says, prompting Akemi to look through a collection of tools in various shapes and sizes. Finding the requested one, she passes over the *nomi* [鑿], or chisel. Grasping the bamboo handle with black latex covered hands, Horikazu deftly swivels the clamp, detaching the stainless-steel headpiece of needles known as *hari* [針] from the long shaft, transferring the needles to another shorter, bulbous, wooden shaft. A solid block of Nara sumi,⁷⁵ India Ink, that has already been freshly rubbed into a stone tray and watered to the desired consistency and depth of colour is now set beside the prepared tools on the mat next to Horikazu, along with thick gauze-like disposable towel that will be put to use wiping off excess ink, blood and plasma once the operation begins.

Equipment ready, with a discerning eye Horikazu examines the area to be worked on, running his finger over the *suji-bori* [筋彫り], outline tattooing and

⁷⁵ There are two types of Nara sumi, or India ink: *Shōenzumi* [松煙墨] and *Yuenzumi* [油煙墨]. *Shōenzumi* made from burning pine resin gives a blue tinge. While *Yuenzumi* made from burning rapeseed oil, paulownia oil or sesame oil, gives a deep black, and is favoured by *horishi*.

some vaster tracts of bokashi [ボカシ] shading, that he completed a couple of weeks earlier. Spreading the skin with his broad hands, he carefully checks for any ink loss that may have occurred during the healing process when the wound flaked and scabbed-over. If too much blood or plasma coagulates thickly over the wound, it may crack and remove the freshly embedded ink as the hardened scab falls away. Satisfied it appears to have healed clearly and cleanly, the client is deemed ready for his next session.

Preparing the area to resume working, Sensei shaves the hair with a disposable razor, wiping the skin clean with antiseptic spray before holding the skin to be inked taut with his left hand. Grasping the nomi, chisel, firmly in the palm of his right hand, index finger pointing downwards he guides the needled shaft in a swift scooping movement, dipping the needles through a sumi-laden brush threaded tightly between the steady fingers of his left hand, punctuating the skin on the curving motion. This style of tebori hand tattooing sees the needles enter under the dermis of the skin at an acute angle. Even the slightest variation in angle will produce a different effect of placement of ink under the skin leading to variations in density of colour. The nine needles, bunched three by three, suckers in and out in short rapid bursts that are punctuated periodically with a longer silence as Horikazu takes ink onto the needles via the brush head wiping away excess fluid before the symphony continues. Over and over, in a methodical rhythmic pattern, Sensei's hands move ambidextrously in fluid, measured union to slowly but steadily add tiny droplets of colour; one tiny dot per needle head visible in the freshly marked skin. Overlapping the inked surface to blend or add depth, the colour begins to fill in from the edges of the black outlines and shading.

For the next two hours the process continues, broken only for a couple of bathroom breaks and sips of tinned coffee brought out on call by Akemi from their adjoining family residence. While other studios are smoky havens, a pull of nicotine apparently relieving tension and relaxing the client to more easily accept the needles thereby facilitating an easier, less painful, and thus faster operation, here there is a strictly no smoking policy on account of Akemi's allergies. Here in this modest studio setting Horikazu, with the support of his wife, brings his shita-e, 'under-drawing' designs, to life.

Tools

The method of tattooing being practiced by Horikazu in the episode above is a hand-poke method known as *tebori*⁷⁶, [手彫り] translated literally as 'hand carving.' This is one of two methods or styles of tattooing practiced in Japan. The other method is the standard western method of machine tattooing called *kikaibori* [機械彫り] or *mashīn-bori* [マシーン彫り], literally 'machine carving' in Japanese. Although *tebori* literally translates as 'hand carving,' the operation itself is more poking than carving. The link with carving stems from *horimono*'s ties with woodblock print production as mentioned earlier; hence the shared names for tools, along with words describing the practices. Hand tools, called either *nomi* [鑿]—chisels— or

⁷⁶ See Appendix One for *Horimono* styles and terminology.

dōgu [道具]- tools – also bare similarities in shape with carving tools and calligraphy brushes. Variations in length, thickness and adornment to the tool handles personalise the equipment. *Horishi* usually produce their own tools⁷⁷ crafting the lengths and weight to suit their unique technical nuances.

Materials used for the tools have varied over time, although the basic structure remains the same. Originally made of wood or bamboo handles on which to grip, with needles attached by silk thread, increased usage of sterilisation equipment such as autoclaving necessitated a switch from thread, which is prone to harbouring bacteria or bodily fluids, to easily sterilised stainless steel. Thus these days, arrangements of stainless-steel needles are attached in either of two ways. Needles are either first welded to a headpiece. The headpiece that the needles are attached to incorporates a small screw-clamp enabling the needle configuration to be attached to any number of different handles and detached for sterilisation. Alternatively the needles may be soldered or wired directly onto a stainless steel handle so that the entire tool can be placed within the autoclave machine.

As noted earlier, handles are either stainless steel, wooden or bamboo. The length and shape of the handles varies between *horishi* to suit their individual methods of tattooing. It may be long, around 20 to 25 cm in length, so the tool can be gripped pen-like with the tattooist's index finger guiding the shaft. Alternatively, it may be thicker, shorter, and grasped more fully with the palm of the tattooist's hand. The number of needles on these handles varies from a single needle through to bundles of around 40, stacked flat or into even layers two or three deep. The tips of the needs are around 3 to 4 mm and arranged curved fan like at the end of the shaft. Different styles of tattooing require different thickness and configurations of needles. For example, finer configurations of needles are used for outlining and the broader, larger configurations for shading. According to Horikazu, the size of tools used may also vary dependent on the condition of the clients' skin, whether it is easy to penetrate, or not. The application of a full body suit can take years to complete and it's not uncommon for *horishi* to put together personalised sets of needles to suit the individual clients' needs, keeping a full set for each long term client. This practice, along with the individual ink preparations and brush sets described above also help prevent the spread of blood-borne diseases or bacteria.

⁷⁷ Tattoo kits, comprising a combination of different length tools set with a variety of needle compositions, are sold online by established tattooists indicating not all tattooists produce their own equipment.

Tebori is extremely time consuming, and can take hours to complete just a few centimetres of skin. For instance, the second session of shading and colouring on a full back piece continued for near to three hours resulting in a single, albeit detailed, three centimetre by ten centimetre square head/face area of a deity beginning to take form. Although one can look at a piece and appreciate the artistry of the imagery and use of the deliberate moving body, seeing the process in practice, sheds new light on how *horimono* are brought into being. Because of the broad canvas, *horimono* are completed in what may appear a haphazard fashion with small sections being completed here and there, the over all image slowly emerging like a puzzle, joining together to complete a picture. The final addition is always committing the pupils to the eyes of the characters. Horikazu referred to this as ‘bringing the *horimono* to life.’

Traditionally, *horimono* incorporated a narrow range of colours, namely, blue-black, green, red, and yellow. Pigments were either vegetable or mineral based and mixed with rice paste to achieve a smooth liquid consistency. Inks originally made including ferrous sulphate were incredibly toxic and painful. Using this type of ink gave the client dangerous fevers and was therefore used sparingly. These days most of the colours are synthetic and produced specifically for skin, and the array of colours available is seemingly unlimited. Tattoo ink, in either powder form or liquid, comes in a wide array of colours. *Horishi* further mix the colours to achieve the desired shade. Improvements in ink quality and colouring have greatly contributed to the artistic effect of tattoos, as has developments with machinery.

Kikai or electric machines are now standard fixture for *horishi*, even those who practice ‘traditional’ *horimono*. In these cases, *horishi* use machines in conjunction with *tebori* tools. With machines, fine outlining is quick and clean. However, some *horishi* like Horikazu are adamant they only use *kikai* to improve the look of their work rather than to lighten the workload. Although many tattooists use machines, home-made or bought, they are not tempted to give up *hari* for colouring and shading as the detail and gradation that *hari* bring to the finished piece is unparalleled.

There are several types of tattoo machines: rotary using a regulated electric power source, coil machines relying on electromagnetic coils, liner, shader, or pneumatic machines that used pressurised air. Coil machines are most common and are comprised of two steel coils attached to two metal frames that encase a needle tube. A needle bar, a long piece of metal with needles attached at the end, drives through the needle tube. The tattooist grips the needle bar as if holding a pen as the oscillating motor, to which the needle bar is attached, rapidly drives the

needles in and out at a rate of about 80 to 150 times per second. The user alters the speed to suit the thickness of the skin and desired line or shading depth. Similarly, needles vary in size, both diameter and length, with different needle combinations achieving different results. For hygiene, the stainless steel needles are single use only. The needles are periodically dipped in ink, usually set out in single usage ink-caps, and is held in the needles by the osmotic force of the oscillations.

The current generation of *horishi* are not inclined to give up their *nomi* or *hari*, yet have made conscious decisions to use machines to enhance their work. What does ‘traditional Japanese tattoo’ actually mean then today? Horikazu, who strived to conform to traditional motifs and colour combinations in line with Japanese aesthetics, told me there are no true *horishi* left since Asakusa Horicho, the last to use only *hari* put down his tools.

Setting

On entering, Horiyasu’s studio⁷⁸ was that of an average apartment: two rooms and a small kitchen. Lead by a *deshi* [弟子], apprentice, to the sofa in the waiting room my attention is immediately captured by life size photographs of tattooed bodies adorning the walls. An unnerving buzz of a tattoo machine hums in the air. There is a distinct odour, a lingering of stale cigarette smoke, mingled with that of the tattoo – blood, sweat and ink. Seated here, the waiting clientele can see into the ‘workroom.’ A client in his twenties is prostrate on towels spread over the tatami flooring as Horiyasu works cross-legged, etching the outline of a koi, carp, onto his clients back.

‘Mansion studio’ in this thesis refers to the likes of both Horiyasu’s and Horikazu’s work places. These work places are set up and operating in residential apartment buildings,⁷⁹ as opposed to modern, Western style ‘street shops’, or studios with a visible shop front. Studios ‘hidden’ in the suburbs without signage came about after the prohibitions on tattooing forced tattooists into hiding. At that time *horishi* tattooed secretly, in danger of being caught, their tools confiscated

⁷⁸ While I use the word studio in this thesis to refer to the tattooing space I recognise atelier would also be appropriate. This is the term used by Kawasaki (2012). As would work space or work place, which is what it is known as in Japanese with the term *shokuba* [職場].

⁷⁹ Through the course of my fieldwork, only the location of one of these ‘mansion studios’ was kept in any great secret. Interestingly, this studio was of a *horishi* practicing machine tattooing as opposed to *tebori*, hand method. The *tatū horishi* in question said he “didn’t want to upset his neighbours” by having me visit, so I interviewed him over the telephone. Of the mansion studios and street shops I visited, this ‘hidden’ studio was the only one located in a completely residential area away from a distinct ‘downtown’ or shopping district.

and their work destroyed. Yet, this type of home workshop is familiar in the *shitamachi* area (cf. Dore 1958; Kondo 1990).

Aside from being situated in residential apartments, the set-up and operation of the mansion studios I observed share a number of similarities with street shops. Street shops are comparable to their Western counterpart. They are highly visible and approachable with their neon signage and advertising encouraging prospective clients to enter. The average interior consists of a reception/counter, seating/waiting area where (prospective) clients can browse photo albums, tattoo design books (flash) and magazines, and a workspace where the operation takes place. While some studios do offer private booths or rooms, much tattooing occurs in full visibility of other clients. In the case of Horikazu, it was not unusual for colleagues or friends of the client to also be in attendance, waiting on the couch flipping through magazines or albums while the operation was taking place.

Where street shops and mansion studios differ, however, is in the styles of tattooing and because of this, the number of people working together. Street shops, or the *horishi* who work in them, often specialise in a particular style of tattooing, such as tribal, new school, old-school, or portraiture. Often times, a number of tattooists specialising in different styles will work side by side in one shop. This practice is a contrast to someone like Horikazu who said, “why would I hang out with another *horishi*, cooks don’t get together and share recipes do they?”

Financial benefits are another reason for operating mansion studios. A *horishi* with over thirty years in the trade only half-jokingly suggested the secretive or hidden nature of these studios, is actually a shrewd financial decision and not the result of lingering stigmatisation. Working from home, supposedly unknown to neighbours,⁸⁰ in a residential address he says, means he can avoid paying tax. For *horishi* like this man, relying on word of mouth is enough to bring too much business. Others have taken to advertising in both English and Japanese broadening their clientele base. Such is the case of Horiyasu, advertising on the Internet in both English and Japanese. He says many of his clients come from overseas to be tattooed by him, and likewise he attends international conventions when he can to take his tattooing to the world.

⁸⁰ While studios may be discrete with no overt advertising, the notion that neighbours were not aware of the studios or occupations of the *horishi* seems debatable, particularly in older close-knit *shitamachi* communities. I am skeptical about the notion of ‘hidden’ studios given the colourful characters coming and going on a daily basis.

Websites, signage and magazine advertisements are indications of innovative business practices adopted by *horishi* to generate or tap into emerging markets. *Horishi* reaching out to a wider audience via advertising on-line suggests demand for the practice. It also demonstrates the drive for *horishi* to share their art with others. While *horimono* do not have a high profile in Japan, ‘Japanese tattooing’ certainly does outside of the country. Many foreign enthusiasts travel to Japan specifically seeking *horishi* to have ‘authentic’ work done. Although Horiyasu’s business card, shown below in Figures 19 and 20, is in Japanese his website that contains details in English is listed.



Figure 19: Business Card, Asakusa Horiyasu, front. Source: Authors

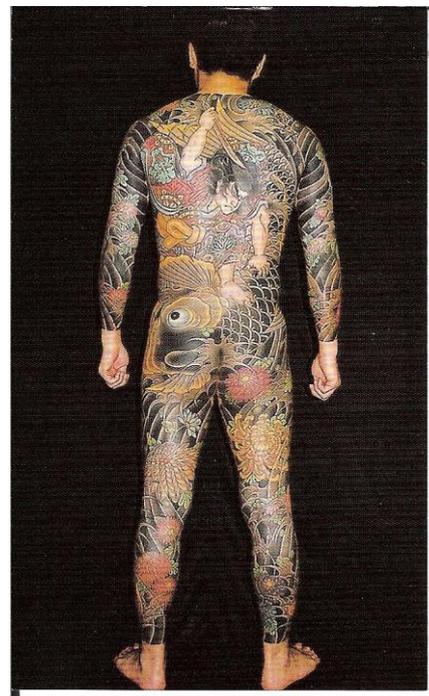


Figure 20: Business Card, Asakusa Horiyasu, back. Source: Authors

PRACTICES OF TATTOOING

Business models employed by mansion studios set them apart from their street shop counterparts. Street shops welcome ‘walk-in’ clients who enter off the street with no prior booking. Walk-in clients choose ready-made designs, either ‘flash’, standardised and mass produced sheets of design, or pre-drawn designs they bring themselves. The clients may then be tattooed with no prior consultation or appointment. For the most part ‘walk-in’ clients will be encouraged to book an appointment for a future date or alternatively, discouraged from being tattooed without deeper consideration. In addition, not all street shops welcome walk-in clients

and insist on making an appointment for the operation to be done later. As one *horishi* insists, “Tattooing isn’t something you get as a trend. Don’t get it just because you think it’s cool. Make no mistake, tattooing is for life, you want something with meaning so you don’t regret it the rest of your life.” Especially busy tattooists can further be booked out months in advance, as are busy *horishi*.

Business methods

Tattooing *horimono* is not merely decorating the body – it is business. The business of *horimono* is an expensive one for those contemplating getting inked. Consequently, key factors when considering getting *horimono* and choosing a *horishi* are style, cost and availability. Some *horishi* specialising in *tebori* or *wabori* [和彫り], ‘Japanese style,’ may be booked out months in advance. These *horishi* also charges considerably for their services. Typically, *horishi* charge around 20,000 yen per hour,⁸¹ with each appointment being for a two-hour session.⁸²

On the other end of the scale, street studios can often tattoo immediately as noted above, and begin from around 5000~8000 yen per hour. These prices of course vary from *horishi* to *horishi* based on many variables such as experience, specialties, and customisation. In these figures alone, the attraction for a cheaper option in *tatū* is obvious. However, my observation of business conducted in Horikazu’s Asakusa studio indicates that prices were not necessarily fixed.

Horikazu was very vague when I initially asked what rates he charged per hour, dismissing my question with the wave of his hand. Initially, I assumed this a taboo subject and did not ask directly about it again. Soon it became clear that although Horikazu refrained from mentioning an hourly rate, he often quoted cost per body part or per full body. Given that other *horishi* charge approximately 20,000 yen per hour, work roughly two hours per session, and a back piece from shoulder to buttocks requires approximately 25 sessions, and a full body takes over 50 sessions, a ball park figure is easy enough to estimate. By such calculations, a full back costs around ¥1 million and a full body, is twice as much at ¥2 million yen.

⁸¹ All prices quoted in this chapter are in Japanese yen and were relevant for the year 2008.

⁸² Sessions can be longer or shorter depending on the stamina of both client and *horishi*.

However, often people expressing interest in getting work done by Horikazu were told more than double this rate, or outright outrageous prices. Perhaps the elevated prices are to deter the prospective client, rather than the *horishi* refusing them outright. Clients themselves acknowledge that they do not choose the *horishi*. Rather, the *horishi* chooses the client. Added to this I noted Horikazu request full cash payment before the operation of some clients, not per session, giving the clients incentive to continue being tattooed. Full payment also covers the *horishi* should clients stop keeping appointments for any number of reasons, finances, incarceration, or defection to another *horishi*. Other clients came when they had the money. Endo, a thirty-eight year old labourer, was in this situation. With an incomplete *horimono*, Endo dropped by Horikazu's studio once or twice a year to keep contact with his Sensei. "Money is tight so I can't come as much as I need to. I'm saving to have the rest completed." Turning to Sensei he says, "What is your schedule like? Would it be possible to finish the rest in about three or four months' time?"

The cost of Horikazu's work also varied with individual clients, based it seemed, on their relationship to him. Friendly with his clients, the degree of reverence and respect paid him clear in the honourific language used; also in the manner in which clients conformed to Horikazu requests, issues that will be discussed further in the next chapter. The friendships needed to be kept at a suitable distance, as Horikazu explained, "I'd never make any money if they were my friends." In this respect, maintaining the master / client relationship was a financial necessity.

Steps to being tattooed

The steps for being tattooed follow a general pattern. Clients make an appointment to meet with the *horishi*, in a kind of consultation or counselling session. During this appointment, discussion focuses on design ideas, placement, size and so forth. At this appointment, should the *horishi* accept the client, a plan is made for the completion of the *horimono*. Given the time taken to complete larger pieces the schedule can stretch over months and, in some cases, years. This is longer still for *horishi* who use machines necessitating a sometimes-lengthy healing process.

Given the popularity and specialty, clients are willing to wait as long as it takes. David, a German university student was set on getting tattooed by Horiyasu while he was studying in Japan having seen Horiyasu's work featured in tattoo magazines. After an initial appointment, a schedule was agreed upon to tattoo a back piece of a dragon complimented by peonies. There was a four month waiting period from the time of setting the schedule until the first session of

tattooing, then an estimated twenty to twenty-five sessions at a fast paced one per week were pencilled into Horiyasu's diary. At this rate, there was a concern the skin would not heal enough between sessions to carry on seeing as Horiyasu uses a machine rather than the *tebori* method. Determined to be tattooed while in Japan, David signed a contract, had his back measured and desired design confirmed before heading immediately to the bank to transfer the ¥40,000 deposit that would secure his appointment.

Safety deposits are required at the time of counselling. Street shop and mansion studio *horishi* alike may request either a percentage of the overall fee on booking, or the first hourly payment to be deducted from the overall cost on completion of the tattoo. Horiyasu requested a bank transfer of the first session (two hours) following the initial meeting and signing of contracts. It is then on receipt of this deposit, he begins drawing the *shita-e*, tattoo design. Should the client break the contract, deciding not to be tattooed following the consultation, the *horishi* is not out of pocket. Contracts such as Figure 21 on the next page are an attempt to safeguard both the client and the tattooist.

Furthermore, according to Horicho, it is only once the contract is set and signed that payment should be discussed. He is of the opinion that cost is not a determining factor in whether to get tattooed or not. The next section looks further into these relationships between client and *horishi*.

刺青施術同意誓約書

H18年 12月 20日

<< 浅草彫やすstudio注意事項 >>

○ご予約について

1. 二彫から予約受け付け致します。(一彫 約50分)
2. 予約時に予約保証金として二彫分をお預かり致します。作品完成時に返金または差し引き致します。

○キャンセルについて

1. 刺青施術(以後施術)を受ける方の都合によるキャンセルは、いかなる理由によっても、予約日より2週間前は予約保証金より一彫分、1週間前は二彫分をキャンセル料として頂きます。
2. 6ヶ月以上施術による来店が無い場合、施術放棄とみなしキャンセルになります。その後、施術希望される方は再度予約保証金をお預かり致します。
3. 予約保証金および不足分はキャンセル時より、1週間以内にご入金ください。
4. ご入金の無い場合は、以後の予約はキャンセルと致します。
5. 連絡が何日も取れない場合はキャンセルとみなし、予約保証金をキャンセル料として頂きます。
6. その後の予約については、再度、ご相談の上お受け致します。
7. やむを得ず”浅草彫やすstudio”からの急な予約変更がある場合は施術を受ける方と相談の上、予約変更致します。

※施術を受ける方の都合によりキャンセルされる場合は15日前までにご連絡下さい。

○当日、施術予定時刻に遅れる場合は必ずご連絡ください。予定時刻に遅れた場合でも終了時刻の変更及び延長は致しません。その際、料金は施術時間分ではなく予約時間分頂きます。

○刺青を入れた当日は清潔な湯などで洗い、軟膏剤(ドルマイシン・クロマイP等)を朝晩塗ってください。その後も薄皮が取れるまで薬を塗り続けてください。関節や衣類があたる場所は、薬を塗った後にラップなどで保護することをおすすめ致します。患部を洗うのは二日くらいで、その後はかいたりこすったりしないでください。

○18歳未満、高校生は不可。

○施術当日は15分前までに来店してください。

※施術当日、持参するものはバスタオル3枚です。

○その他、ご不明な点がございましたら先におたずねください。

<< 刺青施術同意誓約事項 >>

○私は自らの意思により、“浅草彫やすstudio”に刺青(tattoo)の施術を依頼しました。施術にあたり、“浅草彫やすstudio”より十分な説明及び指示を受け内容を理解したうえで施術をお願い致します。

○なお、施術中、施術後の身体、刺青等にかかる事態が生じても、施術者や関係する組織に対する請求訴訟などすべての権利を放棄致します。

○”浅草彫やすstudio”の技術向上の為、施術部位の写真撮影に同意し、当写真の著作権、肖像権は主張致しません。

○”浅草彫やすstudio”での施術中は、その出入りをはじめ公序良俗の範囲内で行動致します。

○私自身の生年月日は、下記の通りであり、その証として身分証明書(パスポート、住民票、健康保険証、運転免許証、その他写真付証明書)を提示致します。

○私は以上のことを承諾致しましたので、本書に署名・捺印致します。

浅草彫やすstudio
東京都台東区西浅草2-14-13 マンション西浅草502号

TEL 03 - 3843 - 3444

代表 安田 森次 殿

住所 [Redacted]

TEL [Redacted]

氏名 [Redacted] 印 性別 (男)女 生年月日 [Redacted] 年 月 日

施術予約日時

| | | |
|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. / : ~ : | 5. / : ~ : | 9. / : ~ : |
| 2. / : ~ : | 6. / : ~ : | 10. / : ~ : |
| 3. / : ~ : | 7. / : ~ : | 11. / : ~ : |
| 4. / : ~ : | 8. / : ~ : | 12. / : ~ : |
| 予約金 済 ・ 未 | 施術内容 [Redacted] | 担当者 [Redacted] |

Figure 21: Tattoo Operation Agreement Contract for Asakusa Horiyasu Studio

Client relations

The settings and practices described above do not leave all the power in the *horishi*'s hands. *Horishi* are sometimes obliged to tattoo people they do not want to tattoo. One young client came nervously to Horikazu's studio requesting to be tattooed. Sensei, claiming a tight schedule, artfully declined. Only later on admitting that he did not think the young man would have enough money to afford to pay up-front for his *horimono*.

A few days later, a well-dressed middle-aged woman arrived at the studio. Bowing deeply and begging pardon for intruding, the woman left her shoes on the entrance stone, and stepped into Horikazu's studio. Immediately to her knees, she bowed deeply, prostrating herself before Horikazu sitting at the coffee table. With a polite but firm tone, she repeats the request asked earlier by her son. "Please consider tattooing him. "There is no one else who could do this," she says implying the mastery of Horikazu is unparalleled. Bowing further, pleading more eloquently, she slides over the coffee top a full envelop. Stuffed with cash, she here to pay for her sons *horimono*. The young, soon-to-be-client's mother was the *mama-san*, proprietor, of a bar Horikazu frequented. Horikazu could easily refuse the son; not so the *mama-san* of his local bar. In this case, a refusal was difficult given the pre-existing relationship Horikazu had with the boys' mother, illustrating how existing relationships are important factors in the business of *horimono*.

Unpleasant obligations extend beyond the studio as well. Drinking in a small bar with *Horikazu* and some of his extremely extroverted yakuza clients, I asked whether he came there much with these people. And in blunt terms said, "they are not my friends," again drawing a line between client and *horishi*. I discuss the issue of obligations further in Chapter Three.

Until around thirty years ago, *horishi* were also in direct control of the images, choosing what the person should have. Control of image was necessity of a no appointment style of business. Introductions may have still been necessary to find the *horishi*, but clients did not make appointments, rather, *horishi* tattooed on a 'first come first served' basis. This left clients lined up out the door waiting, and no time for discussing design and placement. In those times trust in the *horishi* was paramount especially as *horishi* drew designs freehand onto the skin with a brush and ink instead of the prepared images used today. Furthermore, this was before the common use of autoclave sterilisation, making infections or disease a very real danger for both clients and *horishi*. These days, there is minimal risk with the implementation of effective sterilisation procedures and as I have shown above, appointments are necessary.

Imagery

I will not go into detail here regarding images, there is a broad range of detailed studies already on Japanese tattoo imagery. Instead my concern here is to first illustrate the *horishi's* role in image selection; and second, to discuss what 'traditional' Japanese tattoo is, particularly in terms of visual understandings or categorisations.

Image selection can be a delicate process. Although, previously *horishi* had final say in the designs their clients received, and some clients may still defer the choice of design to the *horishi*, trusting their knowledge and expertise to match an image to not only the body but the person too (to be discussed further in Chapter Four). At times, however, there is also an impetus to follow the customers' requests. On occasion, this occurs regardless of whether the combinations of elements are correct. For example, climbing koi combined with *botan* [牡丹], peonies; even though koi climb upstream in autumn and therefore should be shown with *momiji* [紅葉], maples, an autumnal element. Also *horishi* are more inclined to deviate from tradition, opting instead to add their own interpretations to formally fixed designs. For example, *tengu* [天狗], traditionally facing slightly off centre, is now getting full frontal display.⁸³

In some cases, the *horishi* simply lacks knowledge. Other times, he chooses to mis-represent. Horikazu for example is particularly scathing of inappropriate combinations or deviations from tradition, but concedes, "If that is what the customer wants, then that is what they get." He says explicitly, time is money and he doesn't make money sitting around discussing designs. More importantly however, is that clients with ties to *horishi*, mainly through yakuza networks, would not be given a misrepresented *horimono*. Those coming to *horishi* via yakuza networks are bound to a strict social structure where the *horishi*, *Sensei*, as they are known, is always right. For example, a *horimono* enthusiast may recognise skulls as symbolic of the brevity of life; yakuza will also see the brevity of life in skulls, but know these are the lives taken by the wearer.⁸⁴ Further, yakuza may be aware of coded meaning of *horimono* elements. Coded meanings can be seen in Figures 22 and 23. The *horimono* here are on a heavily tattooed yakuza, who along with his 'friends' are tattooed with characters from the popular cartoon 'Doraemon and friends' to indicate their relationship.

⁸³ Refer to Nakano for more details on poorly executed designs (中野 2002: 95-106).

⁸⁴ When looking at photographs of a *horishi's* work, I asked what the story was behind 7 skulls, recently inked on the man's torso. *Horikazu* casually said, 'they're the people he sent to hell.' This example is discussed further in Chapter Four.

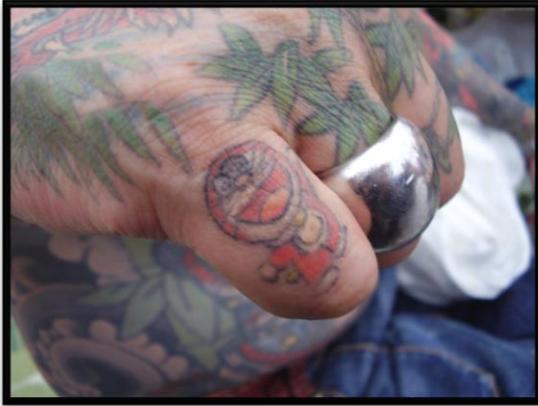


Figure 22: Doraemon and friends *horimono* (1).
Source: Taken by author



Figure 23: Doraemon and friends *horimono* (2).
Source: Taken by author

I have presented here a brief outline of image selection as one step in the process and practice of tattooing. In the following section attention shifts to how the practices of *horimono* as defined above are treated or conceived of on a wider, international level.

‘TRADITIONAL’ JAPANESE TATTOO

‘Traditional Japanese tattoos’ are one of the most sought after style of tattooing outside of Japan. Popularity is supported by access to information on the Internet, magazines and international conventions. So much so that tattooists outside of Japan now ‘specialise’ in Japanese tattooing. This internationalisation and dissemination of Japanese practice is actively promoted by Japanese *horishi*. For instance, Asakusa Horiyasu, Horiyoshi III, Horitomo Ichi-mon, amongst a growing number of others, regularly attend international conventions. Conventions are a forum to showcase their work and mingle with other likeminded professionals. Horiyoshi III is well known internationally and his work is recognised and idolised by fans from all around the world.

Conventions typically comprise of booths where an individual tattooists or representatives from a tattoo studio/shop tattoos live while enthusiast watch. Booths may be decorated with photographs of the tattooist’s work, memorabilia, merchandise for sale, or advertising materials – brochures and business cards. Also, representing their *horishi*, tattooed people enter in ‘tattoo competitions’. Best work is judged by categories such as style (for example, black & grey, tribal, Japanese) or position (for example, back piece, full body, leg work). At international conventions, *horimono* regularly win accolades.

However, presentations by *horimono* to wide audiences,⁸⁵ often exhibits a practice quite removed from actuality. These presentations depict the uniqueness and traditions of Japanese practices, with booths decorated to reflect the Japanese experience with *tatami* matting, *horishi* and *deshi* dressed in regular work-wear and *ukiyo-e* posters showing the flourishing period. Although this may come across as playing into known stereotypes or orientalist in nature, in everyday practice, many *horishi* are conscious observers of tradition and their studios reflect this in decoration and ornamentation. Similarly, the *horimono* images speaks for the *horishi* from the backs of his clients, detailing stories, mythology and characters from times long past. In the crowded space of an international convention, the recreation of ‘traditional Japan’ lends an aura of authenticity and history to modern practices.

Attending international conferences presents a unique challenge for heavily tattooed Japanese people. Accustomed to covering their *horimono*, a move that social climate dictates, and which is now worked into the aesthetic of tattooing. To show off one’s *horimono* is considered gauche. *Horimono* are not to be shown off in everyday life with the beauty and essence of *horimono* revealed in their showing. Yamamoto, drawing on the writer Tanizaki Junichirō suggests an artistic sensibility that posits beauty in the shadows rather than fully exposed (Yamamoto 2014: 94). Omiya describes the clash of aesthetic or artistic sensibility he experienced when attending a convention in America. Asked to strike menacing poses, flexing his muscles and performing on stage to garner audience attention and votes from the judges was quite removed from the standard closed fist stance readily found in books and magazines in Japan, they strike menacing poses. Talking about the same trip, to California in 2008, Noguchi says, “It was tiresome. They took so many photographs and we had to flex our muscles and...” Pointing to the published images from the convention of him holding up the award he won for his full body piece, “Look at this! Strange isn’t it?”

Internationalisation, exchange, and subsequent emulation of Japanese designs germinated a ‘Japanese-style’ tattoo, *wa-fū* [和風] in Japanese. The genre of Japanese-style tattooing is a hybrid of Western style tattooing that is Japanese-like in visual imagery. To the keen eye of a Japanese *horishi*, however, such works are aesthetically unappealing and in no-way shape or form *horimono*. To quote Horikazu, “There’s something odd with it. Look at the balance, look at the clouds they’re too thick. And see here? The way it comes over the buttocks is too broad so the image becomes distorted, the balance is wrong.” *Horimono* is more than the ‘Japanese

⁸⁵ Refers to those outside of the demographic who see or experience *horimono* on a familiar basis (*horishi*, *horimono* wearers and associates).

tattoo' labelled as such in magazines and popular culture books. It is more than the body-suit of integrated designs and motifs. It is more than a purchasable commodity.⁸⁶ Instead, worked into the skin along with the ink at the end of the needle are relationships that are as permanent as the ink.

An ethnographic exploration of the process and practices of tattooing today reveals business models and client relations in line with other so-called traditional *shitamachi* businesses. That is, family run studios situated within or near-to the residence, which, although contrasting with more visible street shops, are accessible should one know where to look; also, strong reliance on networks and personal relations. Distinct relationships emerging between client and *horishi* necessitated by the process and business of tattooing are then both indelibly reflected and embedded within the *horimono* through the procedure, in the operation. Through the discussion in this chapter, the central role of the *horishi* has become clear. While the finished product may be on the skin of another, the *horimono* – from the design, through to the resulting tattooed body – has been crafted at the hands of the *horishi*. Once inked, this link via the *horimono* to the *horishi* remains. It is worthwhile then, to look more closely into this central figure of the *horishi* who plays a seminal role in the network emplacing/surrounding *horimono*.

⁸⁶ See for discussion Bradley (2000), Murray (2006), Schouten and McAlexander (1995) and Vail (1999) on tattoo as commodity.

CHAPTER THREE

HORIKAZU – LIFE OF A HORISHI

“Omawarisan! Mr Policeman! Mr Policeman!”

“Keep working hard! You’re doing a great job!” sings out the booming voice from the passenger of the car I am travelling in, packed in like a sardine in a can with seven other people.

The policeman on his clunky bicycle wobbles to a stop as we cruise by.

The passenger, still protruding from the vehicle, slings a few more exuberant calls in his direction and finally gets a reply. The policeman having recovered his composure, chuckles and says a few inaudible words in our direction.

I can only imagine what the policeman must be thinking. The passenger in front, even sitting down in the passenger seat of a vehicle is an imposing sight. Covered head to toe, from his eyebrows to his toenails, in colourful *horimono* he is hard to ignore. At over 6 feet tall and well built, boisterous and fuelled up on both the excitement of festival and the alcohol that has been flowing freely all morning, Fujimiya is in a good mood; spreading the cheer to all those we pass. Before too long we arrive at our destination: the studio of Fujimiya’s tattooist, who goes by the working name Horikazu the First of Asakusa.

My arrival on Horikazu’s doorstep was as unexpected as it was fortuitous. Having spoken to the right person at the right time, before I knew it I was on my newest acquaintance, Fujimiya’s, cell-phone requesting an audience with Horikazu. To which he easily obliged. Such was the nature of Horikazu. Such is the nature of connections between *horishi* and client; client and *horishi*. [June 2007]

This chapter looks into the life of Horikazu the First of Asakusa. I describe here Horikazu’s path to becoming a *horishi*, how a young man from Hokkaido ended up in *shitamachi* Tokyo by way of Germany. Then, I turn to his everyday life as a *horishi*. As Kondo (1990) has shown, working lives, or peoples work identities, do not stop at the door of the workplace or the end of the workday. Particularly in the close-knit communities of older areas of the *shitamachi*, selves and identities are crafted through such workplace relations. And this rings true for Horikazu and the extended network of relations that form in *horimono* production. But, before I get on with my discussion, I should mention the previous works on Horikazu.

As a well-respected *horishi*, practicing for over forty years, there are understandably some publications and interviews with him already. He has been interviewed in a volume on ‘traditional Japanese tattooing’ (小山 2004), as the focus of a study on the history of *yakuza*

tattoo (Poysden and Bratt 2006), involved in a German produced documentary⁸⁷ on Japanese tattooing, and more recently, posthumously, a volume of his life's work (Kawasaki, Graham et al. 2012) among others. This most recent work shares some similarities with my own. That is, a recognition of the strong connection between Horikazu and *horimono* with *shitamachi* Tokyo and the Sanja Matsuri. Actually, these observations appear quite obvious, seeing as *shitamachi* played a significant role in Horikazu's life as the place he lived, worked and brought up his family: points I will discuss in more detail shortly. The point I wish to make is that my positioning of *shitamachi*, Sanja Matsuri, *horimono*, and Horikazu is not a new observation. Additionally, I do not intend to debate details of my observations with the previous works. Rather, I will let my ethnography, the interactions I had with Horikazu, and the observations I made in the field, tell the story of Horikazu.

Figure 24: Horikazu eating whale Asakusa, November 18th 2009. Source: Taken by author



⁸⁷ The German documentary, of which I have not observed the finished production, was filmed in the summer of 2009. In spring 2010, I watched the uncut footage together with Horikazu. He joked about how hot it was within the studio in the middle of summer with lighting turning the room into an oven. I wondered, however, if the Japanese translator was sweating from the heat or the situation; as the translator looked decidedly uncomfortable, particularly during questions about yakuza connections.

ROAD TO BECOMING A *HORISHI*

Early life

Born in Hokkaido in 1943⁸⁸, Horikazu's first steps towards the life of a *horishi* came as a small child visiting the local bathhouse with his father. His interest stirred by the colourful bodies he saw bathing. Growing up around people with *horimono*, he was interested in learning for himself how to replicate the intricate designs he saw. As a youngster he describes himself as being a bit of a thug. And because of his behaviour, was sent away from his family and spent some time in an establishment for juvenile delinquents. It was around this time, when still in his teens that he started to experiment with tattooing and fashioning tools and practicing on his own body and the bodies of his friends. His own *horimono* had lots of blacked in areas after he says he taught his girlfriend to tattoo and she started to ink his skin, which he then had tattooed over later.

Formative years

It was through a friend that he was introduced to Horitake in Hokkaido. From Horitake he first learned the art of preparing needles and making tools. As I have already mentioned, Horikazu prepares personal sets of tools for long-term clients to suit their skin and for hygiene purposes. This aspect of good sanitation, at a time when technologies like autoclaving were not accessible, is something he gleaned from Horitake. On coming to Tokyo at the age of about 27 or 28, Horikazu sought to learn from Horiyoshi II, the son of Horiyoshi, perhaps the most famed tattooist. But after being unsuccessful in connecting with Horiyoshi II who required a formal introduction which he could not produce, he met with another Horitake, unrelated to the one in Hokkaido. Rather than being taught directly, he entered into an apprenticeship with Horitake in the *shitamachi* area. The conditions of the apprenticeship were that Horikazu would tattoo and learn from Horitake in return for Horitake tattooing his back. However, Horitake was not often in the studio for Horikazu to see; instead he learned from working on Horitake's clients.

The process of becoming a *horishi* begins with being an apprentice, or *deshi*. And in the way of other crafts in Japan, takes the form of *minarai* [見習い] learning with one's eyes, watching, seeing, practicing and then doing. The teacher does not direct or dictate, instead the student learns from the teacher by observing. In Horikazu's experience, he learned from Horitake in Tokyo, the practice of drawing. Horitake was known to draw wonderfully and would also tattoo

⁸⁸ Showa 18.

directly onto the skin. The practice of drawing has stayed with Horikazu throughout his career and he expressed how he was always thinking of the next image, the combination, colours and composition.

One other point learned from Horitake was the art of running amok on the streets of *shitamachi*. After Horikazu spent all day tattooing, Horitake would swing by the workplace to pick up the days takings, and then they would head out to the bars and entertainment of Asakusa and nearby Ueno. He says he learned about *shitamachi* and how to play from Horitake. At the same time, he had plenty of opportunity to tattoo; sometimes arriving home after a late night out to the customers already waiting at the door. As at this time appointments were not made, and business was run on a first come first tattooed basis. It was an exceptionally busy time for *horishi*, with clients lining up at the door of the studio waiting their turn. There was no need for formal advertising at all, the *horimono* itself served the same purpose. Yet, Horikazu was still eager to learn more.

Influenced by the work of German tattooist Herbert Hoffman, he set his sights on going to Germany. After seeking council with the German ambassador in Tokyo, in 1970 he went and spent six months in Germany. During his time there he learned a couple of valuable lessons. The first being how to craft his own needles and coil-machines. At that time, German tattooists soldered their own equipment and it is something that Horikazu has always done too. The second major influence of going to Germany was gleaning a deeper appreciation for Japanese practices. Although the machines were quick and made out-lining and tattooing in general much faster, they were unable to replicate the subtle nuances in gradation or tone that characterises *horimono*. After an influential and educational six months in Germany, Horikazu returned with even stronger resolve to work on his *horimono*.

About a year later, he had another encounter that would further change the course of his life. Attending the Sanja Matsuri, he took his position under the carrying pole beside a beautiful young girl. And he was smitten; it was love at first sight. As it turned out, the young girl Akemi, was younger than he thought – she was still a teenager. Undeterred, he sought permission from her family to date. Akemi, a true child of Edo, born and raised in the *shitamachi* area to parents who also were born and raised there, has been by his side since. Her parents were not concerned about Horikazu's age or occupation, rather, they saw in him a good character, with a solid and admirable occupation.

Akemi and Horikazu married and together they had five children, three sons and two daughters. They were married for over 40 years by the time of Horikazu's passing from liver cancer in November 2011. This reads like a rather romanticised story – and this is the way Horikazu told it. Drawn to Asakusa from far away Hokkaido, unwavering from his path after his time in Germany, meeting Akemi and raising his own family in *shitamachi*; while not an 'Edokko' like Akemi, he went on to typify the artisan and character of the historical *Edokko*.

On Horikazu's passing, his legacy will pass on to his son, who is also a tattooist known as Horikazuwaka. After a mourning period, he will change his work name and become Horikazu the Second. This is how tattooing families pass along their traditions. Horikazu's second son is also interested in following in his father's footsteps. Horikazuwaka learned – and second son Yu will also learn – by *minarai*. Yu began being tattooed as a high school student, causing a number of difficulties in changing for sports and if his “shirt come up,” but otherwise the “teachers do not do anything about it.”⁸⁹ Kei, the youngest son, was in primary school when I first met Horikazu, and his drawings were often on the coffee table in the studio. However, by high school age, he has many other interests as well. Horikazu said he would be happy if all his sons followed him, but what is most important is they don't do it out of obligation. “Oldest son is already tattooing as Horikazuwaka, that is enough.” The next section turns to look more closely at how Horikazu works focussing on the relations, including this one of obligation.

WORKING LIFE

When discussing his route to *shitamachi*, Horikazu explained how he became Horikazu the First of Asakusa. At one stage in his career he said, he lived and worked from his then residence of Nishi Asakusa (West Asakusa). “But, he explained “how could I be ‘Nishi Asakusa Horikazu’? Who has heard of such a name?! So I moved, to Asakusa, and could be called Asakusa Horikazu.” A large distinction in terms of the image conjured by the name and place of ‘Asakusa.’ Not so much in terms of distance. Under the name Asakusa Horikazu, or Horikazu the First of Asakusa, he worked for over forty years, modest and well-respected. Unlike other tattooists who aim to ‘make a name for themselves’ so to speak, Horikazu let his work speak for him. He strove to produce *horimono* that came to life on the bodies, in the manner of traditional aesthetics. He worked hard, he said when he was younger he played hard too.

⁸⁹ The age of tattooing in Japan is eighteen although as the industry is unregulated, the law is usually only applied in instances of forced tattooing with the implication of joining a criminal gang.

When I met him for the first time, by way of Fujimiya's introduction he was sixty-three years old. Now, while he still worked hard at his *horimono*, he made more time to spend with his family. He had lightened his schedule and kept days free to have family time. As a self-confessed 'oyabaka' [親馬鹿] 'doting parent' of five children, three adult by that time, he was still kept busy. When he wasn't working or with his family, he enjoyed yakuza movies, films from 'out of this world' and drawing. All told he was a devoted family man, devoted also to his work. And his clients, were also devoted to him.

Implications of being a horishi

In the next section I am going to present some of the implications being a *horishi* had on his everyday life. First of all, through the master – client relationships there are distinct hierarchies and associated social etiquette. Through this, interesting social interactions take place. Take for instance my sudden arrival at his studio with a rowdy crew of assorted people. The circumstances behind it were quite simple. I had met Fujimiya at a festival and mentioned I was researching *horimono* and asked would he be willing to tell me about it. As a client, Fujimiya immediately deferred me to Horikazu. It seems a simple connection but is more loaded. That is, Fujimiya, although extensively tattooed and in some position of hierarchy himself, is the client – and Sensei, is the master. In this case Fujimiya could not presume to teach me about *horimono*; that was for someone like Horikazu with the knowledge and authority. Horikazu, based on his longstanding relationship with Fujimiya obliges accordingly.

Another episode followed a similar pattern. In the lead-up to the 2008 Torigoe Matsuri, I had visited Sensei and talked with him on the phone about the festival, questioning if he was going. He wasn't, he didn't usually go. A couple of days later I received a phone call, "would you like to go with two of my friends (clients) who go every year?" Of course I jumped at the chance. However, while a unique experience it was a rather nervous day.

I arrived at Horikazu's home/studio and his friend/clients were already there, still drunk from a night of drinking together the day before. Heading into his studio I went to take my shoes off at the entrance as is customary. Except this time we were entering his second floor studio, and at the entrance there was a large stone plate. Faced with the conundrum, do I step on the stone to take off my shoes, or take them off first? I didn't know one small step could be so problematic. I didn't want to offend anyone and get the day off to a poor start. Trying to hold back, I was ushered inside first. Opting to take off my shoes first and quickly move across the threshold so no one would notice I moved inside and sat beside the coffee table as indicated. A few minutes later, I was starting to relax and Yoshida comes to the entry and before coming in, takes the time to arrange my shoes in the right position at the entrance and turn around Sensei's

shoes too so he could walk right into them on leaving. Cringing at my faux pas I was introduced to Yoshida, one of my hosts for the day, for the first time.

I was told Yoshida has a construction company. He was also a student like me, just a little older. Yoshida was studying to learn traditional building methods and tools. He was also covered in extensive *horimono*. A depiction of *shichi-fuku-jin* [七福神] the seven gods of fortune, covering his belly. This year at the festival though he is wearing long sleeves and long trousers so there is no *horimono* in sight (see Figure 25 in contrast to Figure 26). For the next 8 hours Yoshida guides me, and some of my university colleagues that we meet at the festival, around. And, late in the evening after a long day by my side, we all eat dinner together and talk about the day.

While this may appear as a mundane or trivial incident, of a foreign student being shown around a festival, it is a little more complex; just like the shoes. First, I had not met Yoshida before this day, and second, wouldn't Yoshida who attends the festival every year prefer to spend the day and his time with his own friends?⁹⁰



Figure 25: Above: With Yoshida and Okazaki at Torigoe Matsuri, 2008. Source: Taken by author

Figure 26: Left: With Yoshida far left and acquaintances, Sanja Matsuri, 2012.

⁹⁰ Yoshida regularly participates in both festivals. At the Sanja Matsuri this was usually with Horikazu.

Initially, I was uncomfortable about burdening Yoshida and the others who we set off with, but got lost in the crowd along the way. It soon became clear, however, the relationships between *horishi* and client are imbued with notions of *giri* [義理] obligation and *ninjo* [人情] emotion or compassion (Befu 1993). *Giri*, sense of obligation on a social level and according to Befu is a governing principle of social reciprocations. *Giri* is contrasted and balanced by more personal, emotional feelings of *ninjo*. In the relationship between *horishi* and client the predicament of these relations can be seen. I already mentioned one such instance in the previous chapter, where Horikazu agreed to tattoo a local woman's son after she made the request herself, after previously refusing the son. Similar too is Horikazu's relationship with Fujimiya. Although, many Japanese disclaim these notions as feudalistic, they are embedded in *horimono* and in the process of tattooing. Dore notes the significance of the condition in his study of a Tokyo ward (1958: 253).

Following this excursion with Yoshida to Torigoe Matsuri, I called Horikazu to thank him. He said he had talked to Yoshida all about the day and how enjoyable it was; I was not convinced. Until that was, I could see more clearly the position Horikazu had within his network of relations.

On one hand he was a respected *horishi*, a man of good character that embraced the 'traditional' practice of *horimono*. This was recognised by his father-in-law. It is also recognised within the *shitamachi* community. While *horimono* may not be on display at the *shitamachi* themed museums in the area, locals see the tradition and links with the area and 'culture,' and at the time of festival in particular the community (on some level) when *horimono* comes out in the open, we can see these different engagements emerge. But this is for discussion in Chapter Five. What I would like to emphasise here is the extent of relations that emerge on a social level, through notions of *giri/ninjo* and the relationship between *horishi* and client.

On the other hand, how Horikazu ended up in *shitamachi* Tokyo was not by chance. *Shitamachi* was and still is a site for traditional practices, where occupations like *horishi* are respected and encouraged. Horikazu in seeking to become a tattooist, came to the site of its foundation. And his foray into the world of western tattooing in Germany opened his eyes further to appreciating the Japanese practices.

Although this chapter focuses on one *horishi* and thus presents only one possibility of many, the discussion here is useful as a means of situating *horimono* and tattooing within the everyday life

of the *shitamachi*; albeit from a different perspective than presented in earlier chapters. As, through tracing the path to becoming a *horishi* along with a narration of his working life, we see another aspect of the everyday experience of *horimono*. Here *horimono* is not an image on someone's body, nor is it a tattooed body to be seen or shown, instead *horimono* is what has shaped the life of one man his family, and his extended network of clients. *Horimono* is what drew Horikazu to the *shitamachi* area, and all the area provided, in terms environment, conditions and people, is what kept him here. Looking into the life of the traditional tattooist Horikazu is in this sense like opening a window to the past and the future: past traditions and ideas characteristic of *shitamachi* Tokyo being passed on to future generations through tattooing.

So far in this thesis, I have emplaced an historicised *horimono* both within a network of social relations and in the context of both geographical and conceptual constructs of *shitamachi* Tokyo. In this position *horimono* appears static, as an object, construction nonetheless, which actions or relations emerge through or around. Yet, as the next two chapters will show, *horimono* is anything but static. Instead, examination of 'lived experiences' of *horimono* reveals *horimono* to be a dynamic social agent.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIVING HORIMONO – NAVIGATING SKIN AND INK

It was a chilled, midwinter day when Suzuki, a high elevation scaffolding constructor, lost his footing on the thin poles on which he worked, plummeting to the ground below. Showing little signs of life he was rushed to the hospital by ambulance. No one that witnessed Suzuki's fall expected him to survive. Surprisingly, he did. But, diagnosed with a broken spine, the prognosis for someone of Suzuki's occupation was grim; ultimately medical professionals told him that he would likely never walk again. Within a few months, however, he was well on his way to recovery, walking unassisted, and in no time at all was back on the scaffolding.

Suzuki attributes his survival and subsequent miraculous recovery to Kannon one of the Seven Gods of Fortune.⁹¹ Suzuki believes Kannon saved his life; Kannon has his back. That is, tattooed with a full-body horimono from neck to ankles, the primary figure on the centre of Suzuki's back is Kannon. The section of his spine broken in the fall corresponds with Kannon's outstretched arm, and since the accident, her hand has taken on a prominent bend or 'stop' like gesture that was not noticeable prior to injury.⁹² For Suzuki, his tattooed body does not simply represent Kannon. Neither does the image symbolize her qualities; nor are they embodied. Instead, for Suzuki, Kannon is living – she reached out and softened his fall. Suzuki says, "Kannon saved me." His *horishi*, says he was "saved by his *horimono*." This is how Suzuki experiences, how he lives with, his *horimono*. And, this is how Suzuki's *horimono* lives.⁹³

This chapter explores what I refer to as 'lived experiences' of Japanese tattooing focusing on the multifaceted ways people, like the protagonist Suzuki above, experience the large-scale tattoos referred to as *horimono*. Given that the process of tattooing permanently alters the surface of the body, it draws a range of historically and culturally contextualized interpretations, many of which are based on the physical and symbolic breaking of boundaries. Namely, 1) the boundaries of skin – the most outer layer of the biological body – which is penetrated by needles and permanently altered with the insertion of ink; and 2) of social groups within broader society when *horimono* becomes a marker or means of expressing group inclusion or exclusion. More importantly, on delving into the lived experiences of *horimono*, an interplay of agency can be seen navigating a reversal of the subject and object between person and *horimono*.

⁹¹ Kannon is worshiped in Japan as the Goddess of mercy.

⁹² See over page for images of Suzuki.

⁹³ I have covered the face of Suzuki, his name to a pseudonym also to protect his identity, which seems redundant given how identifiable tattooing is, not to mention *horimono* so extensive.

A MIRACULOUS RECOVERY

Suzuki is saved by Kannon.



Figure 27: Suzuki, front.
Source: Taken by author.



Figure 28: Suzuki, back.
Source: Taken by author.

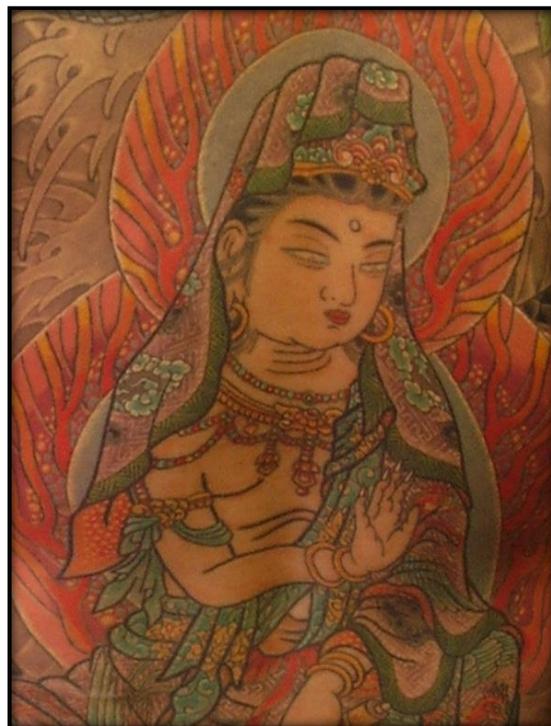


Figure 29: Injured section of spine.
Source: Taken by author.

So here I suggest there is another aspect to consider: 3) those ‘boundaries’⁹⁴ conceptualized between the *horimono* itself and the tattooed person (body, self) and society.

These three aspects take on specific meaning within the Japanese context with an overriding influence being the conceptualisation of “inside” (*uchi* [内]) and “outside” (*soto* [外]). In terms of skin boundaries and penetrating the skin, “inside” is associated with purity and the “outside” with pollution (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). This idea based on Shinto beliefs plays a significant role in understandings or experiences of tattooing. As Ohnuki-Tierney points out (Ohnuki-Tierney in Namihira 1987: S72) *kegare* [汚れ], impurity or pollution, and *hare* [晴れ], purity, are more complex than a simple contrast of inside/outside. However, for this discussion it is enough to point out these local notions of purity and pollution, and association with an inside/outside dyad, compounds repugnance towards the tattooed body. Tattooing, the process of breaking through the skin barrier between the “outside” and “inside” pollutes the otherwise pure, unmarked body. The resulting *horimono* becomes a permanent marker of this transgression or impurity for others to observe.⁹⁵

As noted earlier, *horimono*, and more broadly tattooing, have been referred to in academic scholarship in terms of such transgressed boundaries, mainly in reference to group or social affiliation. More specifically, *horimono* are commonly associated with criminal identity formation as a sign of antisocial behaviours rather than normative or customary practice; historicized conceptualisations of *horimono* dominate public perception,⁹⁶ and in turn, reflexively impact becoming/being tattooed, along with impacting on experiences of living with *horimono*.

⁹⁴ I recognise ‘boundary’ is a tricky word to begin with as it suggests something concrete, fixed and bounded, and as I attempt to show in this chapter, the different actors at play, ‘*horimono*,’ ‘tattooed person,’ ‘body’ or ‘society’ are far from fixed or ‘bounded.’

⁹⁵ Although, these notions are drawn in the Japanese context, the use of a stigmatizing affect through tattooing is noted in many cultures. Greeks and Romans first used the word ‘stigma’ to refer to tattooing. Referring to the tattoos, slaves were marked with denoting their status (Jones 2000: 1-2) lead to the incorporation of ‘mark of infamy’ or ‘moral blot’ into the meaning of the word. This nuance is carried on with the word stigma in English language today. It is for a similar reason that throughout this thesis I use the term *horimono* rather than the arguably more common, *irezumi*, that retains stigmatization having been used to refer to punitive tattooing.

⁹⁶ To reiterate, the proliferation of *yakuza* films in the 1960s depicting tattooed characters is likely to have contributed to such widespread opinion (山本 2005) while *kabuki* and *ukiyo-e* have also played a significant role in facilitating an image of tattooed characters, ruffians, gamblers, Edo era *otokodate* for example, all contributing to public perceptions. See Kitamura 2008, Kitamura and Kitamura 2001, and Van Gulik 1982 for further details on link between *kabuki* and *ukiyo-e*.

In anthropology, the study of the body as a boundary phenomenon has a long history⁹⁷ that continues to be impactful today. For example, issues raised in Van Gennep's (1960 [1909]) classic discussion on the role of bodily transformation in the form of tattooing, scarification, or painting within rites of passage for example remain relevant to tattooing practices today when tattoos are discussed as modern day 'rites of passage' or a means of marking group identity onto the skin. Likewise Levi-Strauss' work on Maori tattooing where he writes the "purpose of Maori tattooing is not only to imprint a drawing onto the flesh but also to stamp onto the mind all the traditions and philosophy of the group" (1963: 257). However, it was Turner's (1980) investigation of Kayapo bodily adornment that brought into consideration the sociality of bodies, rather than the Western centric bounded, individual body.

According to Turner, the body's surface is "the symbolic stage upon which the drama of socializations is enacted" (Turner 2007 [1980]: 83). As summarised by Kawano, the skin / body is the immediate point of junction between the self and the world, as well as the symbolic screen through which contact between subject and social context is mediated, objectified, and transformed (2005: 5). In this manner, exposure and decoration of certain body surfaces can have considerable semiotic value. Because, like actual clothing, bodies are part of the "social skin" on which identities and relations are made visible or, conversely, erased (ibid). Turner and those who have followed his lead have been significant in conceptualising the way in which bodies, and what is done to them, are part of processes of social production, creating and reflecting relationships, negotiating and mediating between different kinds of actors.⁹⁸

The primary turn in trajectory in conceptions of bodies and boundaries came about with a growing recognition of the ever-problematic body/mind dualism, and associated classic western notion of singular bodies; bodies that are bounded entities to be taken as the site of individuality, juxtaposed with society (Lock & Farquhar 2007: 104). As Lock and Farquhar (ibid: 2) point out examination of how the human body is 'lived' indicates there is a multiplicity of bodies. Thus rather than looking at singular bounded entities then, focus has shifted towards 'lived bodies' defined as 'assemblages of practices, discourses, images, institutional arrangements' (ibid: 1).

⁹⁷ Refer to Schildkrout (2004) for detailed review of inscription of the body in social theory.

⁹⁸ See also the work of Alfred Gell in his tome on Polynesian tattooing, *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia* (1993). Drawing on Anzeiu's (1989) theory of the 'Skin Ego' Gell suggests tattooing creates a 'double skin folded over itself'. He argues that the tattoo negotiates between the individual and society, between different social groups, as well as mediates relationships between persons and spirits, the human and divine. Furthermore, tattooing played a fundamental role in the construction of the person based on Maussian notions of personhood with tattooing a means of 'reconstructing personhood according to the requirements of the social milieu' (Gel 1993: 3).

Although it is well-recognised Japanese conceive of the body as being one with the mind as argued by Yuasa (1993) one and the same,⁹⁹ treatment of the Japanese subject has not been able to avoid western centric notions of bodies or selves.

It is not only the concepts of bodies and boundaries that has come into question, so too has western-centric conceptualisations of selves and identities. Conventional conceptualisation opposes the self, a fixed entity comprising some sort of essence with feelings and identities, to a world or society, which is spatially and ontologically distinct from the self (Butler 1988 in Kondo 1990). The binary of self and society is further transposed into another distinction: between a 'person', seen as human beings as bearers of social roles, and 'self' – a kind of inner, reflective psychological essence (ibid). Yet, writing on constructions of selves and identity within the Japanese workplace, Dorinne Kondo (1990) shows how, in contrast to the fixed, or bounded entities of the Western 'individual', 'selves' in Japan are relationally defined and inextricable from context. Kondo argues that the categories of politics, personal, individual and so forth that are typical of North American notions of selves are unable to account for the ambiguities of everyday life in Japan, instead emphasizing the importance of understanding selves as subject-positions crafted within relations of power (ibid: 300). While Kondo positions the Japanese sense of self clearly within social networks and contexts of power, she does not consider religious aspects, which although similar, cannot be ignored.

A common reference for why people are not, or should not be tattooed in Japan draws on notions of relationally defined selves; In this case, Confucian view of the body as an inheritance from one's ancestors. Because the body comes from one's ancestors it should not be harmed or marked. To modify the body is disrespectful to the ancestors, showing a lack of filial piety, and may sever the link to the ancestors (Miller 2006: 85-86). Miller also suggests the possibility of such thoughts being behind the avoidance of certain invasive surgeries like organ transplant, and the relatively low statistics of invasive cosmetic procedures such as plastic surgery practiced in Japan compared to the United States (ibid: 86). These Confucian notions are only compounded by the concept of *uchi* and *soto*, and marking oneself 'outside' the group.

With these ideas in mind, focus in this chapter is on 'lived experiences.' Beginning from the standpoint of the non-tattooed person I explore the ways non-tattooed people 'see' or 'view' *horimono*. Next, I build on the discussion by adding another element, that of the tattooed

⁹⁹ See also Hahn details on issues of body / mind in the context of Japanese dance (2007) and Ozawa-De Silva (2002) for a breakdown of Japanese theories of body and mind.

person, in the section ‘Being *Horimono*’. I use the phrase ‘Being *Horimono*’ here to express the conflation that occurs between one’s self-identity and socially constructed readings of *horimono*. That is, when the tattooed person’s own intended meanings and conceptions of their tattooed body are submerged, namely through privileging the visual, to the point where one’s identity is reduced to that of their *horimono*. Finally, in the section ‘Living *Horimono*,’ I consider the relationships that have started to emerge between wearers of *horimono*, the *horimono* itself, the *horishi* tattooist and client, and non-tattooed others.

Through this exploration of experiences, I illustrate how reading *horimono* and the tattooed body, while playing an important role in how one experiences being tattooed, (and consequently how one conceptualizes themselves as a tattooed person) effectively disregards the ontological status of *horimono* itself. Instead, paying particular attention to both the boundaries brought into question through the process of tattooing, and to the relationships between ‘persons’ and ‘things’ that come into play, implicates *horimono* implicated in complex entanglements of relations. Consideration of these entanglements is then revealing; *horimono* may be both part of, and also beyond either the physical body, the ‘person’ on whom they are etched, or, the image formed in skin and ink. Indeed, examination of lived experiences of *horimono* and the tattooed body, show how *horimono* may be experienced as protective, talismanic, or some other ‘supernatural’ physical manifestation.

SEEING HORIMONO

Today, *horimono* are rarely seen outside festivals and the occasional bathhouse or onsen, hot springs, and continue to occupy a contentious position in Japanese society. Nevertheless, many older Japanese can vividly narrate their encounters with *horimono*. The following section looks at some testimonials of non-tattooed people’s experiences of ‘seeing’ *horimono*. The aim here is to unpack how non-tattooed people relate to and conceive of *horimono* and the tattooed body.

What is gleaned in this section becomes pertinent when discussing tattooed people’s experience of their own tattooed body later on.

Nostalgic traditions

For 68-year-old suburban housewife Kiyomi her first encounter with *horimono* was at a public bathhouse with her grandfather in the early 1950s. She vividly recalls seeing a glistening black and red dragon, coiling up the hunched torso of an elderly man. The dragon rendered ‘lifelike’ by the glowing sheen of heat-reddened skin. Since this day, Kiyomi has never seen another

horimono in the flesh. Yet, the beauty and lifelikeness of her first and only encounter many years before remains clearly etched in her memory. Kiyomi explains:

It was usual for Grandfather to take me to the *sentō* [銭湯] bath-house. One day when we were there, I saw an old man who had risen from the bath. His skin was red from the heat, and it was all coloured. Covering his whole back right down over his shoulders and down to his elbows was *sumi*, ink. In the middle of his back was a moving dragon. Maybe it was from having just bathed, I don't know, but the dragon looked alive, it looked like it was moving. It was a long time ago, but I haven't forgotten how it looked, how it looked alive.

Sixty-three-year-old grandmother Eiko recounts a similarly everyday encounter. The arborist who regularly tended the garden in her childhood home in rural Kyushu would rest in the garden, removing his coat to reveal his *horimono* covered back and arms. “The flowery patterns on his muscled arms,” Eiko recounts, “blooming bright in the sunlight much like the branches he was trimming.”

A sense of nostalgia stains both of these accounts, where Kiyomi and Eiko describe a normative *horimono* against the backdrop of a historical, bygone era. Neither of these descriptions of encounters with *horimono* are nuanced with a sentiment of criminality or social transgression. Additionally, both Kiyomi and Eiko lament how things are different these days. “We can't see *horimono* at the bathhouse anymore; such tattooing is only for yakuza,” says Kiyomi. Far from being merely anecdotal, Kiyomi and Eiko's experiences, and subsequent views of *horimono*, reflect an assumption that appears widespread and entrenched in contemporary Japan. That is how *horimono* may once have been the normative practice of tradespeople, but today they are synonymous with, symbolic of, periphery and marginality, of yakuza and criminality.

Yoshiko, now 79 years old, saw early on the tattooing practiced on the periphery of society and has always associated tattooing with marginality:

The only child of a philosophy professor at the prestigious University of Tokyo, Yoshiko lived a privileged and carefree life until she was forced to flee with her mother from the still smouldering ashes of their family home in the affluent area of Hongo after it was razed in a bombing raid in 1944 during the Second World War. Following the end of the war Yoshiko and her family returned to Tokyo to live in the crowded confines of Ryusen,¹⁰⁰ right in front of the gates of the Shin-Yoshiwara licensed quarters.

¹⁰⁰ Asakusa, Taitō Ward.

Prostitutes from the Yoshiwara were easily identifiable, says Yoshiko, by their clothing, accessories, style and speech. Although her mother steered her away from this new aspect of her post-war life, Yoshiko says she knew their occupations.

“They would be around on the streets. I knew somehow that they were different. They dressed different from my mother and other people who lived in our new neighbourhood. It was very crowded at that time; it was very different from our house in Hongo that had been destroyed. It was a shock coming from the countryside area, from where we had evacuated. We didn't have a lot of space but we were fortunate that we didn't have to share our house. We used a nearby bathhouse and so did the prostitutes.”

Unclothed at the local public bathhouses, stripped of their identificatory fashions, extensive tattooing served the same purpose, betraying the prostitute's occupation. Yoshiko can still describe in detail a beautiful feminine Kannon Bosatsu¹⁰¹ [観音菩薩], Bodhisattva Kannon, covering once woman's back, and providing a wealth of semiotic value (Barthes 1983; Cort 1992; McVeigh 2000). “The lady with Kannon on her back,” says Yoshiko, “was often in the bathhouse. Her back was so beautiful. I thought how Kannon even looked like her.”

In this case, Yoshiko's earliest encounter with *horimono* left a lasting impression. Not only of the visual impact, the beauty and detail of the *horimono*, but also of just who were tattooed: prostitutes or those on the periphery of society. From an affluent family, Yoshiko did not see or associate with tattooed people after she moved away from Ryusen as a teenager, yet the memory lingers. These three observations appear to link the past with the present, while at the same time fracturing the two. What do the younger generation think?

Perhaps naïve, I assumed these views would have changed amongst the younger generation, where there would be more tolerance towards tattooing. Talking with a group of well educated, well-travelled women, who could be described as ‘worldly,’ I was shocked to hear some seemingly arbitrary assessments of character based simply on tattooing.

Twenty-eight year old Miwa said, “I could never marry someone with *irezumi*.”

“Do you mean *yōbori* or *wabori*?” I clarify.

“Either, they're the same. I know *yōbori* is fashion, so maybe if they had like a ‘one-point’ tattoo they could have it removed. Though I'm sure I wouldn't be attracted to someone with any tattooing.”

¹⁰¹ Worshipped in Japan as the Goddess of Mercy.

Similar sentiment was expressed by thirty-six year old veterinarian, Yōichiro:

“I don't have friends with tattoos”

“why?”

“If my friends had tattoos they wouldn't be my friends anymore.”

Yōichiro then proceeded to inform me I couldn't possibly understand because I was not Japanese.¹⁰²

Yoshiko's associations of tattooing with a marginal identity, as well as the views of Kiyomi, Eiko and younger Miwa and Yōichiro are not totally unexpected. Such views, of how one sees or reads the tattooed body, are not created in a vacuum; they are informed by the social system in which they exist.

Japan's Anti-organised Crime Laws [暴力団対策法] recognises this implicating tattooing/*horimono* in the identity construction / identification of criminals. Laws explicitly prohibit the use of tattooing along with other identifiable marks of yakuza or gang association such as missing fingertips and gang insignia as a show of intimidation or ostentation for illegitimate ends, or ‘hindering secession.’¹⁰³ Additionally, the coercing of minors to be tattooed, with the implication of them then being tied to a gang, is also addressed and prohibited. In *Yakuza, Law and the State* Peter Hill sums up the situation:

Because the shared identifiers of yakuza membership, such as amputated fingers, tattoos, particular patterns of speech and dress, are readily understood by ordinary Japanese, and yakuza name-cards and lapel-badges baldly demonstrate gang membership, explicit intimidation is not necessary; the intimidation is implicit in yakuza/bōryokudan membership and their universally recognized reputation for violence (2004: 100).

¹⁰² At risk of generalising, I heard this sentiment from many non-tattooed people, where the usual pattern was a discussion of tattooing and a lecture on the background and history of tattooing as if to back up the opinions. The entire conversation would be prefaced by an idea that ‘western tattooing is fashion’ or my opinion of Japanese tattooing would be from this viewpoint. On the other hand, tattooed people were more likely to give a history of the widespread, Edo era flourishing of tattooing, highlighting positive aspects of tradition and qualities *horimono* are thought of as imbuing in wearers, strength, perseverance and so forth.

¹⁰³ In 1993 an amendment to the Anti-organised crime laws was released and put into practice, the same year (August), strengthening regulations against organised crime. Included was the prohibition of new types of acts of violent demand related to the acquisition of money by Organised Crime Groups, and the acts of “finger chopping” and forcing adolescents to be tattooed, that will hinder secession from an OCG. In 1993, 610 infringement orders were handed out, of these orders 335 (54.9%) were issued for acts of violent demands, and 263 (43.1%) were for forced membership or hindering secession (法務省『犯罪白書平成6年版』).

Three forms, one practice

This view of tattooed bodies and *horimono* was controversially brought to the fore in May 2012 when the Mayor of Osaka Hashimoto Tōru ordered public servants working for Osaka to be surveyed on whether they had tattoos or not, and size and location should they have one. This initial survey revealed that from 33,500 employees, 110 had one or more tattoos; of these 10 people employed in schools including 1 teacher had tattoos (Japan Today. 2012). An incident where a public servant, a cleaner, reportedly intimidated children with his tattoos sparked this survey. An Osaka city hall spokesperson explained, “public servants should not wear tattoos as they make others feel uncomfortable when they see them.”¹⁰⁴ Aside from the ethical backlash of conducting such a survey, I deduced a number of themes from peoples’ reactions.

Firstly, the idea that tattooing makes others ‘uncomfortable’ and children are ‘scared’ is reliant on pre-conceived ideas about tattooing. And, although the catalytic incident leading to the survey appears to have centred around exposure of *horimono*, there was no differentiation in the results between *horimono* and western-style ‘one-point’ tattoos. Yet, people I spoke to regarding this survey clearly conveyed a difference in opinion of the forms of tattooing; which raises the second theme. There appears to be a more lenient view of ‘one point’ tattoos, with an acceptance of them as some sort of ‘fashion’ or trend, and somewhat removed from the criminality of *horimono*. Thirdly, there is the idea of permanent make-up tattoos, ‘make-art,’ as acceptable and within another category to *horimono* and one-point all together: as ‘make-up.’

The following anecdote illustrates this point.

Nobuko, an educator in her 50s, has had her eyebrows enhanced with permanent ‘make-up.’ This involved hair-like whispers of ink etched into the natural brow area to fill-in and enhance the shape and appearance of her brows. The result is subtle and natural, now permanent, eyebrows. “Art-make,” as cosmetic tattooing is known, “is not tattoo,” stresses Nobuko, “it’s make-up.” Never mind, the ink and machine used to complete this procedure is the same as those used for one-point tattoos. “It’s not the same as *horimono*,” determines Nobuko.

All three – *horimono*, tattoo and permanent make-up – are inherently the same thing. They are all the result of a process of inserting ink under the skin to make a permanent mark. However within the social milieu, what they symbolize, what they represent is radically divergent. Some

¹⁰⁴ An Osaka Prefectural ordinance 「職員基本条例第8条2項」 referring to ethical regulations of employees 「職員倫理規則」 deals with tattooing. Under these regulations the showing of tattoos is prohibited (ref. 「同規則2条8項」) as is getting tattooed (ref. 「同条9号」) (関東弁護士連合会 2014: 159).

critics of the survey were therefore only outraged at the grouping of all three forms of tattooing into the same category:

Mrs Tobita, an English teacher and mother to two small children, aware of my research interests approached me in haste at the supermarket not long after news of the survey broke. She immediately launched into a tirade on how “unfair” it was that people with ‘art-make’ could lose their jobs. “Tattoos? Well, no teachers should have tattoos! Children should not see tattoos. But I feel for people with art-makeup. It’s just, you know, make-up,” she told me in English.

In these reactions to the survey, semiotic interpretation, or what the tattooed body is thought to represent or symbolise is again privileged over experience, as the process – tattooing the skin – and the end result – permanently marked skin – is discounted. What remains is the following formulation: *horimono* equates to criminal/yakuza; ‘one-point’ equates to fashion (no matter how unsavoury); permanent ‘make-art’ is enhancing beauty. Ironically, clients regularly state ‘becoming beautiful’ as a primary reason for being tattooed with large-scale *horimono*. Consequent to widespread assumptions of *horimono* as a shared identifier of *bōryokudan* membership or associations with peripheral society, the tattooed person is simply identified as such regardless of actuality.¹⁰⁵

This incident in Osaka sparked a court-case that is currently (as at September 2014) awaiting ruling on issues of ethics and rights of self-determination. The fact that it is before the courts, recognises there is a flipside to the opinions and observations expressed above. That is people (without tattoos) that view tattooing as a personal freedom. Ishii sums up this position:

Personally, I wouldn’t get tattooed. I don’t like pain. But, they look so beautiful; it’s so amazing that such detail can be tattooed onto skin. Tattooists must be really skilful. When I see people with tattoos I wonder about the images they chose, what do they mean?

Consider also yoga teacher Akiko’s observation:

I went to a seminar a couple of years ago, and a fellow yogi had beautiful flowers tattooed across her left thigh. They crept up the outside from her knee right up and under her yoga shorts. The placement made the tattoo kind of sexual. Beautiful and sensual. With clothes, I mean longer trousers, it would be able to not be seen. Perhaps this was the idea, to reveal it right at the perfect moment?

Here there is recognition of choice and beauty when it comes to other’s *horimono* and tattooing and a final aspect – pain.

¹⁰⁵ As noted at the beginning of this thesis.

Throughout this research project, the most common comment I have heard regarding tattooing, on par with yakuza references, has been in relation to pain. Particularly the large-scale *horimono* elicit comments ranging from the extent of pain that must accompany the procedure to suppositions of what enduring the pain means. For example: endurance, perseverance and so forth. I should note here, however, pain is not an explicit topic of conversation for those who are tattooed, rather it is a given. As Horikazu said, “If someone comes to me and asks is it going to be painful I will not tattoo them. I know they are not ready, they are not able to stand the pain.” Indeed, when I mentioned the topic he took a tool and grasping my arm told me to “try, and see how painful it is” while sticking the un-inked needle in my arm. A Japanese friend, who accompanied me to the studio on one occasion, asked the same question and received the same response – a needle in the arm. However, that is not to say pain is not a factor at all.

Clients are well aware of the most painful places to be tattooed. The client may need to be held down whilst sensitive areas such as the groin, back of knees, under arms are tattooed. Yet, pain itself is not a deterrent for these clients. By the time a person is in the position to be tattooed, it is no longer a consideration. It is a consideration at the earlier stage, of deciding to become tattooed or not. But, here I digress.

To return to the examples presented in this section: they need to be considered in perspective. The personal accounts narrated above come from the point of view of those who have had little to no association with tattooed people other than brief encounters. The experiences presented here may be consistent with broader opinion, yet, when compared to the previous chapter, and the ‘normalised’ association of *horimono* as tradition and livelihood, the difference is striking. Issues of subjectivity should be clear at this point. Now, I will delve into the lived experiences of those who have *horimono*.

BEING HORMONO

For those tattooed with *horimono*, the people on who *horimono* exist, the above such readings greatly impact how they experience everyday life and how they experience being tattooed. This section turns now towards such everyday experiences with the aim of drawing attention to the interactions and relationships with others mediated through *horimono*, and the role they play in one’s sense of self. Let me begin with an episode:

The early summer day of June 8th 2008 in the back streets of Asakusabashi is ripe with signs of summer: a cacophony of festival sounds – *taiko* drumming and lively flute melodies of festival ensembles competing with discordant whistles and shouts of encouragement of participants – and a rising temperature. Moisture hangs almost palpably in the air as the midday sun beats down upon dark, sticky bitumen and a ramshackle, tightly packed mix of post-War steel and fibro constructions amid rising humidity. Exacerbating these already heady conditions is a steady stream of people shuffling to and from the source of noise: a *mikoshi*, portable shrine, being conveyed through the tight network of *shitamachi* neighbourhoods. Amongst the throng of people, many wearing nothing more than loincloths and festival jackets is a clearly uncomfortable man. Dressed rather incongruously in a dark coloured sweat suit, the type favoured by boxers, jockeys and those trying to drop a few pounds quickly, the man is sweating profusely. Flapping his jacket and trousers in what appears to be an attempt to scoop in cooler air, he turns to me with a wry smile and says, “it’s like a sauna in here, let’s go get a drink to cool down.” As we duck away from the crowds down narrow and disjointed side streets, he lets his jacket fall to the end of his elbows, yet never quite takes it off. A more vigorous flurry of flapping soon reveals why as the self-created breeze lifts his shirt revealing a rainbow of colours enveloping his body: his body is covered neck to ankle in *horimono*. “It’s hot, but I have to keep covered, it’s a rule.”

Festivals, as noted already, are one instance where *horimono* may be seen or shown off in the public sphere. This year however, Suzuki, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, was not participating. He was there to catch up with his friends and, at the request of our mutual acquaintance, the late Horikazu, tasked with showing me around.

Many of his acquaintances that we met over the course of the festival were similarly attired in long trousers and long sleeves on this hot sticky summer day. “It’s just how it is,” he explained. “I don’t want to scare anyone.” Well aware of the social climate of tattooing in Japan, the comfort of others was paramount to his own. Considering and navigating the reactions of others comes hand in hand with being tattooed in Japan as can be seen in the following scene:

Handa, a portly 40 year-old man stood up in middle of a busy *shitamachi okonomiyaki*¹⁰⁶ restaurant in order to show a particular floral design on his ample belly. Perhaps at first glance, the patrons packing the tables might not have noticed what was on display. Once the proprietress of the establishment took interest and honed in for a look and to loudly ask questions, however, the atmosphere palpably changed. Some people stared, obviously interested, others markedly avoided the spectacle in front of them.

As it turns out, although the tattooist Horikazu who was also attending was a longtime customer at this restaurant, the proprietress had never seen *horimono* up close. Given that Horikazu took

¹⁰⁶ [お好み焼き] Savory pancake filled with cabbage, other vegetables, meats and ingredients of choice.

care to cover his full-body *horimono* and dressed for work and comfort in the style of trousers and shirt favoured by craftsman in the area, this is unsurprising. He looked decidedly uncomfortable during this scene and other displays of *horimono* in a public (non-festival) setting. Horikazu explained the situation:

It's not good. Acting like that will not be good for other customers wanting to come, then we won't be able to return. Being tattooed requires being mindful of others. Showing off and turning away other customers is not good for their business. Nor mine, we might get turned away from a restaurant. So, it's not good for me. Some places it is acceptable, it is not a problem, but not all.

In this way the behavior of people wearing his name¹⁰⁷ also reflects poorly on Horikazu. Aside from having to navigate social aspects of *horimono* such as when to show or be seen and vice versa, there is a further dimension to experience of *horimono*: a reflection of his family history and identity.

Returning to Suzuki:

As head of his own construction company, he has strong *bōryokudan* affiliations. He visits the headquarters of a known gang to pay respects on our way to the festival, and whenever he is in the area. He is on friendly terms with known gang members and participates in both the Sanja Festival and Torigoe Festival with yakuza members.¹⁰⁸ This was not hidden or covert. On our way to the festival together, we stopped out front of a building known locally to host the offices of two different *bōryokudan* groups. Both Suzuki and Handa disappeared into the building for no more than 15 minutes as I stayed in the taxi with a young, drunk and slurring underling whom I had not met before. Nothing was said about this minor detour, aside from, "I'm just dropping into the 'office.'¹⁰⁹ Just wait here a moment." He is adamant though, that he is merely a construction worker, head of his own company nonetheless.

His strong *shitamachi* roots, both as a high elevation scaffolder, and the enduring legacy of his fire-fighting forefathers, are what prompted him to become tattooed he explains. Both his Grandfather and Great-grandfather were raised in *shitamachi* Tokyo. Also, both were tattooed with extensive *horimono*. The protective fire coat of his relatives has pride of place in his house, the inside of which is elaborately designed in a manner similar to that of his own tattoo and those of his ancestors.

¹⁰⁷ *Horimono* are usually 'signed' with the horishi's work name.

¹⁰⁸ At Torigoe Matsuri, he has participated with several different groups, including *Miyamoto* and *Momose-gumi*.

¹⁰⁹ The word used, *jimushitsu* [事務室], was a means of gauging connections with the various people coming and going from Horikazu's studio. Particularly at festival time when the flow of traffic was greater than usual with many people stopping by to pay respects, it was not a setting in which forthright questions about affiliations were appropriate.

For Suzuki, his family history – his *shitamachi* roots – are part of his *horimono*, part of his tattooed body, part of himself.

Choosing to reveal, or alternatively not to reveal *horimono* is an instance of navigating one's sense of self through *horimono* and being tattooed. In the case of Suzuki, so as to avoid being seen in a certain way – as *yakuza* – he conceals his tattooed body; the very tattooed body that for himself and those close to him tells his personal history in a very visible way. And, contra to Confucian notions of filial disrespect by marking and desecrating the body received from his ancestors, Suzuki shows respect to his ancestors by being tattooed.

I have illustrated so far, how tattooed people have historically been associated with the margins of society and how *horimono* continue to evoke strong notions of criminality and aversion. I have also shown how one's own experience of *horimono* may differ from what is represented or read from the tattooed body, yet can also be shaped by it. Furthermore, I have begun to outline how one may negotiate their sense of self through being tattooed. The next section considers more carefully the relationships that have started to emerge, between wearers of *horimono*, the *horimono* itself, the *horishi* tattooist and client, and non-tattooed others.

Becoming tattooed

The process of 'becoming tattooed', that is how one comes to live as a 'tattooed person' may be a timely affair as noted in Chapter Two. In the case of *horimono* it may take years to complete a full-body design, and during this time, the wearer is constantly negotiating how to 'be' tattooed. That is because acts of visibly marking the body change not only the physical appearance of the person, but also the way in which others relate to them as a tattooed person, and how one conceives of themselves as a tattooed person. This necessitates a renegotiation of one's own sense of self. First, consider examples from Canada and New Zealand before returning to the Japanese context.

In *Tattooed: Sociogenesis of a Body Art* (Atkinson 2003b) Sociologist Michael Atkinson recounts the reaction of his students upon seeing his extensive tattoo work for the first time:

I heard whispers and gasps throughout the class, and peered around to see wide-eyed students with their mouths agape. Their collective reaction was a mix of disbelief, confusion, and fascination. I am not sure the students heard anything I said that day, as their attention appeared to be focused on my arms and not my words (2003b: 91).

Here, Atkinson's position as a university professor is temporarily undermined by his student's recognition of him as a heavily tattooed person. He is essentially, to borrow Turner's words, 'betwixt and between' two states of being and must renegotiate his transition from the state of non-tattooed, to a state of acceptance as a *tattooed* professor. This observation gives weight to Atkinson's observation that, while there is a rising acceptance of tattoos in Canadian society, there is also a parallel rise in the prominence of 'tattoo communities.' While within tattoo 'communities' people have a similar appearance and similar sensibility towards tattoos and being tattooed, and may move with ease (Atkinson 2003b; DeMello 2000).¹¹⁰ Within broader society, visibly tattooed people constantly have to negotiate their position with 'outsiders' or people unknown to them. This is also expressed by Maori who make the decision to wear traditional facial tattoos known as *moko*.

On one hand, for the *moko* wearer and the members of their immediate community who understand the significance and symbolism written in to the tattoo, their status and position is clearly defined as a learned elder, holder of traditions. On the other hand, for people outside of this circle, their tattooed appearance relegates them to membership of a marginal or minority group. As such, they must constantly redefine themselves for others. While between *moko* wearers, they maintain an element of homogeneity and a sense of belonging – where an understanding of difficulty and cultural expectation associated with wearing the *moko* are homogenising factors difficulty arises outside of the community (Nikora, Rua and Te Awekotuku 2005).

Becoming a *moko* wearer means dealing with duality. Within the Maori community – the *moko* wearer undergoes a transition from being a 'plain face,' they experience a period in which the cultural weight of the *moko* is instilled upon them, and then they experience reintegration into their community and undergo a renegotiation of self as a tattooed person (ibid). In contemporary society, however, a smooth navigation is complicated by the dual set of social structures and social orders – Maori and non-Maori – so that they are threatened with their liminality. In the Maori social order, their transition is swift; in the non-Maori social order their marginality can be life-long.

Returning to Japan, social representations strongly influence how one may relate to becoming tattooed. From the outset of getting tattooed with a central back piece depicting a climbing carp,

¹¹⁰ See DeMello (2000) for details on tattoo communities.

Jun recalls taking great care in his family home. He says: “summer was the worst. It was so hot and I had to wear a t-shirt everyday.” He also describes, “forgetting” about being tattooed and realizing just before his father saw him after absentmindedly rising from the bath and not immediately covering up. “My father would be angry. He’d kick me out for doing this.” Jun must now modify his behaviours accordingly until it becomes second nature, which after already wearing a *horimono* are more than five years, is still difficult. The fact that *horimono* are usually designed to be covered by clothing allows for some ease in everyday life. But transgressions, intentional or otherwise, can occur and be telling about how one may constantly be mediating or re-navigating their actions because of their tattooed body.

LIVING HORIMONO

In Chapter Two I showed how the nature or status of the relationship between *horishi* and client, or the (social) status of either, may dictate the images actually used in the *horimono* design. Today when there is trust between the client and *horishi*, particularly where there are pre-established relations or ties between *horishi* and client, *horishi* will design a *horimono* to suit the person. When there is no prior relationship, the tattooist may just tattoo whatever the client requests and essentially buys. Sometimes this is regardless of aesthetic or symbolic balance. Further, dependent on relationship there may be reluctance, on the part of the *horishi*, to tattoo certain images. Such is the case with *namakubi* [生首] or severed heads.

Severed heads along with skulls and demons are a common feature in the genre of Japanese paintings and woodblock prints known as *jigoku-e* [地獄絵] or ‘pictures of hell’ and can be seen incorporated into broader tattoo designs. A *horishi* may be reluctant to tattoo *namakubi* on certain people. For example, Horikazu describes how these days he does not tattoo *jigoku-e* very often, recalling how “those who get *namakubi* die young.” While the image itself is powerful and evocative of gruesome death, Horikazu came to his conclusion through experience, after recognising how people with this particular design were indeed dying at a younger age. In this instance, Horikazu recognises having *namakubi* is potentially life threatening and something that could be manipulated by his actions. Although aware of what *namakubi* represented, Horikazu’s decision to refrain from tattooing them, came *a posteriori*.

To digress, this is the same process I argue, that comes with attributing meanings to *horimono*. Images can be chosen for one ‘reason’ or for what they represent, yet it is in light of other experiences that significance is realised for the wearer.¹¹¹ This is clear in the case of Ryū:

I went to meet an ex-yakuza member in a Shibuya coffee shop. Ryū, in his early 30s dressed in a suit too big for his emaciated body, the jacket hanging off his bony shoulders, a racing form guide tucked in the back of his trouser waistband. Reeking of alcohol and the aftermath of the night before, we met in a popular chain store coffee shop. Here, I was told, was a relatively ‘safe’ place to meet. The safety concern was not mine, it was Ryū’s, as, according to Ryū, he was blacklisted from Shinjuku and could not set foot in the area or he would be ‘killed.’ He was once a well know fixture on the streets here racketeering and running amok, now he stays away in his hometown of Kanagawa. On my behalf, he was risking his life venturing into Shibuya to talk to me about his *horimono*.

Ryū was tattooed on the back *nukibori* [抜き彫り]¹¹² style with the image of Koitaro, a depiction of the little boy hero Taro riding/fighting a carp. Legend describes the strength, perseverance and tenacity of a small boy known as Kintaro who was raised in the wilderness of Mount Ashigara by a mountain hag. Befriending wild animals, Kintaro grew strong and determined overcoming his adverse situation became a renowned warrior. The rendition of Kintaro and the carp is a popular image in *horimono* designs. Said to represent strength and perseverance, dolls depicting Kintaro are displayed on Children’s Day¹¹³ in the hope male children will grow strong and hardy in the manner of Kintaro. Similar sentiment is expressed when tattooed with Koitaro.

Ryū explained he chose that design in order to become stronger. Which according to Ryū, didn’t eventuate. Instead, he was on his forth marriage, had dealt with amphetamine addiction and now just drank instead. Laughing, he said, “it hasn’t made me stronger, it hasn’t done anything.” Yet, that clearly didn’t deter him. He had appointments scheduled to begin the *gaku* frame for the image already on his back. Maybe this will make a difference? After all, it is said *nukibori* is but an unfinished *horimono*.

Although this is not Ryū’s *horimono*, Figure 30 is similar. This is a rendition of Koitaro in the *nukibori* style. As can be seen, compared to the full-body integrated designs, it does appear ‘unfinished’ as Ryū expresses. Whether Ryū’s *horimono* will impact him further once he has the *gaku* frame tattooed, remains to be seen.

¹¹¹ This is why I contend that questions of ‘why did you get tattooed’ or ‘what is the meaning’ are slippery questions; and instead, *horimono* need to be understood in context and within the network of relations involved in lived experiences.

¹¹² *Nukibori* refers to *horimono* comprised only of the central image without any frame or additional images.

¹¹³ Children’s Day [こどもの日] is held on May 5th each year to celebrate children.

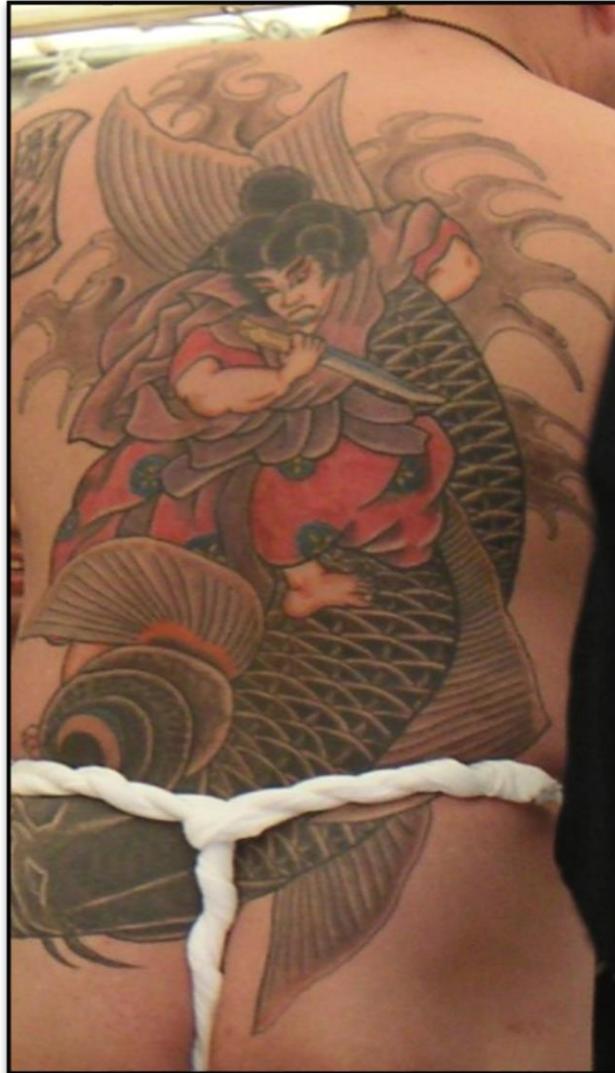


Figure 30: Koitaro, nukibori style. Source: Taken by author.

Returning to the discussion, similarities, with *namakubi* are to be found in the tattooing of skulls similar to those in Figure 31. Referring to a series of 8 skulls, a client said they were for “each person he had sent to hell.” His *horishi* further explained skulls could be tattooed on people who had committed such deeds, but to tattoo them on a person who didn’t have that personal history may (potentially) invite negative repercussions. Here a client’s personal history is not only reflected in the *horimono*, the *horimono* also appears to embody, to bring to life, what is being represented – in these cases the relationship between the living and the dead.



Figure 31: Skull motif (three images). Source: Taken by author.

In these two examples, of tattooing skulls or severed heads, relationships – namely between *horishi* and client, and client and their *horimono* – and personal histories are both embedded and embodied in *horimono* as well. To put into other words, the agency of those actors involved reflects these relations and histories. Further, through the process of tattooing, a client can become committed or tied to a specific type of relationship with the tattooist. Here it is important to highlight not only the embodied nature of these relationships formed around and subsequently realized in (the process of tattooing) *horimono*, but also consider the implications from recognising associated agency in all of the actors engaged for conceptions of selves, bodies and the ontological boundaries of *horimono*.

Writing on the Tahitian context, Kuwahara (2005: 13-16) suggests individual agency of tattooing is engaged on two levels. Firstly, tattooing is an active practice of individuals who, with their own intentions, choose to be tattooed or not. Secondly, all people, whether they are tattooed or not, through making assessments about tattoos and tattooing, become involved in constructions and transformation of social systems. What about the tattoos when they appear to ‘act’ beyond the intentions of the wearer? Can we see *horimono*/tattoos as holders of ‘individual’ agency? In the following section, I tentatively propose approaching *horimono* from a more experimental approach, to draw on the ‘living’ aspect discussing *horimono* as an agent and see where this leads.

“Living art” is a popular phrase used to imply the interactive, transient nature of tattoos. The tattoo ‘art,’ which may start out as a drawing on paper, comes into being, only through the insertion of ink into the skin of a physical body. In other words, tattoos exist – they live – only on the body, *with* the person who wears them. And, at the death of the person the tattoo also

ceases to exist. In this sense, the tattoo has a ‘lifespan’ in that of the wearer. The phrase is widely employed in commentary on Western tattooing, as well as being widely used by Western tattooists themselves. It takes as a premise, and is utilised to advocate for, an understanding of tattoos *as* ‘art’ and emerged at a critical juncture in the history of Western tattooing practices, when tattoo underwent a distinct paradigm shift in the 1960s and 1970s with the transition from craft to art, deviant practice to mainstream acceptance (see Sanders 2008). My intention here, however, is not to debate definitions of art, rather, it is to upset the status quo in academic approaches to *horimono*. Instead of discussing *horimono*/tattoo as either a mere image, or as a tattooed body, and confine individual agency to judgments or decisions, why not consider *horimono* as an agent in itself?

In *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (1998), Alfred Gell proposes an anthropological theory of art that is based on the relations between people and the material things that they make and exchange. Based on the premise that anthropology is the study of social interactions, the main focus of Gell’s theory are the interactions – the complex entanglements – occurring between people and things, which are framed by the making, reception, and effects of art forming complex networks that Gell refers to as ‘art nexus.’ Adopting Peirce’s use of the term *index* to refer to ‘works of art,’ rather than ‘representation,’ Gell outlines a wide range of relations that can occur within the art nexus. These may include relations between the ‘patron’ of the work, the ‘artist’, the thing that is ‘indexed,’ (which may include both animate and inanimate objects, gods, and even people) the ‘recipient,’ or audience, among others.

Agency begins, according to Gell, with an initial ‘index.’ Recipients (or viewers) ‘abduct’ the context of relations that stem from the index. The index is conceived by Gell to itself have a sort of rebounding or reflective effect on the artist, the commissioner, or the person/thing being portrayed. As such, it can additionally take on some of the agency of any of the agents within the art nexus, as well as acquire a kind of agency in itself. Indexes in turn, develop networks of linkages and relations of their own. These can include artists copying other artists, or the making or copying their own work, thereby forming a set of ‘distributed’ elements of the original artist’s own agency. This occurs amongst the mutually interacting agency of many other artists and elements from within the art nexus.

With an emphasis placed on intentionality, Gell’s agent is defined as “one who has the capacity to initiate causal events in his/her vicinity, which cannot be ascribed to the current state of the physical cosmos, but only to a special category of mental status that is intentions (1998: 19).”

This agent is not always a person or what would generally be considered a ‘living being.’ Rather, Gell suggests that a type of “personhood” may also be attributed to inanimate things, illustrating the multifarious ways agency ‘can be invested in things, or can emanate from things.’ Following Gell, let us assume *horimono* have “personhood” in way people are thought to and consider the following occurrence:

Kazuyoshi, the son of the tattooist Horiyoshi III, well understands the repercussions or expectations of being tattooed with certain images. Kazuyoshi, a tattooist himself, is tattooed in the centre of his back with Oiwa [お岩], a vengeful ghost. Oiwa, is known for her grotesque features and drooping right eye, and Kazuyoshi’s *horimono* depicts these features. In order to counter the negativity of ghosts, Horiyoshi III tattoos *bonji* [梵字] Sanskrit characters, for ‘pure’ or ‘good’ into the overall tattoo design. In this particularly instance, however, after Horiyoshi tattooed Oiwa on Kazuyoshi’s back, but before he was able to complete the *bonji*, Kazuyoshi’s eye started to swell in the manner of Oiwa’s; as did Horiyoshi’s eye. As a measure to restore harmony and balance thrown out by the ghost of Oiwa, Kazuyoshi went to his local temple to pray and be purified. This will be a lifetime necessity, now he wears ghosts on his body.¹¹⁴ Refer to figures 32-33 on following page.

A client of Horikazu similarly requested a protective *horimono*:

Horikazu obligingly embedded a Sanskrit character over the pre-existing *horimono* as a preventative measure to keep his client’s sanity as his health failed. Not long after being tattooed with this protective *bonji*, Horikazu took a call in the middle of the night. Fearing the worst, he listened to his client’s wife as she explained her husband had taken a nasty tumble down a set of stairs and lost his ability to walk. She continued to explain he did not even sustain a bump or scratch to his head; he was protected by his *horimono*. So much was her gratitude towards Horikazu she was prompted to call at the unusual hour. Consequently, right up until his eventual demise some months later he remained lucid. His family attributed this to Horikazu tattooing the protective *bonji* and accordingly, profusely thanked him once more.

In both these cases, the efficacy of the *horimono* is not attributed to the tattooed person, instead it is conceded to the *horimono*. Representations are not embodied; Instead these episodes are narrated with a sense of acting on the person. It is for this potentiality, that Horihide also avoids tattooing ghosts, “You should not tattoo ghosts on people. This could make trouble for a person. There are some designs that you should not tattoo. These could be bad for a person’s soul and spirit.” (McCabe 2005: 116)

¹¹⁴ This happening is also quoted by Mandelbaum (2008).



Figure 32: Oiwa image. Source: Mandelbaum, J. 2008



Figure 33: Kazuyoshi's Oiwa *horimono*. Source: Mandelbaum, J. 2008

The use of tattooing or other forms of body modification and adornment for apotropaic or talismanic purposes have been well documented in anthropological literature. Behind the tenet of efficacy in such charms or protective amulets we can find Frazer's theory of causality that provides the foundation for Muassian concepts of magic. Frazer writes:

If we analyse the principles of thought on which magic is based, they will probably be found to resolve themselves into two: first, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has severed (1998: 36).

In the earlier examples of *namakubi* and skulls, the imitation and potentiality appear self-evident. In other words, the possible effects of the severed head and skull resemble the cause or what the image represents. Yet, the purpose of these images, were not to intentionally produce negative repercussions. Understanding of the possibilities of such imagery came after the fact, and furthermore, are not a universal observation or application. Horikazu explained how he would obligingly tattoo these designs should an unrelated client, someone oblivious to potentialities or the power of the images. Other tattooists like Horicho, on the other hand, refute

such happenings are caused by *horimono*, rather, he says, “the person will die when they die” (see also 中野 2002: 122-123).

The case of Oiwa presents a further conundrum in that the efficacy and agency extends beyond the immediate recipient of the *horimono*, affecting the *horishi* and prompting further conciliatory action. Whether this can be taken as ‘individual’ agency, secondary agency, or in Frazer’s terms of “magic,” remains open for debate. What is more important, I suggest, is how it prompts us to consider different ways of thinking about *horimono*. It prompts a reconsideration of how those who wear *horimono* experience them, live with them, live as them; how they conceive of their *horimono* and body, and their differentiation between the two.

With these ideas in mind, I present the final installment in the story of Suzuki’s miraculous survival with which this chapter began. This is, when Suzuki was examined at the hospital after falling from scaffolding on a construction site:

After a lengthy medical assessment, the specialist made a diagnosis and ordered an operation be carried out to address the break in Suzuki’s spine. However, before the operation took place, another doctor heard about Suzuki’s captivating *horimono* and went to look for himself. Whereupon this new doctor became aware of the proposed operation and treatments, and realized such a treatment plan was extremely risky and really would leave Suzuki unable to walk. This doctor who was so interested in Suzuki’s tattoos took it upon himself to have Suzuki transferred to another hospital that subsequently carried out an alternative operation that would not leave him in a wheelchair. Certainly, being tattooed preserved Suzuki’s ability to walk. Suzuki, however, remains adamant – it was Kannon and not the doctor that came to his rescue.

Engaging this emerging idea of agency even in this ambitious and unrefined capacity allows for appreciation of the *horimono* and tattooed body in the context of its inception. That is, ‘being tattooed’ amongst the complex social interactions that are implicated/complicated through the physical process of becoming tattooed. Rather than seeing only a tattooed body or seeing either the body/person or the *horimono*, a focus on agency shifts attention to what is happening, to the actions. And, by focussing on how the different actors are engaged in experiencing and living with *horimono* this chapter showed how multiple layers of agency are at play in personal experiences of *horimono* within the network.

In this chapter I have suggested through ethnographic description the diverse ways the participants in this research experience their *horimono* and (tattooed) body may raise questions about the status of, or the relationships between, the body, self and identity, as well as about conceptualisations of *horimono* itself. Yet, because of the very duplicitous nature of lived

experiences we are still left with the golden question: where does one draw a boundary between “person” and “thing” – especially when doing so reduces *horimono* to a symbolic representation thereby privileging a visual that may be in direct contrast, or a transgression from, the lived experience or intention of the tattooed and *horishi*, tattooist?

To take a symbolic or visual interpretation – one of fixed and bounded entities – is to remove *horimono* from the relations and contexts that define how one experiences their *horimono*. Instead, in examining the multiple lived experiences of those with *horimono* we have seen a more fluid negotiation of boundaries. Thus suggesting that far from fixing the body and/or self, *horimono* facilitate, perhaps even necessitate, a reflexive, constantly changing mediation of bodies and selves via the biological body whose boundaries are manipulated and transgressed by their *horimono*.

Indeed, *horimono* and the process of tattooing, bring into being tangible (materiality) relationships between biological bodies; thinking, feeling self-identifying persons being tattooed; the tattooist and the elements or images of the *horimono*, which itself retains a sense of ‘personhood.’ In this light, I would go so far to say *horimono* can act both on the wearer and through the wearer, with an independent agency. How this agency plays out, however, on a social or community level, as opposed to the personal level here, is not another matter entirely; as becomes clear in the festival setting.

CHAPTER FIVE

SPIRITS, BODIES, BOUNDARIES – HORIMONO IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

SUNDAY MAY 20TH 2007: MIYADASHI¹¹⁵ 宮出し

Belying the serene calm that hangs over the yet to awaken city, the shrine and temple complex of Asakusa Jinja and neighbouring Sensō Ji is seething with activity. In the muted glow of pre-dawn light an estimated ten thousand people, namely parishioners known as *ujiko* [氏子] have come together to kick off the final day of the three-day long festival, Sanja Matsuri. Clustered together in their respective associations, affiliations are discernable by the mandatory coloured *hanten* [半纏], festival coats, adorned with the crests and motifs of the forty-four tutelary neighbourhoods of Asakusa Jinja. Spectators and press, many of whom have been waiting all night vying for the best views, skirt the edges of adjacent Sensō Ji's main hall, while *katsugi-te* [担ぎ手], carriers who will bear the more than one tonne portable shrines, *mikoshi*, on their shoulders, impatiently await movement from beyond the inner tori gates of the shrine. They are all gathered together for the climatic *miyadashi*, the 'bringing out' of the three tutelary spirits in their respective *mikoshi* to excursion through the three reaches of the parish: *Ichinomiya* [一之宮] will head east, *Ninomiya* [二之宮] west, and *Sannomiya* [三之宮] will excursion south.

Joviality rings clear in the raucous chatter and laughter amongst the crowd, threatening to drown out last minute orders hoarsely barked by shrine officials as they take up strategic positions. Watching preparations unfold from the sidelines are orderly rows of somber faced riot police. Their bulky protective vests, shin-pads, heavy boots and pristine white gloves starkly contrasting with the minimally attired *katsugi-te*, who pair their *hanten* with little more than *fundoshi* loin cloths or light cotton *momohiki* pants, and thin-soled split-toe *tabi* shoes. Preparations in place, proceedings get underway signaled by a resounding, clap-clap-clap! clap-clap-clap! clap-clap-clap! CLAP!¹¹⁶

Finally, at a little after six in the morning the three *honsha-mikoshi* are simultaneously hoisted above the crowd with a collective roar of appreciation and expulsion of pent-up anticipation. But, just as the first *mikoshi* nudges its way from the inner precinct out through the *torii* gates into the gathered spectators and watching, waiting *katsugi-te*, an audible, collective gasp is drawn. “*Notta! Notta!*” “They’re riding it! They’re riding it,” come cries all around breaking the intensity of the moment along with cheering, shouting, and the boom of an increasingly frantic police megaphone. Shrine officials teetering precariously from their makeshift perches gesticulate in vain. “Get off, get off,” they holler at the figures boldly balancing – in direct contravention of festival rules – atop the portable shrine’s thick, sturdy supporting poles. Borne along with the enshrined spirits aloft their fellow parishioners shoulders the men ride the *mikoshi* urging on the *katsugi-te* by waving fans and blowing whistles. In response, the *mikoshi* careens

¹¹⁵ *Miyadashi* refers to the ‘bringing out’ of the spirits in the portable shrine.

¹¹⁶ *Ipponjime* [一本締め] is a rhythmic ceremonial hand clap comprising three sets of three claps finished with a single clap.

maniacally to and fro, up and down, spiralling around the precinct at speeds belying their immense weight. Riot police, serving as a human barrier between *katsugi-te* and spectators, observe the melee. So begins the daylong journey of Asakusa Jinja's *mikoshi*.

MIDDAY – NISHI-ASAKUSA 西浅草

Some six hours later, the *Ninomiya mikoshi* has wound its way past the broad shop fronts and down the narrow alleyways of the western district to reach the neighbourhood of Nishi Asakusa. From here, it will make one last transfer before being loaded on a truck and transported to the furthest and most northerly reach of the district. As is customary at the handover points between the different neighbourhoods and groups carrying the *mikoshi*, men stand astride the main support poles as it rests upon a lacquered trestle while the succeeding group of carriers gets into position. These men known as *kashira* [頭]¹¹⁷ take leading positions on the support beams to both guide and encourage their bearers to cleanly lift up the *mikoshi* to begin making its way along the next leg of the festival route. As the *mikoshi* is lifted from the wooden trestle and onto the shoulders of a neighbourhood association who are completely swamped by a crowd spanning the broad four-lane Kokusai-dōri, instead of alighting a fraction before being airborne, one man stays daringly balanced on top. As witnessed earlier at the *miyadashi*, waving his fan the man engages the audience, exciting the crowd and inciting attending officials and police, seemingly immune to calls to retreat. It is all over too quickly. Just a few short intense minutes and the culprit disappears from sight amongst the crushing throng of participants and viewers, leaving in his wake a scuffle breaking out between attending police and two others, diverting police attention.

The *mikoshi* rider appears to have gotten away. It is clear, though, it will not be too long before the law catches up as a heavily fortified police vehicle rolls slowly along conveying on the roof two officers who are filming the scene, another manning the loud hailer, "Climbing on the *mikoshi* is prohibited. Step down! Step down." More importantly, just as earlier at the *miyadashi*, where those riding on the *mikoshi* were easily identifiable by their marked *hanten*, the man riding the *mikoshi* here in this incident is just as recognizable – by his *horimono*.

¹¹⁷ Literally translated as 'head' or 'lead.'



Figure 34: Sanja Matsuri, Saturday 18th May 2013. Source: Taken by author.

What appears in this scene as an organic, a seemingly spontaneous, response to a festival – an atmosphere charged with an infectious energy emanating from and flowing through the tightly packed crowd of participants, from the *katsugi-te*, officials, riot police, through to the audience – is an act in direct contravention of well publicised festival rules. It is an act both affecting and contingent upon the behaviour of others and one bringing history-making consequences. In other words, it is an act that both reflects and impacts the dynamics of both the setting – the festival – and the community – in which it occurs.

This chapter considers *horimono* on the community level exploring the presence of *horimono* at two annual *shitamachi* festivals – Sanja Matsuri and Torigoe Matsuri. In a public place, the presence of a man covered by full body *horimono* is particularly striking. Towering over the participants and crowd atop a *mikoshi*, portable shrine, the presence of men like this is also distinctly memorable. Shinto shrine festivals, *matsuri*, like the one described above, provide a rare public space in which *horimono* can be seen or shown as extensively tattooed men and women participate in the act of propelling spirits in portable shrines through the streets in a blessing and cleansing of the local neighbourhoods. Not without contention, these tattooed participants have become integral to *shitamachi* festivals, evoking notions thought to be characteristic of both the area and its people.

As outlined in the Introduction Chapter to this thesis, *shitamachi* is both a territorial place, and a conceptual construct. It is a place seen as representative of ‘traditional’ Japan where locals – often times still endearingly referred to as ‘*Edokko*’ children of Edo – are looked upon as maintaining ‘traditional’ practices along with upholding old social norms. *Shitamachi* is also a conceptual space evoking a collective memory, nostalgia for the past, as well as an historical (localised) identity. Festivals provide an opportunity for locals, domestic and international tourists alike to catch a glimpse of this ‘*Edokko*’ spirit, and to experience ‘traditional Japan.’¹¹⁸ At the same time, festivals are a platform for the (re)creation of such localised meanings and values, as well as the (re)construction, or reinforcement, of local (social and personal) identities (Ashkenazi 1993; Bestor 1989; Kawano 2005). As a rare occasion in which *horimono* may be publically experienced, it is then prudent to question the role of *horimono* within this festival setting. How does *horimono* fit within today’s notions of *shitamachi*? More explicitly, how **does** *horimono*, through the participation of tattooed men and women in *matsuri* contribute to the formation of multifaceted social/community and personal identities that define the area?

Previous studies have shown festivals provide a window into aspects of everyday social life of the locale and community in which they take place (Bestor 1989; Ashkenazi 1993). Correspondingly, the aim here is twofold: firstly, to illustrate the role *horimono* plays amongst the broad cast of actors on the festival stage, and secondly, to unravel how actions within the festival reflexively impacts on a broader societal level. This chapter comprises three sections. The first section is an introduction to the *matsuri* outlining the setting, the origins of the shrines, festivals, and the festival formats. The second section explores ‘*horimono* in action,’ while the concluding section discusses notions of power that I argue can be seen emerging in the festival. Foucault (1979), Gell (1998, 1999), Lienhardt (1961) and many others have presented a wide range of divergent forms of power, control, authority, potential and so forth. I’m not going to go into detail about such definitions here, rather, through ethnographic detail I intend to illustrate how ‘powers’ emerge within the context of two *shitamachi* festivals.

¹¹⁸ The Japan National Tourism Organization English website describes the Sanja Matsuri in these terms stating, “[T]he palanquin parade is said to convey the ‘Edo-ko katagi,’ or the spirit of the children of Edo, representing the traditional temperament of the original townsfolk of Tokyo.”
<<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/tokyo/asakusa.html>>

MATSURI

Comprising two key elements, ritual and celebration, or festivity, *matsuri* originated with the aim of renewing the life power of both *kami* and human beings in a given life space (Sonoda 1975: 103). Often translated into English as ‘gods’ or ‘spirits’, *kami*, have a somewhat broader definition. Following 18th century Shinto scholar Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), any being has the potential to be *kami*: the defining conditions, being ‘awe-inspiring’ and having some eminent quality out of the ordinary (Ibid). Deities of heaven and earth, human beings, objects or animals all have potential to be *kami*. Including ‘evil and mysterious things if they are extraordinary and dreadful’ (Norinaga in Arnason 1997: 161).

During the *matsuri*, *kami* excursion into the secular world over which they preside (Ashkenazi 1993; Sonoda 1975). In the *matsuri* described in this chapter, the *kami* are transferred to portable shrines known as *mikoshi* and paraded around the neighbourhood. This parade was once part of a well-defined balance of ritual and celebratory actions.¹¹⁹ These days, while religious ritual are at the core of Shinto *matsuri* and ritual elements continue to punctuate the proceedings of the festival, festivity supersedes ritual. Generally, a shift in balance away from religious towards secular actions characterises post-War *matsuri* (Ashkenazi 1993; Bestor 1989; Sonoda 1975), and accordingly, I view *matsuri* in this chapter as social occurrence, rather than strictly religious events.

SANJA MATSURI

Sanja Matsuri is a Shinto shrine festival held annually at Asakusa Jinja. It is one of the three largest festivals in Tokyo dating back to the Edo period.¹²⁰ The history of the festival and the shrine is inseparable from that of neighbouring Buddhist temple, Sensō Ji.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Following Sonoda (1993: 105-108) the original form of *matsuri* can be summarised as follows: the first step in preparing for *matsuri* is purification, cleaning the shrine precinct and surrounding neighbourhoods. Purification readies the area for the invocation of the deity to the altar with a ritual cry known as *keihitsu* [けいひつ]. Offerings of special food dishes are prepared for the deities, and there is participation in ritual prayer, *norito* [祝詞], recited by the *kannushi* [神主] or head priest. The ritual actions of *matsuri* concludes by seeing off the *kami* with another ritual cry and closing of the altar doors. These ritual actions run parallel with, and complementary to, celebratory actions where festival participants prepare by cleansing and bathing to purify themselves. The sacralisation of participants in this manner paves the way for the emergence of a symbolic vehicle for the deity, such as the portable shrine, *mikoshi*, and the setting in motion of the *kami* in this vehicle. Animation, that is the lively motion through vigorous actions of the participants while propelling the spirits through the neighbourhoods, draws the spectators into the action akin to a state of collective ecstasy; Thus, effectively creating a state symbolic of the flow of life between *kami* and participants. A flow of this nature not only erases distinctions between participants but also strengthens the vitality of the *kami*. Festival actions conclude with standing still and the quieting of both participants and *kami* (Sonoda 1993: 105-108).

¹²⁰ *Sandai-matsuri* 三大祭 Sanja Matsuri, Kanda Matsuri Sanno Matsuri held annually in June.

*Historical background – Asakusa Jinja*¹²²

Partitioned off from the Buddhist temple area by imposing tori-gates, the Shinto shrine of Asakusa Jinja sits oasis like in the northeast corner of the greater temple complex, calm and quiet amongst the everyday activities of the busy tourist hub. The shrine was commissioned by Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604~1652) in the year 1649 in honour of three men – fishermen brothers Hinokuma Hamenari and Hinokuma Takenari, and their patron, Haji no Nakatomo, a village headman of Asakusa – who are credited with the existence of Sensō Ji (浅草神社. 2008. 「浅草神社のご紹介・由緒」).

Legend has it that on March 18th 628,¹²³ the Hinokuma brothers were fishing on the Sumida River. Pulling in their nets, the fishermen discovered they had not caught a single fish. Instead, they had pulled up from the depths of the river a small golden statue, which they promptly threw back into the water. To their bewilderment, each time they returned the statue to the river it resurfaced again. Recognising something unusual in the statue they took it to shore placing it at the base of a pagoda tree in nearby Komagata. Afterwards they discussed the strange events of the day with the learned headman Haji no Nakatomo who, on seeing the statue, realised it was the image of the Bodhisattva Kannon¹²⁴. On learning, from Haji no Nakatomo, of the benefits Kannon could bring to this world, the two brothers prayed earnestly for profitable fishery. The following day, the brothers had a profitable catch thereby cementing their belief in Kannon and moved by the fortuitous discovery and turn of events, Haji no Nakatomo took on the priesthood giving up his position of headman and converting his house to a temple for Kannon, devoting his life to Buddhism.

The Hinokuma brother's and Haji no Nakatomo's actions paved the way for Sensō Ji on the marshy edge of the Sumida River. After visiting Asakusa and learning of the statue of Bodhisattva Kannon, Buddhist priest Shōkai Shōnin [勝海上人] built a hall to house and worship it in the year 645. This was the first Kannon-dō (Hall of Kannon) built to house and worship the statue making it the oldest temple in Tokyo. However, Shōkai subsequently experienced a revelation that the statue must be hidden from human view. Since then the

¹²¹ It is common to find Shinto shrines nearby or associated with Buddhist temples due to the syncretic nature of Buddhism and Shintoism in Japan.

¹²² All information in this section comes from Asakusa Jinja and Sensō Ji websites unless other wise noted.

¹²³ According to the old lunar calendar of Japan that was in use until 1872. Dates on the lunar calendar are around 6 weeks earlier than the current calendar.

¹²⁴ *Kannon Bosatsu* [観音菩薩] in Japanese.

statue has been kept out of sight, with a replica for public viewing and worship eventually produced in the mid-ninth century.

Popularity of Sensō Ji grew during the Kamakura period (1192~1333), which led to further development of the temple precinct and an increase in pilgrimage to the area. Later during the Edo period (1603-1868), Sensō Ji gained further prestige and prosperity after the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu [徳川家康] (1543-1616) identified Sensō Ji as the temple where prayers for the shogunate would be offered. By now, Sensō Ji and the surrounding area were established as a site central to the rapidly growing metropolis of Edo, and Edo culture. In this climate in 1649, Asakusa Jinja was built. Today, the precinct comprising the Buddhist temple, Sensō Ji, and Shinto shrine, Asakusa Jinja, remains a primary destination for domestic and international tourists and pilgrims with an estimated 27.5 million visitors annually (台東区市役所. 2012. 「観光統計調査の実施方法及び調査結果」).

The Asakusa Jinja precinct or *keidai* [境内] is demarcated by *torii* gates, the largest of which tracks a path to the main building (*shaden* 社殿). Upon entering the sacred perimeter via the *torii* gates, visitors cleanse their hands and rinse their mouth to purify their spirit at the 手水舎 situated in the front western quadrant. After purification, they make their way northwards to the centrally situated main building which comprises two conjoined structures – the worship hall, *haiden*, in front and offering hall, *heiden*, behind. It is here within the worship hall the three deities are enshrined. A further two structures are situated on the front eastern section, the *kaguraden*, a small hall for musical and dance performances, and the *mikoshiko*, a comparatively nondescript building where the *mikoshi* are housed out of sight for most of the year. Flanking the northeast entrance is a small *inari* shrine, Hikaninari Jinja.

The combined area of Asakusa Jinja (shown on next page in Figure 35) acquired the status of Important Cultural Property in 1946,¹²⁵ the designation officially recognising the important history and culture of the shrine. Aside from renovations and repainting such as those that took place most recently in 1996, Asakusa Jinja remains in its original form having remarkably survived the multiple devastating fires of Edo, Great Tokyo Earthquake of 1923 and the firebombing of Tokyo in World War II unscathed. The nearby temple buildings of Sensō Ji and much of the surrounding area were not so fortunate facing extensive and

¹²⁵ According to The Agency for Cultural Affairs [文化庁] Database of Important Cultural Properties of Japan [重要文化財] Asakusa Jinja, namely the *honden* and *kaiden*, were designated Important Cultural on November 29th 1946 [<http://kunishitei.bunka.go.jp/bsys/maindetails.asp>]. Asakusa Jinja website lists 1951 as the year of designation [<http://www.asakusajinja.jp/asakusajinja/syaden.html>].

repeated devastation. Reconstruction of Sensō Ji following damage inflicted during the Second World War was completed in 1958 with the aid of donations.



Figure35: Map of Precinct and Asakusa-jinja.

Source: Asakusa Kannon Sensō Ji Homepage <http://www.sensoji.jp/guide/index_e.html>

| | | | |
|------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-------|
| A. Kaminarimon Gate | 雷門 | H. Zenizuka Jizo-do Hall | 錢塚地藏堂 |
| B. Hozomon Gate | 宝蔵門 | I. Nitenmon Gate | 二天門 |
| C. Main Hall | 本堂 | J. Demboin and garden | 伝法院 |
| D. Five-storied Pagoda | 五重塔 | K. Chingodo Hall | 鎮護堂 |
| E. Yogodo Hall | 影向堂 | L. Bentendo Hall | 弁天堂 |
| F. Yakushido Hall | 薬師堂 | M. Komagatado Hall | 駒形堂 |
| G. Awashimado Hall | 淡島堂 | ★ Asakusa Jinja | 浅草神社 |

Festival origins

The Sanja Matsuri held annually on the weekend closest to the 17th and 18th of May honours the three founders of Asakusa Jinja.¹²⁶ The year 2012 brought the 700th anniversary celebrations of Sanja Matsuri and a celebratory revival of its origins, a Boat Festival [舟祭] held on the Sumida River (See Figure 36 for route). Known early on as *Kannon-sai* [観音祭] or *Asakusa-sai* [浅草祭], the format of today's festival stems from the more recent Edo Period (1603-1868) where the festival combined this early boat festival with *mikoshi* and festival floats known as *dashi* [山車]. During the Edo period the three *mikoshi* bearing the spirits of the deities of Asakusa Jinja were placed in *mikoshi* before the Kannon-do Hall of Sensō Ji. Binzasara dances devoted to the deities as the eighteen towns of the district gathered together outside the gates at Asakusamitsuke [浅草見附] pulling the elaborately decorated *dashi* floats. Following the dedication by the procession of floats, the three *mikoshi* were raised in homage. Then with *Ichinomiya* in the lead, they were carried over to the boat terminal where the three *mikoshi* were placed on the river boat and rowed along the river to Komagata [駒形] to the site where the Kannon statue was first brought ashore (See Figure 37 for route). From here, the *mikoshi* were carried back to the shrine by foot (浅草神社. 2008. 「浅草神社（三社様）」). This format continued through to the end of the Edo period (1868) over two days, March 17th and 18th, every other year.¹²⁷

Festival proceedings

The current three day long Sanja Matsuri maintains many of these earlier elements with the three distinct events that now define the festival: *Daigyōretsu*, literally 'Great Parade;' Parade of neighbourhood association *mikoshi* (*Machi-mikoshi Rengo*) (町神輿連合); and the climatic Parade of the three Main *mikoshi*, known as *honsha-mikoshi* [本社], of Asakusa Jinja.

¹²⁶ The May date coincides with the discovery of the Kannon Statue, by the old calendar, March 18th 628. From the 5th year of Meiji, 1872, the festival was held on May 17th and 18th for almost one hundred years, when in 1963 the dates were changed yet again to keep up with the times and the developing traffic and city, to the closest Saturday and Sunday to the 17th and 18th.

¹²⁷ Following the Chinese astrological calendar the festival was held in the years of the Ox, hare, serpent, sheep and cock.

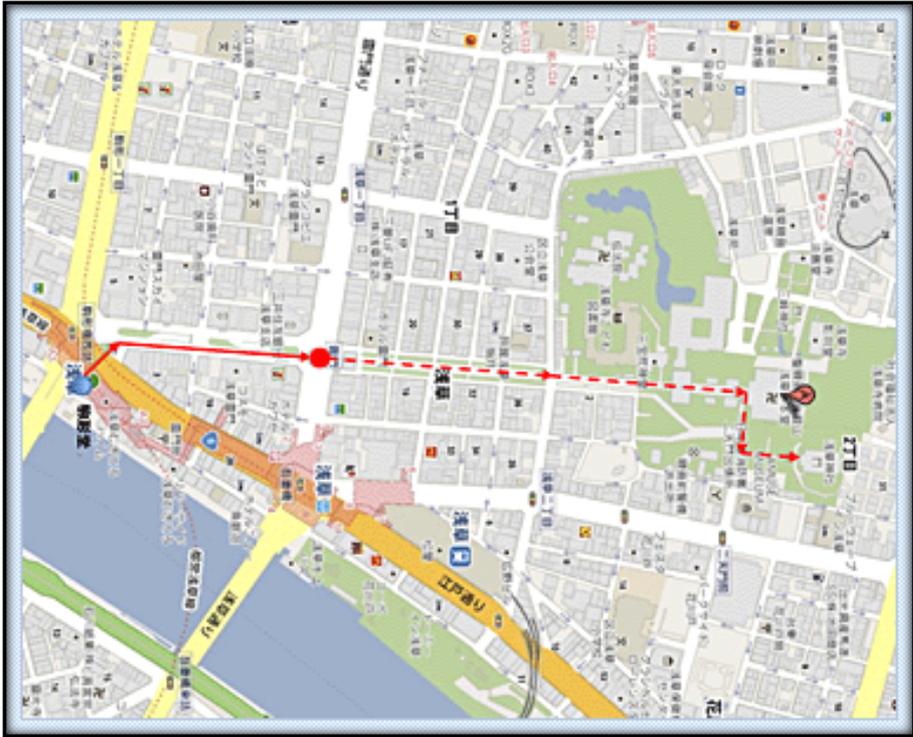


Figure 37: Route of Mikoshi from Komagatado Hall to Asakusa-jinja, 700th Anniversary.
 Source: <http://www.asakusajinja.jp/asaku_sajinja/funasa12012/>

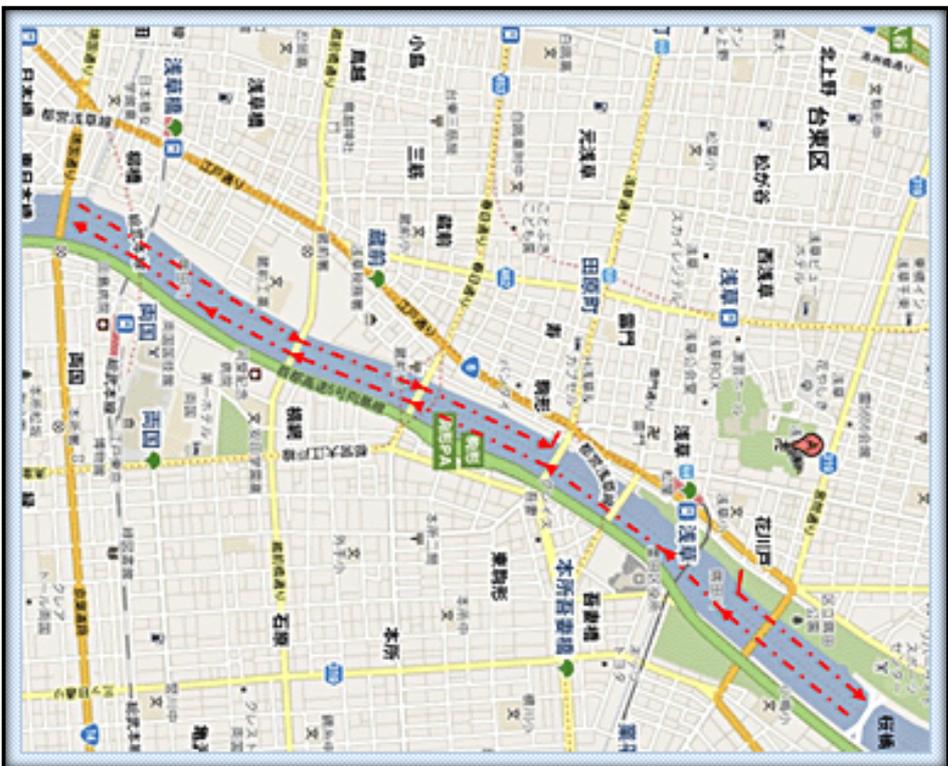


Figure 36: Path of boats, 700th Anniversary. Source:
 <http://www.asakusajinja.jp/asaku_sajinja/funasa12012/>

These days, although the main events of the festival span three days, Friday through Sunday, preparations begin prior. The early days of May bring the first indication of the approaching festival as decorations displayed on the streets, transforming the everyday scene. Streets, shopfronts, entranceways and doors are scrubbed clean and framed by paper lanterns and hanging strips of white paper symbolising purity. The usage of which comes from an early form of offering to the *kami* as a means of requesting the *kami's* presence, or as a visible marker for guiding the *kami*.



Figure 38: Preparations. Source: Taken by author.

Similarly, strings of paper lanterns span the length of the main street of 雷門通り, and the tourist hub of shopfronts and restaurants surrounding the temple and shrine complex are decorated in bright, cheerful plastic floral decorations and more paper lanterns depicting the characters of the festival [三社祭] as shown in Figure 38. With the cleaning and preparation and hanging of decorations the atmosphere around the area noticeably shifts. These visual indications thus serve a two-fold purpose, marking the approach of a festival as well as defining the boundaries of the festival, and enhance the atmosphere, which is integral to the festival process (Ashkenazi 1993: 39-41).

The festival follows a pattern repeated each year with variation primarily occurring in the order in which the neighbourhood association *mikoshi* are paraded, or which main *mikoshi* goes in which direction. While officials of Asakusa Jinja and the Service Association of the shrine decide the order in which the *mikoshi* are carried in March, it is not concrete.¹²⁸ On the eve of public festivities, on Thursday evening, a ritual transferal of the three resident deities to the main portable shrines takes place at Asakusa Jinja. The ceremony is performed by the head priest or *kannushi* [神主] and attended by a limited number of *ujiko* and officials / representatives of neighbourhood associations and spectators. From this point, the spirits reside in the *mikoshi* for the duration of the festival. The schedule is shown on next page.

¹²⁸ I noted changes to the order of the *machi-mikoshi* in the years 2012 and 2013. The order altered so that a group [西浅三北] notorious for disruptive behaviour participated in last position. This is a similar position to which they carry the *honsha-mikoshi* the following day, as once the *mikoshi* is carried to the end of the designated territory in Nishi-Asakusa, it is placed on a truck and transported to the furthest reach of the district. Thereby ensuring no contact / clash with a receiving group. These issues are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

DAILY SCHEDULE OF SANJA MATSURI

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Festival Eve Thursday | |
| 17:00 | Ritual transferal of spirits to three portable shrines of Asakusa Jinja |
| Day One Friday | |
| 13:00 | <i>Daigyōretsu</i> Great Parade [Asakusa-kumiai – Yanagi-dōri – Senzoku-dōri – Hisago-dōri – Rokku Broadway – Kaminarimon-dōri – Kaminarimon – Nakamise – Asakusa Jinja (four circuits)] |
| 14:20 | Intangible Cultural Property Binzasara Dance |
| 15:00 | Intangible Cultural Property Binzasara Dance |
| 15:30 | Neighbourhood association <i>mikoshi</i> ritual transferal of spirits |
| Day Two Saturday | |
| 10:00 | Carrying out of annual festival ceremony |
| 12:00 | Parade of neighbourhood association <i>mikoshi</i> |
| 15:00 | Dance |
| Day Three Sunday | |
| 6:00 | <i>Mikoshi</i> of Asakusa Jinja carried by parishioners |
| 6:20 | Main <i>mikoshi</i> carried by non-parishioners |
| 8:00 ~ 21:00 | Parade of <i>mikoshi</i> around districts |
| 14:00 | Ceremonial dance of shrine maidens |
| 15:00 | Dance |
| 16:00 | Japanese taiko Drum Performance |
| 20:00 | Ritual Transferal of spirits from <i>mikoshi</i> back to shrine |

Figure 39: Schedule of Festival. Source: Produced by author.

Friday: Great Parade *Daigyōretsu* 大行列

Public festivities begin in earnest on Friday with the *Daigyōretsu* Great Parade highlighting entertainment and arts famed in the area. Contingent on weather, a long slow-moving stream incorporating musical floats, firemen, representatives and officials of the shrine and each neighbourhood association, Binzasara dances, and White Egret dancers sets off from Asakusa Geisha Association in the early afternoon winding its way through the streets of the central neighbourhoods. Following the parade, Binzasara Dancers, designated Tokyo Metropolitan-Area Intangible Cultural Properties, perform an offering dedicated to the deities of the shrine in the *shaden* and *kaguraden* within the shrine precinct.



Figure 40: Above: Crowd watching *Daigyōretsu* Great Parade, Friday May 16th 2008.
Source: Taken by Author.

Figure 41: Left: *Daigyōretsu*, White Egret Dance, Friday May 16th 2008.
Source: Taken by author

This initial day of festivity is a calm antithesis to the next two days as, although the *Daigyōretsu* and *Binzasara* Dances shown above attracts many tourists who line the cordoned off areas in front of Sensōji and Asakusa Jinja, locals not directly involved pay scant attention. For them the festival starts and finishes with their own involvement in their neighbourhoods and *katsugi-te* groups, who are the center of attention on Saturday, the second day of festivities.

Saturday: Parade of Neighbourhood Mikoshi 各町神輿連合渡御

From midmorning on Saturday, the second day of Sanja Matsuri, a steady crowd of onlookers builds in front of Sensō Ji's main hall. Busy and teeming with people on any given day, some semblance of an orderly path from the Hozomon Treasure Gate to the Hon-dō Main Hall is maintained by a police cordon, literally a rope held in position by heavily attired riot police. The steadily swelling numbers are gathering to view the one hundred or so *mikoshi* of all sizes and manner of adornment belonging to the forty-four neighbourhood associations that will parade from Asakusa Jinja past Sensō Ji's main hall and on to the various neighbourhoods of the parish. As the sun and heat rise, the crowd grows more restless. Pushing and shoving of people jockeying for positions accompanies the strains of festival music wafting from behind the *torii* gates of Asakusa Jinja indicating the *mikoshi* that are in

position, gathered and lined up, behind Sensō Ji's main hall are at last on the move ready to be purified and blessed at Asakusa Jinja.

From midday through to three in the afternoon, the audience energetically claps and cheers for the procession of *mikoshi* and accompanying musical floats. Special cries of encouragement “Lift up your spirits! Show some energy!” rally the small children stoically carrying their tiny *mikoshi*, being taught at a young age the importance of energetically chanting to keep the rhythm of vigorously moving the *mikoshi*, and energising the spirit inside. En route from Asakusa Jinja, each *mikoshi* and musical float pauses in front of Sensō Ji's *Hondo*, main hall, in devotion to Kannon before turning southwards or westwards out of the temple complex and towards home ground. The *machi-mikoshi* traverse their neighbourhoods, resting the night at prepared rest places, *tabisho* [旅所].¹²⁹

Sunday: Main Mikoshi of Asakusa Jinja 本社神輿

The third and final day of the festival brings the climatic main event. For fourteen hours, from the *miyadashi*, the bringing out of the spirits, at 6am to the *miyairi*, the return of the spirits at 8pm, the three *honsha-mikoshi* of Asakusa Jinja are carried through the three districts, East, West and South. Weighing in at over one tonne each the three *honsha-mikoshi* are the vehicles for conveying the three deities duration of the festival. Commissioned by Tokugawa Iemitsu in the 14th year of Kanei, 1637, the original three portable shrines faithfully carried the deities for almost 300 years before being designated Important Cultural Properties in 1927, and retired for three newly purposed *mikoshi*. Unfortunately all were destroyed during the fire-bombing of World War II, including a fourth [四之宮] *mikoshi* belonging to Tōshōgū Shrine that falls within Asakusa Jinja's district. Replacements of the *mikoshi* were made in 1950 and 1952 and have been carried since.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Refer to Bestor (1989) for the significance of the position and selection of *tabisho*.

¹³⁰ The fourth *mikoshi* [四之宮] of Tōshōgū, was a *machi-mikoshi* that was dedicated to Asakusa Jinja after there were not enough locals in the neighbourhood to carry it. It was said to be too heavy for the present carriers, yet compared to the one tonne others, it is light and because of this light weight, it was very easy to move and manipulate roughly and violently and as such was known as an ‘unmanageable *mikoshi*’ [暴れ神輿]. Two issues – lack of carriers and aggressive behavior – led to it being decommissioned. More widely, these two issues echo through the entire/overall festival as well as that of nearby Torigoe Festival, as will be discussed shortly.

Miyadashi 宮出し

The *miyadashi*, bringing out, of the main shrines of Asakusa Jinja is renowned as a chaotic affair as illustrated at the beginning of this chapter. Because of increasing popularity and large numbers of participants, coupled with violent incidents stemming from the competitiveness of the participating groups, the *miyadashi* of Asakusa Jinja has distinctive characteristics. Firstly, there are two participating factions, *ujiko*, parishioners, and *dōkōkai* [同好会] literally ‘appreciation groups’ who carry the *mikoshi*. During a period of restoration (completed late 2010) on Sensō Ji when space surrounding both Asakusa Jinja and Sensō Ji was restricted, the *miyadashi* was limited to parishioners only. The only people allowed within the *keidai* were *ujiko* wearing their identificatory *hanten*, festival coat. Following the completion of the restoration, this trend continued with a slight moderation: *ujiko* participate first, followed by *dōkōkai*. At the completion of the *miyadashi*, the *mikoshi* continue on to traverse the neighbourhoods following a set route and order of procession that does not change from year to year. Returning in the evening, with the *miyairi*.

Miyairi 宮入り

From 6pm, barricades are rolled out in the temple complex in preparation for the *miyairi*. The steel barricading effectively demarcates the route of the procession cordoning off areas immediately surrounding the shrine from non-participants. Participation in this section of the festival is limited to *ujiko*. Typically the west district returns first from the north entrance, followed by the east and south districts entering from the main south entrance. However the scheduled order is flexible, allowing for faster or slower passages.

Spectators for the *miyairi* converge early on Sensō Ji temple from early in the afternoon, taking seats on the steps, rails and high on the veranda areas, rope and police keeping everyone in their place several hours before the *mikoshi* comes close. The level of security has increased in recent years due to a death¹³¹ after a person was struck with the *mikoshi*. According to locals, since then the festival has become a “kenka matsuri” [喧嘩祭り] or fight festival and security an issue, as will be discussed in the following section. It is worth noting here, this same term is used to describe the frequently violent and aggressive Torigoe-festival. Because of the heavy barricades it is difficult for spectators to see much if anything of the passing procession. The lights of the *mikoshi* and the noise of the *katsugi-te* are dimmed by

¹³¹ This death was well known and talked about by participants and locals. Other deaths occurring during the festival are not reported in the media as will be discussed in the following section.

distance and the immediate physical separation. In order to secure both the temple and shrine buildings and the safety of spectators increased security is an understandable move from the organisers. However, the sense of festivity at this point, through audience/community participation, is lost in the fortifications and separation the heavy barricading enforces (see figures 42 and 43 below).

Here then, are two different experiences of the festival. On one hand, the *ujiko* at the center of the procession, carrying the *mikoshi* and the spirits safely home, are excited and elated at the great honour. “I wait every year to carry the *mikoshi*. I get to come home and see everyone and yeah, even though it’s dangerous, I would never miss it.” A sense of achievement is proclaimed in showing off bruised, swollen and in all probability broken collarbone from carrying the *mikoshi*, “it’s such an honour, to carry the *mikoshi*. I do it for the *kami*.” As the spectators peer through the steel, *ujiko*, on the other side of the barricade, glow red with exertion, alcohol and ecstatic energy having once again revitalised their home-turf, blessing and being blessed by the presence of the *kami* that they have once (again) safely returned to their home shrine.



Figure 42: Behind the barricades, Sanja Matsuri, Sunday May 20th 2012. Source: Taken by author.



Figure 43: Behind the barricades, Sanja Matsuri, Sunday May 20th 2012. Source: Taken by author.

On the other hand, for those who have travelled far to see the great *mikoshi* of the Sanja festival, the *miyairi* can be anticlimactic. While there is much proclamation over the size and beauty of the *mikoshi*, there is also disappointment of not being able to see, waiting and not knowing what is going on with the procession. The highlight of the *miyairi* becomes the food stalls doing roaring trade as many lose interest in straining for sight and a decent position near to the action, which is indeed far removed from any action at all. The air inside some parts of the temple precinct, in areas with little visibility, and no interaction, is one of disappointment.

In stark contrast to the *miyairi* described here is that of Torigoe Matsuri, to which I now turn attention.

TORIGOE MATSURI

Torigoe Jinja is home to the heaviest *mikoshi* in Tokyo. Known as *senkan mikoshi*¹³² due to its size, Torigoe Jinja's *mikoshi* tips the scales at almost 4 tonnes and lends a colourful chapter to the shrines 1350 year long history.

*Historical background*¹³³

The area of Torigoe, known as Shiratori Village [白鳥村] until the late Heian Period (749-1185), is today situated to the south of the bustling Asakusa tourist precinct at the crossroads of Asakusabashi in the south, Kuramae in the east, and Akihabara in the west. The area was of course once not so built up, and Torigoe, was then a hilly area comprising an expensive shrine grounds and the fast flowing river area. Torigoe takes its name from this very river. Legend has it that the shogun Minamoto Yoriyoshi's son, Yoshiie [源義家] (1039-1106), then a well-known warrior, had a fortuitous encounter in the on the river banks here. It is said Yoshiie was heading south to Kanagawa Prefecture with his troops under northern pressure¹³⁴ when he encountered an impossible river crossing at the mouth of Okawa.¹³⁵ With steep riverbanks and fast flowing water, the river stopped their progress. Then, just when situation appeared hopeless and looked the entourage would be trapped across the river, a white bird flew down.¹³⁶ Crying out the location of the shallows to Yoshiie, the white bird tracked a path to safety. Following the white bird Yoshiie and his troops safely crossed the river and continued on their journey. From this experience came the name 'Torigoe': a combination of *tori* [鳥] bird, and *koe* [越え] from the verb to cross over (鳥越神社. 2014. 「鳥越神社へよこそ」).

It is also from this time forward the original shrine, Shiratori Myōjin established in 651, came to be known as 'Torigoe Jinja.'¹³⁷ The natural environment around the shrine was altered some time later, when Tokugawa Ieyasu began construction of Edo Castle. Because of the

¹³² *Senkan-mikoshi* [千貫神輿], *Senkan* refers to the weight: 100*kan* =3753kg.

¹³³ Information for this section comes from the Torigoe website, unless otherwise referenced (鳥越神社 2012. <http://www004.upp.so-net.ne.jp/kab_ra/>).

¹³⁴ Pressure from the Zenkunen War [前九年の役] (1051-1062).

¹³⁵ Former Miyadogawa [宮戸川] and Sumida River [墨田川].

¹³⁶ The Shinto deity, Yamato-takeru-no-mikoto, takes the form of a white bird.

¹³⁷ During the Eishō [永承] period, 1046-1053.

need for land for the shogun's retainers¹³⁸ a decision was made to fill in the ponds and canals around the shrine.¹³⁹ Subsequently, the hilly area Torigoe was perched was broken down to use for landfill in the late 16th century. As the construction of Edo Castle progressed, so too did the flattening of the nearby land, with the area completely flattened by 1645.¹⁴⁰ At this time the three shrines on this hilly area were ordered to be transferred elsewhere. As Torigoe Jinja enshrined the deity, Yamato-takeru-no-mikimoto [日本武尊]¹⁴¹ it was left in place.

Today, there are three deities worshipped at Torigoe Jinja. Yamato-takeru-no-mikoto, Tōshōgū Gongen [東照宮権現] the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu,¹⁴² and Amenokoyame-no-mikoto [天兒屋命] (小森 1978: 200).¹⁴³ Also, rather than a natural habitat, the shrine of Torigoe Jinja is nestled in a small precinct at the crossroads of major arteries into the city. A *torii* gate demarcates the sacred area from the four-lane main road, Kurumaebashi-dōri, and although only a couple of blocks back from Edo-dōri, national highway Route 6, the shrine is quiet and calm. Aside from early June that is, when the Torigoe Matsuri festival takes place.

Each year, from 6.30am on the Sunday closest June 9th the annual festival of Torigoe Jinja is held. During the Torigoe Matsuri, the *senkan-mikoshi* carries the enshrined deities of Torigoe Jinja through the twenty-three original neighbourhoods of the area on the shoulders of local *ujiko* groups. To support the festival, an 'Association of Eighteen Neighbourhoods'¹⁴⁴ was organised in 1914. After, being disbanded during the Second World War, this Association was revived in 1949. Since this revival, the old order of twenty-three neighbourhoods continues to be used during the festival. Today this Association of Eighteen Neighbourhoods, along with religious devotees to the shrine work together organizing the festival. Because of the revival of the festival post-war, it is sometimes referred to as a "Showa" festival to describe this era and sensibility. The *mikoshi* parade held immediately after the war is described by elders as having caused a lot of difficulty. The devastation around the area

¹³⁸ Hatamoto [旗本]

¹³⁹ It was also during this time that rice storage was built around the area to fuel the Bakufu economy, leading the area to be named, Kuramae, literally translated as 'In front of Storage.'

¹⁴⁰ Second year of Shōhō [正保 2 年] Minamoto Iemitsu's [源家光] reign (1623-1651).

¹⁴¹ Legendary Prince Ōsu, son of Emperor Keikō (71-130).

¹⁴² Deity was transferred here following the destruction of Matsudaira Jinja in nearby Kuramae in the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923.

¹⁴³ According to records in the *Nihongi*, Amenokoyane-no-mikoto was in charge of divine affairs and divination a position he gained after he was commanded to guard the divine mirror by the sun goddess Amaterasu-ōmikami.

¹⁴⁴ [十八カ町睦会]

changed the street scene and they needed to recreate a new route map to take into account air raid shelters and land displaced by bombings.

The *senkan-mikoshi* carried today is also a replication of the original. After being burned in the fires following the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, a replacement was commissioned in 1925. As the largest *mikoshi* in Tokyo, it attracts much attention, and requires around 200 participants at any one time to carry the four tonnes of weight. While the sheer size and beauty of the *mikoshi* is itself a spectacle so too is the lantern parade that accompanies the *miyairi*.

Torigoe Matsuri is referred to as a ‘night festival,’ in reference to the lantern parade and lit-up *mikoshi* as it is carried down Kurumaebashi-dōri in a climatic finale. From 6.30pm a parade including the legendary *Sarutahiko* [猿田彦] with his long nose, *tekomai* dancers [手古舞] and a variety of different flag bearers carrying long waving coloured flags and paper lanterns congregates at one end of the 100 meter long stretch of road running past the front of the shrine. The lighting of the lanterns signifies the beginning of the *miyairi*. With brilliant lanterns illuminating the *mikoshi*, reflecting off the shimmering gilt of the phoenix mounted on top, as the *mikoshi* is buoyed above the crowd the delicate tail feathers dance and flutter soaring ethereally above the Miyamoto parishioners tasked with safely bringing it home to roost.

Dealing with troubles

At nearly four tonnes, there have been a number of casualties in the festival similar to those noted at the Sanja Matsuri. Injuries to *katsugi-te* are not uncommon; indeed they are to be expected. More unexpected, however, are the injuries to others as well, some stemming from violence some from the intense crowd. Just as at the Sanja Matsuri, to make up the numbers *dōkōkai* [同好会] appreciation groups of festival lovers attend and participate. According to shrine officials and locals, it is these *dōkōkai* groups who have brought trouble to the festival.¹⁴⁵

During the course of a particularly chaotic festival in 2003, a riot police officer was injured, apparently by one of these outsiders. This prompted the introduction of steel barricades to

¹⁴⁵ According to the Mainichi Shimbun report, the shrine has enough *katsugi-te* and the *dōkōkai* are unnecessary. 「祭り狂乱、自分で防いで 警視庁が警備縮小、鳥越祭」、『毎日新聞』2007年6月7日。

keep all but the immediate participants away from the *mikoshi* at the final *miyairi*. The two meter tall steel barricades function to separate spectators, but at the same time, they also bring other consequences.

As is customary, the crowd follows the *mikoshi* parade down the street in the final dash towards the shrine. With space and movement restricted by the barricading, the spectators get caught up in the crowded space and can be crushed against the buildings or trampled in the hoard of people. Pressed flat against walls and shop fronts, trampling potted gardens, being jostled along with a one way moving crowd is dangerous. In fact, shrine officials warn that participation in the festival is dangerous and both *katsugi-te* and spectators should attend at their own risk. Another interesting phenomenon accompanying the steel barricades has been ‘jumping onto the *mikoshi*.’ While riding the *mikoshi* is thought of as problematic at the Sanja Matsuri, during the Torigoe Matsuri, youth attempt to access the cordoned off area by climbing over the barricades.



Figure 44: Youth climbing barricades. Sunday June 11th 2006. Source: Taken by author.

Clambering precariously onto the edge of the tall barricades the youth, heady from the *sake* that has been flowing freely since the early hours and intoxicated by the volatile atmosphere, ignore the repeated warnings of the attending police. Clothed in non-descript white, they strip down baring their partly tattooed backs to the crowd as they perch high above the *mikoshi*, waiting for the

moment to jump down into the fray. The tens of police busses that line the nearby streets bringing in hundreds of riot police, however, do not catch these youth on the fly. Instead, surveillance is on hand filming all the happenings, from the roofs of the heavily fortified vehicles leading in the procession and bringing up the rear, on the balconies and rooftops of adjacent buildings commandeered for the evening.

Each year, the attending riot police take up different tactics to control the crowd. Some tactics include holding back the ‘tail’¹⁴⁶ of the procession with ropes or human chains; keeping a large distance between different carrying groups and the lantern parade; having police vehicles within the parade itself or following / leading at various distances; positioning undercover police within the audience and parade and filming proceedings from all-encompassing positions. The participation of the police in the Torigoe Matsuri greatly affects the dynamics of the festival. With the removal of the steel barricades, there was a notable drop in violence and atmosphere.

Of late there have been discernable fluctuations in security and tactics employed by the police at the festival. Locals informed me the main cause has been financial. “There isn’t enough money. The area is poor so we can’t afford the barricading,” Mrs Noda a seventy-six year old lifelong resident told me. According to officials, the police issued an ultimatum in 2007, to provide adequate security or cancel the festival, as police cut back their presence by 30%. In response, the shrine provided their own ‘security,’ namely *ujiko* and volunteers to line the broad roadway in place of the tall barricades. This appears to be somewhat more effective in quelling at least some of the violence, as the following year in 2008 when again the police presence was greatly reduced, violence was at a minimum compared to previous years with locals remarking at how tame the event is becoming. The reason behind the reduction of riot police was not entirely due to a calming down of the festival. Instead, it was due to the G8 summit being held at the same time in Hokkaido where the presence of riot police was deemed more necessary. Some configurations of police are illustrated on the following page in Figures 45-47).

¹⁴⁶ The non-formal element coming along the end of the festival parade (see Ashkenazi 1987).



Figure 45: Police barricade. Torigoe Matsuri. Sunday June 9th 2013. Source: Taken by author.



Figure 46: Police formation. Torigoe Matsuri. Sunday June 8th 2014. Source: Taken by author.



Figure 47: Human chain. Torigoe Matsuri. Sunday June 8th 2014. Source: Taken by author.

In the years following the reduction of police, another aspect has become clear: the performative nature of the clash with police. When the barricades were in place, youth directly clashed with police by climbing over the barriers and escaping their (immediate) clutches. Against the human chain of riot police, there is much less pushing and shoving and in any case, the perimeter could easily be breached by simply walking around. Additionally, human chains of riot police three deep cordoning off sections of the procession as well as the spectators from the *katsugi-te*, fractures or fragments the actions. This hinders the flow of people that at other times appears to move as a singular organism powering the *mikoshi* forward. The segmented sections ebb and flow against the human barrier, simultaneously held back and holding back as the *mikoshi* takes on a life of its own, pushing forward against the police whistles and orders. Meanwhile, inside the broad cordoned off procession path the actions remain the same. The *hanten* clad *katsugi-te* move together in a flurry of legs, arms and shuffling steps, intent on buoying the spirit through the streets in the ride of their life, a ride for life. North and south, left and right, dipping dangerously low to skim the bitumen only to be raised triumphantly high to the delight of the screaming and clapping crowd, the *katsugi-te* struggle to control the *mikoshi* up and through the *torii* gates of the shrine. The next section delves further into such dynamics, focussing on *horimono* as an active agent within the festival proceedings.

HORIMONO IN ACTION

The following section explores *horimono* in action. Here I suggest *horimono* ‘participates’ in the festival in two ways: first, attracting other participants and spectators through engaging in actions such as climbing on the *mikoshi*, and second, through marking territories.

Within the festival, it is imperative that the participants are lively, animated, and actively engaging. Animation, that is the lively motion through vigorous actions of the participants while propelling the spirits through the neighbourhoods, draws the spectators into the action akin to a state of collective ecstasy, effectively creating a state symbolic of the flow of life between *kami* and participants (Sonoda 1993: 105-108). Collective ecstasy, or ‘collective effervescence’ as defined by Emile Durkheim (1915), is a powerful group emotion arising through shared activities and values, raising consciousness of those involved (226-229). According to Sonoda (1993), a flow of such nature within the festival not only erases distinctions between participants but also strengthens the vitality of the *kami* (105-108). This occurs when, through the raising of consciousness, participants feel a force outside themselves. While this is a social force, it appears to the participants as a form of non-human

power (Durkheim 1915: 226-229). I suggest *horimono* appears as a key actor, a catalyst, within the *mikoshi* processions, animating the other participants, drawing them into the shared experience of the festival.

A depiction of the final day of the Sanja Matsuri, when the three *honja-mikoshi* traverse the neighbourhoods for fourteen hours, illustrates how this occurs. The *mikoshi* procession negotiates as many peaks and troughs as the carefully distinguishes neighbourhoods through which they pass. Although the following depiction is long, it is useful in recognizing the role of *horimono* in building an atmosphere to a peak where each of the participating actors and festival elements then come together to create the conditions necessary for a successful *matsuri*:

Sunday May 20th 2012: Passing through the covered and still shuttered *shōtengai* shopping street immediately north of the shrine/temple precinct the action of the *mikoshi* is lively, in contrast to the mood which feels somewhat subdued. Labouring under the immense weight of the *mikoshi*, *katsugi-te* push, shove and cry, carefully navigating a path through the close confines of the *shōtengai* as shop keepers and early customers, barely break from their preparations to glance at the passing crowd. Onlookers follow the *mikoshi* along the path, but the *katsugi-te* jostling for position and the sombre conglomerate of uniformed officers bringing up the rear hold them back some distance from the centre of action. Ears plugged into a central control, eyes firmly on the actions ahead the police appear alert, but at the ready for what? At this stage of the *mikoshi* procession, their presence seems heavy handed. That is, it is hard to imagine anything erupting in this atmosphere. Barely nine o'clock in the morning and the pace is steady but reserved. Locals going about their daily business ride by on their bicycles with barely a hint of interest.

Making their way to Kokusai-dōri in order to cross the multi-lane street, police immediately form a barricade, blocking the trailing crowd from entering onto the road. Four lanes across, waits a new group and neighbourhood of *katsugi-te*, officials, and onlookers, who appear to be mainly hotel tourists. The drums and musicians that have set the pace for the *mikoshi* thus far remain trapped by traffic and neighbourhood boundaries on the eastern side of the road, their lively music echoing emptily, dimmed by the traffic that continues to inch past the splintered procession. Regrouping at this changeover, the procession slowly picks up speed and, as the day progresses, energy along with a growing trail of spectators, and soon the police are outnumbered and their presence less intrusive.

A couple of hours and a couple of kilometres wound through tight circles of alleyways later, the scene has transformed. An area well documented online and talked about as a prime position to experience the 'shitamachi spirit' of the festival has drawn a large crowd. "Don't get too close, it's dangerous. You'll be trampled, there are too many hooligans here," I am warned repeatedly by locals, veteran festivalgoers and first time visitors. Spectators position themselves along the footpath, backed against the shopfronts and houses over an hour before the *mikoshi* is scheduled. Twenty minutes or so before the arrival of the *mikoshi*, white clad shrine attendants carry in the trestle on which the *mikoshi* will rest

momentarily. Then as the next contingent of *katsugi-te* trickle in the audience stirs. An exclamation of “Irezumi-sama has arrived!”¹⁴⁷ sums up the source of agitation. “Now, it’s going to start,” my companion leans close to tell me.

With standard fanfare of the *ippon-jime* the *mikoshi* is brought in to rest on the trestles, the carriers of Shibasaki-cho quickly move off and the *katsugi-te* of local Nishi-Asakusa San-chōme kita [西浅三北] neighbourhood association and the *dōkōkai* group, Nakamura-kai [中村會] who have until now been patiently waiting, swarm in, quickly engulfing the *mikoshi*. Key figures take their positions. A man dressed in nothing more than a white-fundoshi, his full body horimono on display, a whistle hanging against the crest inked on his chest, climbs onto the front of the *mikoshi*, roughly grabbing at the delicately gilded *mikoshi* for support. Joining him on the front is a hanten clad man. Clambering onto the support beam, he attempts to reveal his horimono, pulling down his belt, opening his hanten to his waist. The fundoshi wearing man, haphazardly hanging onto the purple rope of the *mikoshi*, tears at his companion’s hanten forcing it off and flinging it down below. Now they stand smiling broadly, leaning against the delicate gilt eaves of the *mikoshi*, relaxedly talking.



Figure 48: Standing on the *mikoshi*. Nishi-Asakusa. Sanja Matsuri. Sunday May 20th 2012.
Source: Taken by author.

Finally, in position, slightly behind schedule, the whistle touting man takes charge, barking orders, and readying the carriers. Clap-clap-clap, clap-clap-clap, clap-clap-clap-clap-clap! Clap-clap-clap, clap-clap-clap, clap-clap-clap-clap-clap! Clap-clap-clap, clap-clap-clap, clap-clap-clap-clap-clap! And at last the *mikoshi* is heaved off the trestle as the horimono clad men balance precariously. Two men on the front instantly alight, on the back they teeter unsteadily. Looking around to see what the other men are doing, the two stay on. There is shock and excitement as they hover on the edge hanging on by their toenails, “They’re staying on! They’re going to ride it!” But, unlike the character described in the episode with which this paper began, the men alight at the last crucial moment.

¹⁴⁷ 刺青様が来たぞう！

SEQUENCE OF *MIKOSHI* SCENE

Figure 49: Sequence of directing and standing on *mikoshi*, Sanja Matsuri. Sunday May 20th 2012.
Source: Taken by author.

This episode shows how tension, the suspense over what may unfold, is one key element in the festival; another is the excitement towards the display of strength, of disregard for festival rules, of festival spirit, that fuels the tension creating a volatile situation. The actions of these tattooed men perching on the edge of the *mikoshi* is precisely the action many spectators come to experience, what many participants have gathered to be part of, and what others avoid. “I came from Yokohama after searching on the Internet. I came to see *them* riding the *mikoshi*!” says 74-year-old retiree Mochizuki-san, camera in hand. He grins with glee trying to capture the spectacle as the scrum nearly knocks him to the ground before he is swept up and along with the moving commotion.

The reason why there is such expectation surrounding these men, is not simply their position in climbing or standing on the *mikoshi*, it is also the potential they possess; the potential for doing something outside of the norm, and their *horimono* illustrate that for all to see. In other words, spectators react to both the act of climbing on the *mikoshi* and what the *horimono* represent – criminality, danger, and transgression from their (the spectators) everyday social world. It also represents the spirit for which the festival has come to be known, dangerous.

When spectators active seek out places they are able to see people with *horimono* participating in the festival potentially engaging in forbidden actions creates excitement. I suggest this is closely related to fear and awe that accompany first *horimono*, and then second, the so-thought illicit experience of being in the presence of *horimono*. As a well-dressed middle-aged woman explained as her male companion held out a protective hand guarding against a passer-by, “We come here every year. Sanja Matsuri is the best festival in Tokyo. I can’t miss it. You just never know what is going to happen. This is the real *shitamachi* festival.” Craning to see where the *katsugi-te* are standing and squatting in single file along the opposite edge of the narrow alleyway, she marvels, “Wow, that *irezumi* is wonderful,” unreservedly indicating with her finger. Others are not so bold. “Oh, look at those foreigners! They’re taking photos with *Monmon-sama!*”¹⁴⁸I overhear another person say in response to an exited group of tourists happily posing with tattooed *katsugi-te*, completely oblivious to the stir they are causing simply by taking photographs. Creating an atmosphere and energy is an important aspect of the festival process, so too then is the act of climbing on the *mikoshi*, and showing one’s *horimono*. However, these acts are considered unruly by organisers, and come with a price.

Riding the mikoshi

During the 2006 Sanja Matsuri the *Ninomiya-mikoshi* sustained extensive damage. Reportedly, up to sixteen men attempted to climb upon the moving *mikoshi* during the typically chaotic *miyadashi* weighing down the carriers to the point where they were unable to sustain the weight. *Katsugi-te* dropped the *mikoshi* heavily on the ground breaking two of the main poles. This incident came on the heels of repeated stern warnings and reprimands, which failed to curb increasingly disorderly behavior typified in climbing on the *mikoshi*. As

¹⁴⁸ *Monmon* [紋紋] is used to refer to *horimono* as well as yakuza who wear them, hence *monmon-sama* [紋紋様] could be taken to mean ‘Mr. Tattoo,’ ‘tattooed person,’ or simply ‘yakuza.’

Suzuki Akio, president of the Service Association of Asakusa Jinja¹⁴⁹ expressed, there was an overriding desire for the “festival to return to normal proceedings.” A joint statement was then released by Asakusa Jinja, the Service Association and the forty-four Tutelary Neighbourhood Associations, on December 15th 2006 (see Appendix Two), expressly prohibited climbing on the *mikoshi*. However, the decision was not universal and opposition to these rules led to an additional announcement a month later, on January 15th 2007, warning that climbing on the *mikoshi* and not abiding by the festival rules come May, would result in suspension of the festivities¹⁵⁰ the following year in 2008 (see Appendix Three).

Ultimately, as illustrated in the episode at the beginning of this chapter, on Sunday May 20th 2007 around 20 people defied the explicit rules and climbed on the *mikoshi*.¹⁵¹ Although as President Suzuki confirmed, it was the first time in over 30 years that no one climbed on the *mikoshi* while it was in the temple precinct, as soon as the *mikoshi* passed through the *tori* gates, it was the same scene as usual – people climbed upon it. “It’s regretful,” he said, “that people cannot resist especially when others from the same *dōkōkai* took the rules seriously and didn’t climb up.” In total, seven people were arrested under Tokyo Ordinance Against Disturbing the Peace [都迷惑防止条例違反] for inciting chaos – five of whom climbed on the *mikoshi*.¹⁵² The man who ignored the warning in the incident described at the beginning of the chapter was one of those who was arrested and charged with an offence, along with the two others who attempted to pervert justice by diverting the police. According to his father, he was fined ¥500,000 for over the incident. Tellingly, the arrests took place after police searches of local Yakuza/Designated Organised Crime Group offices revealed a register of the *dōkōkai* to which these three men belonged. More importantly, Asakusa Jinja and the Service Association of Asakusa Jinja confirmed their decision to go ahead with cancelling the festival, on July 24th 2007.

While climbing on the *mikoshi* during the Sanja Matsuri has been an integral part of the festival spectacle since the 1980s, the act itself is contentious, eliciting polarised views. When the person climbing upon the *mikoshi* does so in a *fundoshi* loincloth, showing off extensive tattooing, the impact on the audience and other participants is even more palpable.

¹⁴⁹ Asakusa JinjaHōsankai [浅草神社奉賛会]。

¹⁵⁰ At stake was the parade of the three main shrines of Asakusa Shrine through the streets, seen as the climax of the three-day long festival.

¹⁵¹ 「三社祭の氏子総代会、宮出しやめます「神輿乗り」逮捕者続出で」 読売新聞 2007年6月23日。

¹⁵² 「みこし乗りの逮捕者5人に 浅草の三社祭」 産経新聞 2007年6月21日。

Those who engage emphasise the necessity. Because of the narrow confines of the route the *mikoshi* takes it is necessary, they explain, to have people looking down from above, safely guiding the vehicle to prevent damage to buildings and injury to people. The bearers also need to be enlivened and stirred up to carry the enormous weight. It is important for the carriers to vigorously move the *kami*, and those standing on the *mikoshi* are able to enthruse the carriers for a livelier passage as outlined above. As one festival veteran says, “It’s not done to annoy anyone; you just get caught in the moment. It is a heroic feeling to stand up there and be moved by the crowd.”

It is unsurprising then that following the tightening of rules aimed at curbing unruly behaviours, spectators as well as participants report a dulling down of festivities compared to previous years.¹⁵³ The same sentiment was expressed at the Torigoe Matsuri after a variety of methods were adopted in attempts to calm the festival as noted earlier. Both of these observations echo sentiment from an incident in 1780s where youth, railing against reforms on the festival, refused to participate and the resulting festival was an unfortunate one:

Since the youths did not join in the festival as usual, there were no quarrels, fights, or brawls. But perhaps the gods were not pleased by the absence of the youths, because one of the middle-aged men was injured when the *mikoshi* crashed down on his head. (Tamenaga in Senzō in Takeuchi 1994: 403).

In *Festivals and Fights: The Law and the People of Edo* Takeuchi illustrates the close connection between misbehaviour, violence, lawlessness and festivals during the Edo period (1994). Leading to the question, what are the “normal proceedings” to which the Service Association President expresses the desire to return? This is a question to bear in mind for the remainder of this chapter. As already noted, climbing on the *mikoshi* is not a recent phenomenon and neither is violence and destruction at the Sanja Matsuri or Torigoe Matsuri; nor gang association with festivals in general. In fact, these connections go back to the Edo period and have been seen from this time forward as key aspects of *shitamachi* festivals. Referring to Sanja Matsuri during the Edo Period, Takeuchi (1994) writes, ‘Given all of the drinking and excitement associated with festivals, it is small wonder that fights and brawls were commonplace.’ So, although cancellation of the *honsha-mikoshi* parade of 2008 was reported as history making as it was the first time since the end of the Second World War (1939-1945) the festival was circumstantially cancelled¹⁵⁴ there were many restrictions placed

¹⁵³ See also 原昌志 「『あー乗っちゃった』三社祭で本社神輿渡御 3 容疑者を浅草署逮捕 大きな混乱なく」、『東京新聞』 2007年5月21日。

¹⁵⁴ The festival was cancelled following the death of Showa Emperor in 1989, for repairs in 1995, and again in 2011 due to the Tohoku Earthquake [東北大震災].

on individuals and groups for unruly behaviour during the Edo period where today's festival has its origins. The incidents of early times appear similar to those experienced today.

I suggest one of the reasons the recent cancellation garnered much attention was because it was not a unanimous decision; the actions that prompted it were not universally opposed. Multiple public warnings and the implementation of measures to prevent anti-social behaviours including the signing of contracts by *katsugi-te*, and limiting of number of registered *hanten* available to be worn preceded the cancellation. Yet, the final decision to enforce the cancellation remained controversial with a small but strong voice amongst the shrine organisers opposing, likewise amongst the neighbourhood associations and *dōkōkai* there were also conflicting opinions. Namely regarding two issues: first, the prospect that cancellation would set a precedent of reliance on police to manage the festival, an issue that will be discussed shortly; and second, that interpretation of what constitutes 'normal festival' behaviours, including climbing on the *mikoshi*, varies. Both issues relate to struggles for authority and power; which are the underlying arguments against climbing on the *mikoshi* and showing of *horimono* in the first place.

So, what exactly is said against climbing on the *mikoshi* and showing *horimono*? On this issue, some participants openly – though not near those showing their tattoos – express their disdain and embarrassment; namely because this 'showing off' is in the presence of public, police, and kami. As one shrine official emphatically said, "the baring of *horimono* is the shame [恥] of the festival. They are nothing but an embarrassment. You don't see any other groups behaving like that do you?" There are a couple of particular reasons climbing on the *mikoshi* prompts such reactions, aside from the potential of damaging the *mikoshi*.

Firstly, the *mikoshi* is a vehicle for *kami*. *Kami* are characteristically pure, they possess purity (*hare*), and by virtue of this purity, possess high *social* status (Emphasis in original; Ashkenazi 1993: 19). Walking on the sacred *mikoshi* defiles not only the vehicle but the *kami* too.¹⁵⁵ Consider also the previously discussed idea that tattooing defiles the body, and is considered impure, unclean and of low social status. Secondly, positioning oneself higher than the *kami*¹⁵⁶ violates emplaced moral order. As articulated by Kawano (2005), "hierarchy, respect, and social distance are maintained by orienting the upper and lower parts

¹⁵⁵ Some argue that they are not desecrating the *mikoshi* or the *kami* when they climb on it, maintaining they "stand on the poles and not on the *mikoshi* itself." However, even while defending the practice all I spoke with were cognizant of opposition to the practice on the grounds of the positioning of human and *kami*.

¹⁵⁶ Refer to Kawano (2005a) for further details.

of not only bodies but objects” (56). To stand in the same position, above, or on the *kami*, by riding on the *mikoshi* is disrespectful. In doing so, the *horimono* and the actions of the wearer are seen as subverting the power balance of the festival between *kami* and commoner, and that of everyday (Japanese) society between public and police. Those who do climb on the *mikoshi* or have done so in the past, recognize these arguments. Horikazu, after extolling the virtues of guiding the *mikoshi* and rallying the energy of the *katsugi-te* concluded by saying, “but really, you shouldn't be higher than the *kami*. You shouldn't watch the festival from above either, from apartments or by standing on the fence.” I suggest one further reason these actions are so contentious on one hand, yet ‘exciting’ on the other, and it related to territories and the marking and making of territorial boundaries.

Territorial boundaries

The second way *horimono* engages ‘in action’ in festivals is through marking and making territorial boundaries. Initially this appears to simply relate to the representational aspect of *horimono*, but I suggest the making and marking of territorial boundaries is also inextricably links to notions of power, and relations of power both within the festival and within the broader community.

First, the showing of *horimono* relates to territorial boundaries in the same manner as *hanten*. The festival route traces distinct neighbourhood lines, and the participating groups along the route share the responsibility of carrying the *mikoshi*. Each neighbourhood is responsible for carrying the *mikoshi* to or through their territory with participants identified by their *hanten* coats and emblems which are registered with the shrine/neighbourhood association. This is illustrated in Figure 50 on the following page. The registration is in place to limit circulation of *hanten* and thereby limit unwanted participants.

To carry the *mikoshi* one must be wearing the coat – aside from those baring their *horimono* that is. In the case of Sanja Matsuri for example there are forty-four neighbourhood associations amongst whom the routes are divided. These forty-four neighbourhoods make up the *ujiko* or parishioner groups, for whom Asakusa Jinja is the tutelary shrine (Outlined in green on Appendix Four). In wearing identifiable *hanten* and carrying the *mikoshi*, participants indicate their status as *ujiko* and their neighbourhoods. It is necessary to make a good showing at the festival as spectators and rival neighbourhoods are judging performance and presence.

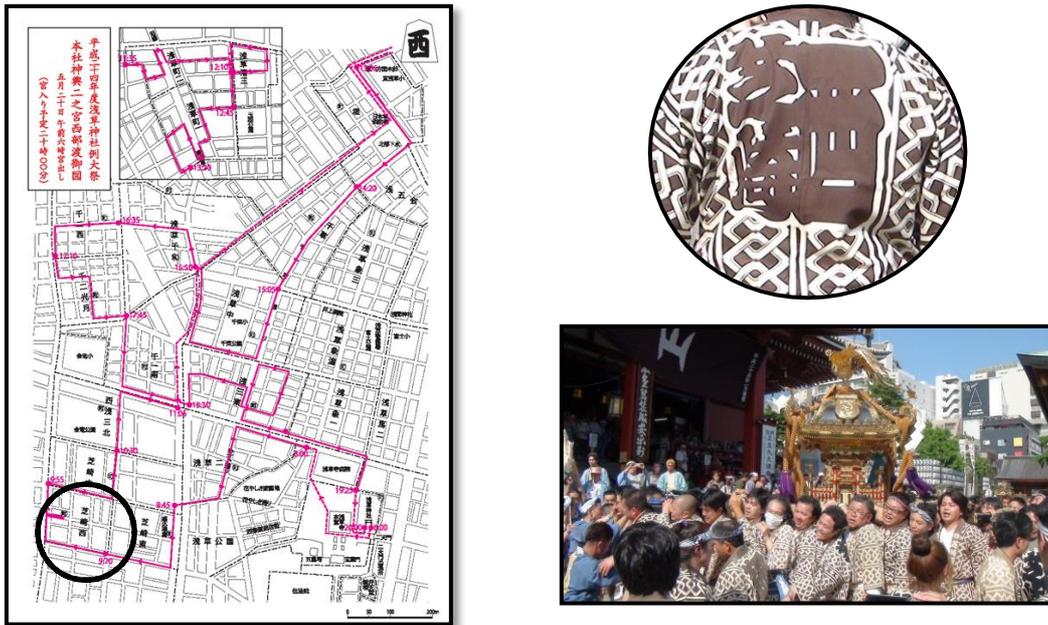


Figure 50: Sanja Matsuri. *Ujiko* group from Shibasaki Nishi neighbourhood; Left: route map; Top Right: *hanten* crest; Bottom Right: carrying neighbourhood *mikoshi*.

While participation in the procession and celebrations afterwards are a means of building relations within the neighbourhood/community, they are also a means through which particular aspects about themselves can be portrayed. For example, size of celebration and events, number of attendees, size of attending musical troops and crowd who attend the procession are all points discussed in comparison to, and competition with, rival neighbourhoods. There is much talk both before and after the festival regarding these matters and how to outdo rivals. Yet, it is not only neighbourhood groups that participate.

In addition to the *ujiko* groups, there are other ‘outsider’ festival groups that also participate in carrying the *mikoshi*. Namely, *dōkōkai*, already mentioned as a supposed cause of increasing violence. Until his death in January 2008, Momose Hiromichi¹⁵⁷ [百瀬博教] (1940-2008) organised a group of like-minded tattoo enthusiasts to gather and participate in the Torigoe Matsuri. Gathering to eat, drink and carry the *mikoshi* the group included festival lovers who participated under other *hanten* in other festivals. Looking closer, however, links between some of these groups (so-called outsider groups) can be found to an ‘other’ local – the local

¹⁵⁷ Well known as an author and producer, as well as heavily involved in the mixed martial arts competition, Pride. Momose Hiromichi, a local to Yanagibashi Tokyo, while born the second son of a well-known yakuza is said to have stayed away from crime after completing a jail term for illegal possession of a handgun. He was a champion of so-called ‘bad boys’ and delinquents, publishing a number of works on the topic.

yakuza groups. Some of who overtly display their affiliation in the same manner as *ujiko* groups, as shown in Figures 51 and 52.



Figure 51: *Mon*, crest on back of *hanten*, Sanja Matsuri, Saturday May 18th 2013. Source: Taken by author.



Figure 52: *Hanten* Inscription, Sanja Matsuri, Sunday May 20th 2012. Source: Taken by author.

Rather than showing the crest of the neighbourhood, these *hanten* show the crest of Fifth Takahashi-gumi of Asakusa. This group is a faction of the second largest crime syndicate in Japan, Sumiyoshi-kai.¹⁵⁸ The office of Takahashi-gumi is situated along the route of the *mikoshi* procession. Subsequently, like other yakuza groups in the district, they openly participate in the festival. In doing so they clearly advertise their presence in the area to the public, other yakuza groups, officials and law enforcement. On May 1st 2013, however, Asakusa Jinja issued a prohibition on the wearing of *hanten* with clear yakuza association.¹⁵⁹ This came on the heels of changes to Anti-Organised Crime Laws adopted in Tokyo in 2012 amid increased efforts nationally to stamp out organised crime. Not to be deterred, at the May 2013 Sanja Matsuri, Takahashi-gumi were still wearing their *marukin* marked *hanten* and showing their *horimono*.

¹⁵⁸ Sumiyoshi-kai [住吉会] or Sumiyoshi-rengō [住吉連合] is the second largest crime syndicate in Japan after the Yamaguchi-gumi [山口組]. Depicted in the picture are *hanten* emblazoned with [五代目高橋組] on the lapel, and the ‘*marukin*’ crest on the back, an encircled [金] character.

¹⁵⁹ This is noted in the Mainichi Shimbun (毎日新聞 2013 年) with the statement: 主催者側がこうした注意事項を明文化するのは初めて。「厳重注意事項」では暴力団関係者に対価・賃借料を支払ってはんてんを購入し宮(本社)神輿(みこし)を担ぐ裸になったり入れ墨を見せたりする。暴力団の組織名や紋様の入ったはんてんを着用する——などを禁じている。Mainichi Shimbun reports that this prohibition on showing yakuza affiliation includes both the showing of crests, and *horimono*, while Sankei Shimbun reports only the prohibition on crested *hanten*(「暴力団文様のはんてんはダメ」2013 ; 「三社祭:暴力団排除で参加者全員に厳重注意事項—浅草神社・奉賛会」2013).

The close association between *shitamachi* festivals and *yakuza* is summed up in the saying, “*yakuza festival*.” Participants and the media have flagged both Sanja Matsuri and Torigoe Matsuri as ‘*yakuza festivals*.’ Particularly in the case of Sanja Matsuri, the close association with *yakuza* has deterred some locals from attending: “it’s a *yakuza festival*. They’ve taken over, so I don’t participate anymore. I don’t even go.” However, the extent of *yakuza* involvement in the festival is not entirely clear. According to Asakusa Police Office, in the ten-year period 1997 to 2007, 40 people were arrested at the Sanja Festival. Other newspapers report that for the same period, 33 members of organised crime groups were arrested. Meanwhile, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police reports that 70 percent of the members of the 30 *dōkōkai* that participate in the festival belong to *bōryokudan*.^{159b} This presence is presented as the source of troubles.

How then do organisers deal with the overt displays of *bōryokudan* or other gang affiliation and their active participation, along with the associated trouble – particularly as such associations have characterized the festivals since the Edo period?¹⁶⁰ I have already mentioned the registration of *hanten*. While this appears a means of tracking, or limiting participation, it has not been particularly successful. For example, after an incident of poor behavior, a group will be prohibited from participating. Instead of staying away, rumour has it they “buy” the *hanten* of another group, and then continue to participate in carrying the *mikoshi* in another district.¹⁶¹ In the case of Torigoe Matsuri, sponsors of the festival are wary about the effectiveness of implementing such rules at all, because of *yakuza* associations.

Asahi Shimbun reports:

Sponsors have decided to impose penalties on the groups whose carriers break the rules this year, including prohibiting their participation next year. But, amongst the *dōkōkai* are groups thought to have *yakuza* connections, so it is uncertain whether this will be successful (朝日新聞 2007).¹⁶²

Another measure is the careful consideration of the route. In the case of Torigoe Matsuri, the route changes each year (see Figure 53). Veteran locals told me this was to include all the different areas within the festival; if the *mikoshi* did not pass by one year, it would the next.

^{159b} 中日新聞 2007 年; 読売新聞 2007 年; 読売新聞 2012 年.

¹⁶⁰ See Takeuchi 1994 for details.

¹⁶¹ I was told this was a fairly common occurrence, not only for groups but for individuals wanting to participate as well.

¹⁶² 主催者側は今年、ルールを破った担ぎ手たちのグループは、認められている部分での参加も来年から禁止するなどのペナルティーを科すことに決めた。ただ、同好会には暴力団とつながる団体もあるとみられ、呼びかけが成果につながるかは未知数だ。

ROUTE MAP: TORIGOE MATSURI

Sunday, June 11th 2006
Parade of *mikoshi* of Torigoe Jinja

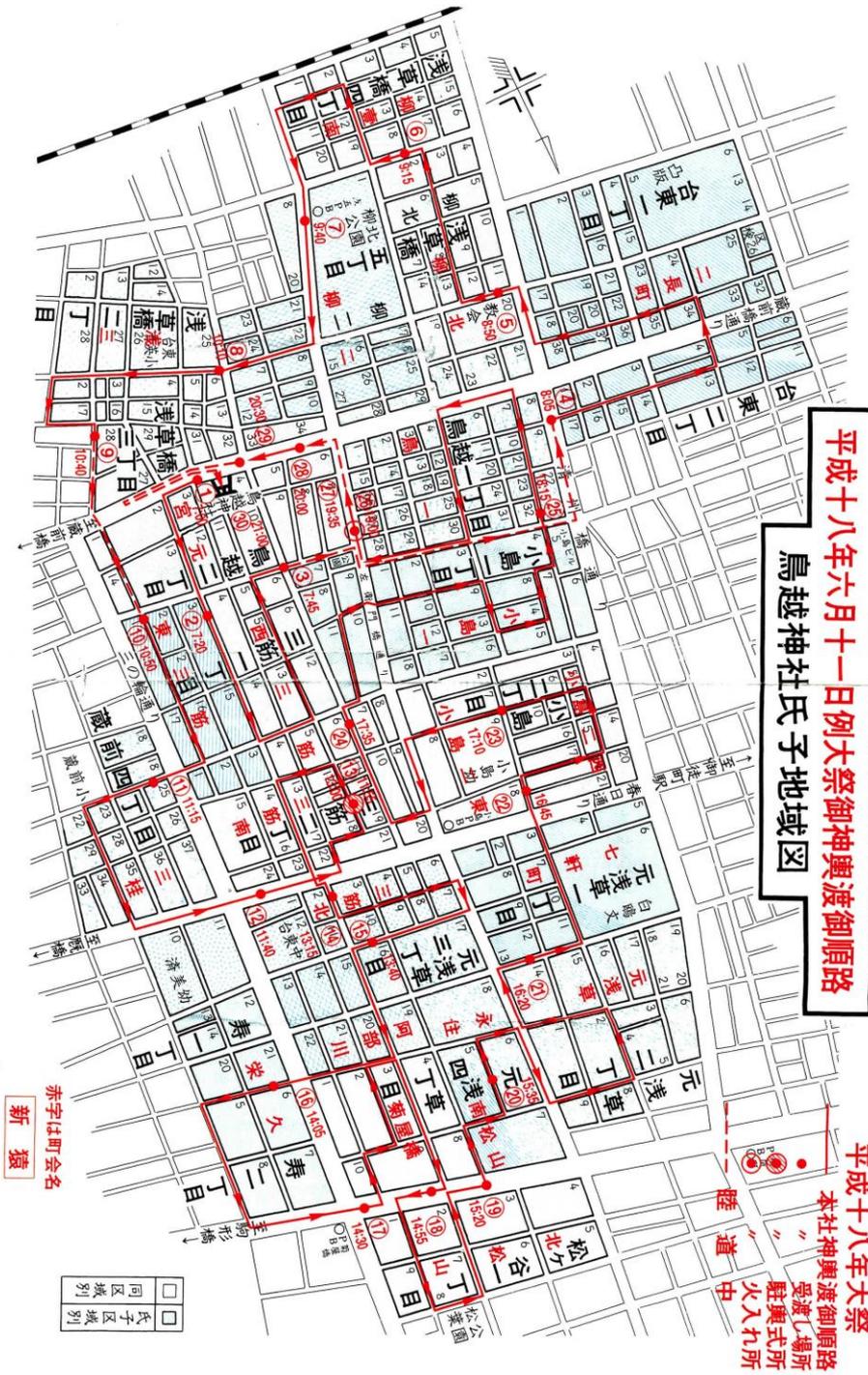


Figure 53: Route map of Torigoe Matsuri, Sunday June 11th 2006.

ROUTE MAP: SANJA MATSURI

Sunday, May 19th 2013
 Parade of main *mikoshi* of Asakusa Jinja

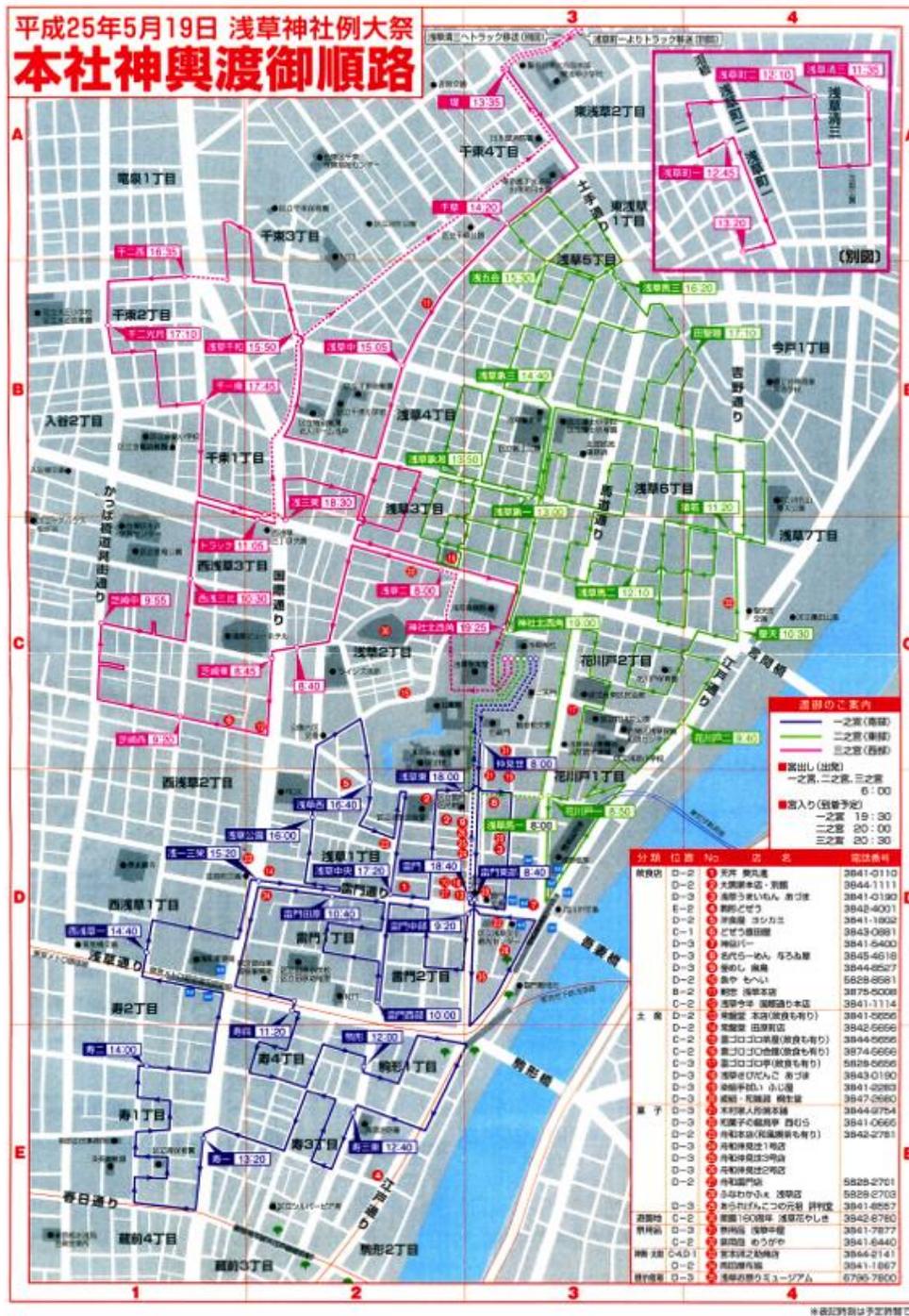


Figure 54: Route map of Sanja Matsuri, Sunday 19th 2013. Source: 浅草神社. 2013. 「浅草神社神輿渡御順路」

Also, each year, the direction of approach of the famed ‘night procession’ and *miyadashi* alternates. Sanja Matsuri route is another matter. When discussing the set route of Sanja Matsuri compared to the changing Torigoe Matsuri route, Izumi, a local of Senzoku, Taitō ward, laughed and said, “That’s just to stop the troubles. Here at the Torigoe Festival aren’t the same problems that’s why we change it each year.” Although the order of procession of the *machi-mikoshi* changes each year at Sanja Matsuri as already mentioned, the route and order of the *honsha-mikoshi* is fixed. Considering this more closely, I suggest this relates to clashes between *bōryokudan*.

On examining the route map, Figure 54 on previous page, there is a particular section that raises questions. That is, when the carrying of the *mikoshi* stops, and it is loaded on a truck and transported to the farthest reach of the district.¹⁶³ The point at which the carrying stops is in front of Takahashi-gumi headquarters. This corner of the festival is the area I have described above, well known as an exciting, volatile and potentially dangerous place to view the festival, where *horimono* and *hanten* are on proud display. After a rousing *sanbon-jime* by the head of this group, flanked by *horimono*, the *mikoshi* is rather unceremoniously tied down to the flatbed of a light truck and driven north.

¹⁶³ The pink square on the upper right side of the map shows the northerly district.

Two significant characteristics define the northern area. First, this area is the ‘Sanya’ area, the former domain of outcasts, day labourers and more recently a significant homeless population (Fowler 1996; Gill 2001). The area borders the former Kodsukappara execution grounds [小塚原刑場] of the Edo period to the north, Sumida River in the east and the former Shin-Yoshiwara pleasure quarters in the south. Second, it is the site of the Yamaguchi-gumi affiliated Kokusui-kai Kanemachi-ikka office.¹⁶⁴ Transferal by truck thus limits the contact both areas have with other groups. The official word remains, however, that the truck is necessary because of distance and time restrictions.

In summation, the showing of tattoos at these festivals is associated with a marking of territorial boundaries; a marking of affiliation through neighbourhood association with the passing of the *mikoshi* and a showing of identity whether this be with the *hanten* or *horimono*. And every year, it is a remaking of boundaries of territory and identities whether that is of neighbourhoods or yakuza groups. What makes the showing of *horimono* noteworthy (powerful) here in both context and manner is related to criminality. There are limited opportunities for the public to see *horimono*, or those with them, to show them off and thus when they are displayed they become a powerful tool in the public sphere, or perhaps more appropriately, the public imagination. As regardless of whether the person is yakuza or not, they can be viewed this way.

POWER OF HORIMONO

When discussing notions of power and *horimono* in this *shitamachi* festival context, it appears obvious to put the points I have already made regarding the showing of identity and territorial boundaries together. This would lead to a simple, and obvious conclusion, that *horimono* are used representationally to identify territories or territorial ‘power’ in the form of control within both the festival and yakuza/honest society context. Indeed, this is what I just outlined in the previous section. However, there are other notions of power that can be recognised in the public display of *horimono* in festivals. These emerge when *horimono* are examined in relation to other participants. The other participants being spectators, governing bodies including both shrine officials and neighbourhood officials, the various *mikoshi* carrying groups including tutelary (local groups) and outsider groups, law enforcement which

¹⁶⁴ Sixth Yamaguchi-gumi [六代目山口組] is the largest organised crime syndicate in Japan, and until the early 2000s were not present in Tokyo. Incursion into Tokyo sparked a number of violent incidents including public shootings, and murder of rivals. Kokusui-kai [国粹会] changed affiliations from Sumiyoshi-kai to Yamaguchi-gumi in 2005 after a period of conflict. Refer to police white paper for review of conflict (警察庁 2012).

includes riot police, metro police, undercover police, local law enforcement, as well as the *kami* of the portable shrine. I have also shown how a survey of the audience indicates particular areas of Asakusa area well known for being able to see *horimono*, with *horimono* specifically drawing large numbers of visitors and locals alike. Additionally, I have suggested *horimono* evoke a sense of tradition, linking characteristics of participants and the festival, such as violence or disorderly conduct, to so-called *shitamachi* identity.

In these festivals where participants go so far as to flaunt their tattoos in front of police and police cameras that are recording the entire proceedings – in front of the shrine or temple, in front of or on top of the *kami*, the divinity/spirit, within the portable shrine – it is pertinent to question a kind of force, rather than the motivation of so many protagonists, behind these actions. Particularly, as these actions appear to go beyond the general aim of the *matsuri* that was once strengthening the vitality of the *kami*, the area and the people. One answer, I suggest, relates to certain notions of power. That is powers evoked by, or the power (embedded in) *horimono* and being tattooed, which is the next point for discussion.

The engagement with *horimono* in the festival to which I now draw attention can be seen in the use of ‘*irezumi-sama*’ to refer to *horimono*.¹⁶⁵ With this term, *horimono* are described in a language that parallels reference to the *kami-sama* in the *mikoshi*. *Irezumi-sama*, used in the festival context in this manner, indicates an experience of *horimono* with some sort of reverence, some sort of spiritual association with *horimono*. When spectators and locals engage with *horimono* particularly atop the *mikoshi*, the engagement is not only with the ‘tattooed person’. Nor is it only with a *shitamachi* local. There is some sort of attribution of spiritual qualities to *horimono*, or we could say, a view of *horimono* as some sort of ‘spiritual’ power, paralleled with *kami-sama*. The religious imagery comprising the *horimono* furthers consolidates such thoughts.

When these so-called *irezumi-sama* stand abreast the *mikoshi* at the changeover between groups, they clearly steal the attention away from the (non-visible) *kami-sama* within the *mikoshi*. Not only is the audience focussed on the *horimono* but also they are focussed on what those with the *horimono* will also do. Add to this a heavy police presence where there are riot police, charged with protecting the spectators by containing the *mikoshi* carrying groups, or conversely containing the spectators, and law enforcement which is in the hands of metropolitan police and the obviously present undercover police. The *horimono* engages

¹⁶⁵ Also *monmon-sama* [紋紋様]

other participants, manipulating or affecting them in some manner, in a manner parallel to how the *kami-sama* within the *mikoshi* behaves, erasing distinctions between participants and strengthening the vitality of the *kami/horimono*. Thus, I argue *horimono* occupy an ambivalent, but indispensable, position of power during festivals. While an enduring image of the Sanja festival itself, they evoke notions of power when utilised to ‘show’ territories or identities, and power play between participants, becoming ‘a’ power of *irezumi-sama* when paralleled with *kami-sama* upon the *mikoshi*.

An elderly local illustrated this final point when describing the carrying of the *mikoshi* through an area with a visible presence of *horimono*. He described the scene as, “cleaning the area; protecting the area.” When pressed on whom, instead of alluding to the *mikoshi* or the *kami* within as might be expected, he said, “They are, those people,” whilst indicating the participants – some with, some without *horimono*. Thus, here appears to be a conflation of actions of ‘those people’ with the actions of the *mikoshi* and the *kami* it bears. An incident in the procession of *machi-mikoshi* during the Sanja Matsuri further shows this confusion or coalescence of position:

As final security measures are carried out securing the spectators gathered in front of Sensō Ji to watch the passing procession, a sea of Katsugi-te in white hanten lead in supporters in festival garb. While others elaborately dressed in outlandish attire subsequently take up prime positions on the steps of Sensō Ji alongside the straw boater wearing shrine representatives. Escorted in by a musical float, the *mikoshi* is coming. And there, awaiting its arrival, standing facing the crowd, backs towards the Kannon-dō, shoulder to shoulder with shrine officials are members of a local yakuza group. Where once these men stood atop the *mikoshi*, they now stand on the steps of Sensō Ji proudly showing off their *horimono*.

Here they face off with the numerous undercover police, marked police, and videos filming the scene. When the *mikoshi* arrives with much vigorous jolting and is raised aloft, high, higher and higher still in greetings towards Sensō Ji, the crowd erupts accordingly. Riot police strain on their ropes as viewers surge against the flimsy barricade, trying to take in the spectacle. “It’s dangerous, don’t push,” they yell repeatedly using their loudspeaker, “Move back! Move back!” The surging crowd forcing the front row of the audience into the police cordon, rope digging into flesh, has the riot police struggling to maintain the boundaries. The *mikoshi*, animated livelily, barrels down the small roped off path when, almost in the blink of an eye, the scene unwinds. For this short passage of the final *machi-mikoshi* for the afternoon, both the crowd and presence of police appears to have tripled [Sanja Matsuri, Saturday 18th May 2013].

The tattooed men and women positioned themselves here in a telling manner. They are subverting convention: at once these men and woman are at one with the deity of Sensō Ji,

above the *kami* in the *mikoshi*, and facing off with the police filming and controlling those around them. Who is in control or who has power in the festival after all?



Figure 55: On the steps of Sensō Ji, Saturday 19th May 2012. Source: Taken by author.



Figure 56: On the steps of Sensō Ji, Saturday 18th May 2013. Source: Taken by author.

The festival is considered somewhat of an ‘autonomous zone’ of power. Actions within the festival, particularly damage by the *mikoshi*, were once attributed to the will of the *kami* (Takeuchi 1994). Today, the *mikoshi* riders express similar sentiment, “I just got carried away,” is how the protagonist in the episode that began this chapter described his experience. Yet, police and officials do not take this as an excuse. They do not consider this the will of the *kami*, it is a broken rule. Officials and police exert their authority over this element of the festival, over other incidents it is another matter.

On Sunday May 16th 2010, following the procession and participation in the local section of the *honsha-mikoshi* parade, I went to visit Horikazu. On walking in the door of his studio, the first thing from his mouth was, “Are you ok? Did you hear about the person who was killed?”

“What happened? Were they squashed under the *mikoshi*?” I ask with visions of the heavy *mikoshi* being dropped in mind.

“No,” he replies, and making stabbing motions with his hand, continues, “He was stabbed to death.”

Shocked, I question “When?”

“Oh, this morning at the *miyadashi*,” comes his nonchalant reply.

I spend the next couple of hours with Sensei as he greets a seemingly revolving door of guests, people attending the festival that have stopped by to pay respects. For Horikazu, his festival finished once the *honsha-mikoshi* had passed by his former Nishi-Asakusa neighbourhood. Now it is time to relax and enjoy the company. Looking tired, he chats easily with each person as they come along over a variety of subjects, but each greeting begins with, “Did you hear about the incident?” It seems as if I may be the only person out of the loop on this fatality. After leaving Horikazu’s I hurry to meet people myself, asking as soon as I see them, “Did you hear about the incident...?” But, no one has. Neither was it reported in the media, or by the police.

Perplexed as to why this death, which seemed to me something rather more significant than climbing on a *mikoshi*, was not reported I continued to dig. Police denied the incident; two journalists assured me there would be no reason to cover up such a happening, and “perhaps the person didn’t die?” they countered. Yet, on the afternoon of the alleged incident, it was *the* hot topic. When I asked Horikazu about it later on, he simply quirked his head and said, “Lots of people have died at the festival.” Here in regards to the stabbing, it seems no one wants authority over the incident. Perhaps the ‘autonomous zone’ of power still exists in the festival after all?

I will finish now by returning once more to the man evading capture introduced at the beginning of this chapter. This man goes down in the history of the festival as directly participating in the cancellation of the three main *mikoshi* in 2008 – the man here who is easily identified by his *horimono*; who is pinpointed by spectators as yakuza; who is under the watchful eye of officials and police. With his *horimono* bare – he is most memorable.

But, this man, Kimoto, is also a local. He was raised here. Has been active in the festivals since a child. He now lives here with his own family and works here as a Japanese tattooist known as Horikazuwaka, son of the late *horishi*, Horikazu. He continues his tradition of

tattooing. And, this is marked on his skin; it marks his skin, along with that of many others that we can see in *shitamachi* festivals. These are relations embedded with the history of tattooing, the history of an area and people, and now the history of the festival. Thus, I suggest we look beyond the common trope of *yakuza* and *horimono*, we can see *horimono* embedded with the power of an historicised identity (whether this be criminal or normative), evoking notions of power in the form of control, among the diverse participants, the spectators, the police, the officials, the spirits, and afforded the powers of *kamisama* within the festival context.

The discussion in this chapter has shown festivals to be a stage where this eclectic cast of characters converge in a joined effort of ritual and festivity. Within the festival context, *horimono* emerges as a dynamic social actor, which is engaged in a confusing clash of negotiations with the other actors. As, on the festival stage, participating as shown in Figure 57, *horimono* is not just a personal possession on the back of a participant, a representation of an historicised criminal past, merely the distinguishing mark of a criminal, a lived experience of a single person. Rather, *horimono* become all of these. In this manner, imbued with these multiple conflicting roles, becomes a powerful agent in its own right, acting on the other participants on multiple divergent levels. And, each year as the negotiations change, so too does the festival experience. Thus necessitating, further negotiations the following year, consequently (re)creating and renewing the festival every year.



Figure 57: Participating in the festival Sanja Festival, Nishi Asakusa. Sunday May 20th 2012.

CONCLUSIONS LOOKING FORWARD

In this thesis, *horimono* in the context of Tokyo's *shitamachi* has been revealed to be not only a colourful amalgamation of intricately interwoven images embedded in the skin, but also an equally vibrant and visible practice, deeply embedded in Japanese society through a complex engagement of historicised, personal and community relations. From the outset of this project, I challenged to uncover the contemporary practices of *horimono* – questioning how is *horimono* practiced and by whom? My jumping off point was an understanding that tattooing was once an integral part of everyday life in Edo era *shitamachi* Tokyo. First, through an examination of background and history, I sought to clarify the setting and context of today's practices.

Beginning with a cursory introduction to the background and setting, *shitamachi*, Tokyo, I outlined how *shitamachi* is both a territorial place and a conceptual construct steeped in notions of 'tradition' and the past, Edo period. Notions and representations that today, rather than linger like a shadow of a past, are brought into the light, actively embraced and promoted within the area by locals and outsiders alike. *Horimono* and the tattooing practices I subsequently examined were situated within such notions of both past and present *shitamachi* as well as the geographical area, namely Asakusa. Both historically and today, the area has a concentration of *horishi*. Chapter One uncovers reasons why, through an examination of the roots of tattooing in the *shitamachi*.

In Chapter One I introduced the history of tattooing in Japan. Although a focused history narrow in scope, limited to practices from which *horimono* is thought to have roots, Chapter One showed how the history of tattooing in Japan is characteristically fragmented and diverse: from customary and punitive practices in antiquity, to later markings of criminals, pledges of devotion, onto a flourishing fixture on the street-scene of Edo, and more recent ostentatious and nefarious displays of today's *yakuza*. Furthermore, I also illustrated why this mix of both complimenting and conflicting practices has emerged disproportionately towards representations of and associations with criminality, as a means of communication.

This historicised understanding of *horimono* is revealed to be a significantly influential aspect affecting representations and understandings of *horimono* and the tattooed body. While at the same time, later discussion in Chapter Four and Five, demonstrated how this aspect of 'criminal *horimono*,' both merges and conflicts with another historicised representation, that

of ‘*shitamachi horimono*,’ in actual lived experiences of *horimono*. A more rigorous examination of the history and setting from a genealogical approach would have perhaps uncovered more pertinent insight into past while at the same time created a stronger argument, seeing as discussion in Chapter Two on processes and practices of *horimono* showed links to past remains strong.

Chapter Two stepped into practices of *horimono* today, introducing observations from my fieldwork. Through a description of techniques of tattooing, I revealed how the business of *horimono* is comparable to that of other *shitamachi* businesses. In addition, looking into the process of tattooing uncovered the significance of personal relations that are realised in the *horimono*. Although the finished product –the *horimono* itself – exists only on the body of the client – the tattooed person – it has been crafted by the *horishi*, and in many cases, the relationships that brought the client to the *horishi* in the first place. This entanglement of relations remains embedded in the skin, shown in the *horimono*. The central role of the *horishi* became clear in this discussion on the process and practices of *horimono*.

Chapter Three focused on one *horishi*, Horikazu the First of Asakusa, and as such presented just one portrait from many possibilities. Yet, Horikazu proved an interesting focus as he embodied in his everyday life as a family man, as well as in his role of a tattooist, the characteristics of the *shitamachi* area in which he resided and worked. He is shown to have had a strong affiliation and appreciation for notions of *shitamachi* and the close-knit interpersonal relations of the area. He nourished the same within the community that developed through and around his tattooing. Discussion in this chapter further gave rise to an understanding of *horimono* as something other than a static, image, an object on the acting subject. Rather, the relationships shown at play in discussion of Horikazu, suggested behind this image, forming this image, are various kinds of dynamic relationships.

Chapter Four looked more closely into personal experiences. An examination of lived experiences of *horimono* raised questions about the status of, or the relationships between, the body, self and identity, as well as about conceptualisations of *horimono* itself. Rather than being static I showed *horimono* to be a dynamic actor suggesting that the process of tattooing itself brings into being the relationships in the network that comprises of: biological bodies; thinking, feeling self-identifying persons being tattooed; the tattooist and the elements or images of the *horimono*; which itself retains a sense of ‘personhood.’

Regarding festivals, I have shown in Chapter Five that two festivals, Sanja Matsuri and Torigoe Matsuri, are sites where the conflicting representations of *horimono* converge. In these festivals, *horimono* and tattooed people face the paradox of historicised criminal association, and normative practice or ‘tradition.’ Personal experiences of *horimono* come up against or together with personal experiences on a community level. From this intersection and the confusing interactions between participants, I recognise *horimono* in three divergent aspects of engagements. First, there is an identifying aspect. This is in terms of representation as an enduring image of festival itself, along with an historic, traditional, *shitamachi* character. Representations here are steeped in past and present, criminal and normative associations. The second aspect is of participation. *Horimono* participates in the festival on both an individual level, and group level, in a power play between participants – public, police and *kami*. The third aspect of engagement is in terms of positioning. That is, through participation in the festival *horimono* appears in the spiritual realm via positioning on *mikoshi*, as well as reverence towards the *kami* in *horimono*.

Through an exploration of these three engagements I have shown how three ambivalent notions of power emerge: ‘power of historicized identity,’ ‘subversive power’ and ‘spiritual power.’ In other words, *horimono*, I argue, are embedded with the power of a historicised identity; evoke notions of power in the form of control among diverse participants in the festival context, as well as ‘powers’ of *kami*. In these emergences of power, *horimono* evoke the protective facet of *kami*. This is a structure that seems somewhat familiar.

Although emerging from a different situation and conditions, there appears to be an interesting parallel between what is happening within the festival, with the underlying structure of *horimono* on the community level as a dynamic social actor, and the underlying structure of the protective *horimono* of Edo era firemen. I would like to indulge a final word on the possibility of engaging *horimono* not only on the historical, personal and community levels as discussed in this thesis, but on the mythical level as well.

In the instance of fires, *hikeshi*, fire fighters of the Edo era, as mentioned in Chapter One, came together to protect the homes, livelihoods and lives of the community in which they resided. At the same time, renowned for their ruffian nature and penchant for fighting, *hikeshi* descended upon the site of fires. Baring their *horimono* along with their *matoi* to identify themselves and intimidate their competitors, tattooed firemen and their *horimono*, faced off against the destructive power of fire, itself a manifestation of *kami*. The dragons of the *hikeshi*’s *horimono* provided another layer of protection against the fire, with water

symbolising dragons oppositional to, and thus protective against, the destructive power of the fire. While recognising the difference in time/period and thought, I suggest some homology can be found between the two cases. But, this is a topic for future consideration especially if I were to be so bold as to suggest the *horimono* of contemporary *matsuri*, festivals, could be seen as a community deity in the manner of the mythical dragon *horimono* of Edo era *hikeshi*.

APPENDIX ONE: TERMINOLOGY

| Techniques | | |
|--|---------------------|---|
| <i>Bokashi</i> (<i>akebono</i>) | ボカシ・ あけぼの | Shading using black ink of various depths or coloured ink; colouring in of outline. |
| <i>Eguri</i> | えぐり | Tattooing the torso stopping some distance from neckline. |
| <i>Hanebori</i> [<i>Hane-bare</i>] | 羽彫り [羽離れ] | Technique where after pricking the needles into the skin, the needle points are flicked upwards, puncturing more widely for more depth of colour. |
| <i>Hanpabori</i> | 半端彫り | Half-finished <i>horimono</i> ; when someone cannot endure the pain, or payments, and the image is left half finished. |
| <i>Kakushibori</i> | 隠し彫り | Adding a lewd image, word or name in a hidden place such as underarm, inner thigh or on flower petals. |
| <i>Kebori</i> | 毛彫り | Tattooing the human or animal hair, usually much finer lines / needles used. |
| <i>Keshōbori</i> | 化粧彫り | Adornments or trimmings; autumn leaves, cherry blossoms etc. surrounding a dominant image. |
| <i>Machine-bori</i> / <i>Kikai-bori</i> | マシーン 彫り・ 機械彫り | Machine tattooing. |
| <i>Nijyūbori</i> [<i>Futaebori</i>] | 二重彫り | <i>Horimono</i> depicting a figure with <i>horimono</i> ; double tattooing. |
| <i>Oshiroibori</i> | 白粉彫り | Tattooing so that the image appears to glow or stand out when blood circulation is good; i.e. <i>Horimono</i> are said to 'come to life' on heat reddened skin after bathing. *Impossible? |
| <i>Shakki</i> | シャッキ | Sound of <i>tebori</i> needles. |
| <i>Sujibori</i> | 筋彫り | Outline; outline of entire image done before shading. |
| <i>Tebori</i> | 手彫り | Hand tattoo; ink inserted by needles on the end of a tool. |
| <i>Tsubushi</i> | ツブシ | Filling over / covering up; filling in of <i>munewari</i> empty area up to the neck. |
| <i>Tsukibori</i> | 突き彫り | Technique. |

| Shapes | | |
|---|------------|--|
| <i>Asai-hikae</i> | 浅い ひかえ | Shallow / narrower chest plate; Shallow tattooing over shoulders and breast area. |
| <i>Edobori</i> <i>Tokugawa- bori</i> | 江戸彫り | Same as <i>munewari</i> ; open down chest, may come down and rounded at the legs like the <i>happi</i> coat. |
| <i>Fukai-hikae</i> | 深い ひかえ | Deep / round / larger chest plate; Deep tattooing over shoulders and breast area. |
| <i>Gaku</i> | 額 | Background framing the central image. |
| <i>Hikae</i> | ひかえ | Chest plate; tattooing over shoulders and breast area. |
| <i>Munewari</i> | 胸割り | Tattooing opened down the chest area. |
| <i>Nukibori</i> | 抜き彫り | Central image only, without frame or background. |
| <i>Sōshinbori</i> | 総身彫り | Full body tattooing; from neck to ankles. |
| Edging | | |
| <i>Bokashi-mikiri</i> | ボカシ みきり | Graduated transition from tattoo to skin; image / colour appears to fade out. |
| <i>Botan-mikiri</i> | 牡丹 みきり | Peony border; rounded edge shaped like peony petals. |
| <i>Butsu-giri</i> | ぶつ切 り | Unbroken straight line. |
| <i>Matsuba-mikiri</i> | 松葉 みきり | Pine-needle border; short vertical lines along edge depicting pine needles. |
| <i>Mikiri</i> | みきり | Border of overall design |

APPENDIX TWO: SANJA MATSURI: NOTIFICATION (1)

Asakusa Jinja, Service Association of Asakusa Jinja

December 15 2006

| |
|--|
| 平成18年12月15日 |
| 通達書 |
| 浅草神社 浅草神社奉賛会 |
| <p>平成18年度浅草神社例大祭斎行に於いて、本社神輿二之宮の担ぎ棒が毀損されたことは前代未聞の深刻な不祥事であって、今後の浅草神社例大祭に於いては二度と繰り返されてはならないことと強く決意するものである。</p> <p>今回の事件の際には本社神輿二之宮の担ぎ棒の上に多くの担ぎ手が乗っており、このことが担ぎ棒を毀損させた大きな原因の一つである。そもそも、本社神輿には浅草神社のお神霊をお祀りしているのであって、人が乗ることは浅草神社のお神霊を汚す行為となり許されないことは言うまでもない。</p> <p>従来から、浅草神社例大祭斎行に当たっては、実施要綱冒頭にも「神輿の上には何人（なんびと）も乗ることを禁ず」と明記してあり、神輿に乗ってはならないと繰り返し注意してきたところである。しかし残念ながら、永年の浅草神社例大祭斎行の間に、この原則が軽視される傾向が見られる様になってきた。</p> <p>浅草神社及び浅草神社奉賛会は、今回本社神輿二之宮の担ぎ棒毀損という重大事件を契機として、神輿に乗らないという重要な原則を厳密に守るため、今後の浅草神社例大祭に於いて以下に規定する「定め」をおき、関係各位に通達する。この「定め」は、浅草神社奉賛会傘下の者を始めとして浅草神社例大祭に於いて神輿を担ぐ者全員が徹底して厳守しなければならないものである。</p> <p>今後この「定め」の制定を契機として、平成24年の三社祭斎行700年の年に向けて、浅草神社例大祭が本来の姿に立ち返るよう全力で努力することを改めて決意し、茲に表明するものである。</p> |
| 「定め」 |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 氏子44ヶ町に所属する町会役員、青年部、担ぎ手を始め総ての浅草神社奉賛会傘下の者は、各町渡御中も含め如何なる場合も理由の如何を問わず本社神輿に乗ることを禁ずる。 2. 浅草神社宮頭の指揮下にある鷹頭は、本社神輿庫入れ時及び有事の際を除き、理由の如何を問わず本社神輿に乗ることを禁ずる。 3. 浅草神社奉賛会並びに浅草警察署に誓約書を提出して宮出しに参加を認められた神輿同好会に所属する担ぎ手は、如何なる場合も理由の如何を問わず本社神輿に乗ることを禁ずる。 4. 浅草神社奉賛会傘下の者、鷹頭、上記同好会所属の担ぎ手等の内、何れかの者が上記各定めに違反して神輿に乗ることがあれば、<u>『次年度以降の浅草神社例大祭において、宮出し・宮入りに際しての違反の場合は宮出し自体の中止、本社神輿各町渡御に際しての違反の場合は本社神輿各町渡御時の該当町会の朱引図の削除』</u>を含む重大な罰則を適用する。 尚、浅草神社奉賛会傘下の者、鷹頭、上記同好会所属の担ぎ手が担いでいる最中に、他の者が神輿に乗った場合も同様とする。即ち、同じ神輿を担いでいる最中に何人たりとも神輿に乗ることがあれば、その神輿を担いでいる者の連帯責任とみなす。 |

APPENDIX THREE: SANJA MATSURI: NOTIFICATION (2)

2007 Asakusa Jinja Festival, Basic Policy

January 15 2007

平成19年1月15日

平成19年度浅草神社例大祭
基本方針

浅草神社
浅草神社奉賛会

平成18年度の祭礼に際しては、宮出し時に本社神輿二之宮の担ぎ棒が毀損する等の前代未聞の深刻な不祥事が発生した。

今後同様の事故を繰り返さない為にも、平成19年度祭礼においては宮出し・宮入り・本社神輿各町渡御を含め神輿の上に人が乗るような事があれば、翌年平成20年以降の宮出しの中止もしくは本社神輿渡御時の該当町会の朱引きを削除する旨の「通達書」を浅草神社及び浅草神社奉賛会の方針として決定した。

上記「通達書」は平成18年12月12日に開催された浅草神社奉賛会総町理事会時に重要審議事項として提示し、総町（氏子44ヶ町）の承認は得たものの、同月16日に開催された同好会説明会において資料として提示したところ、浅草神社及び浅草神社奉賛会の方針を全く無視した反対意見が出され、例年提出を義務付けている宮出し・宮入りに際する参加規約遵守の為の誓約書への署名迄も拒否された。

そもそもある一部の同好会においては、宮出しを含む本社神輿渡御時に神輿の上に乗る事を前提としており、また同好会説明会に関しても、浅草神社奉賛会はあくまでオブザーバーとしての参加であり説明及び質疑応答にも一切応じない意志が同好会側に全く伝わってなかった。

浅草神社例大祭である三社祭は、歴史的な時代背景はあるものの本来浅草に住み浅草で生活する氏子44ヶ町の氏子の為の祭礼であり、祭礼自体の意義と浅草神社及び浅草神社奉賛会の方針に同意しない同好会側の言い分に今後一切応じる事は通わない。

前述の通り、同好会側が最低限の遵守事項である参加規約に対し誓約書の提出が出来ないと公の場で宣言している以上、当然の事ながら祭礼斎行時にはそれに伴う数多の混乱と危険性が容易に危惧されるものであり、浅草神社及び浅草神社奉賛会としても今後の祭礼を例年通り斎行する事は困難な状況であるとの結論に至った。

よって上記経緯と祭礼に対する関係諸団体の概念の相違を踏まえて、平成19年浅草神社例大祭の斎行に際し、以下の3項目を事前に提示した「通達書」に示す通りの方針に加筆修正するところである。

1. 今後、そうした一部の同好会が関わる説明会等の会議へはその形式がどうであれ、浅草神社及び浅草神社奉賛会として一切関与しない。
2. 前述した状況が解消されない以上、平成19年度浅草神社例大祭において、氏子宮出しを含む宮出し自体を中止とする。
尚、現段階では本社神輿各町渡御は斎行する予定だが、状況によってはそれさえも中止もありえる。
3. 上記2項目に関してはより良き祭礼を目指す上での、浅草神社の強い意向でもある。

但し、これからの祭礼準備期間（3月中旬を目途）において、祭礼時の混乱と著しい危険性が解消され、先に提示した「通達書」通り差なく祭礼を斎行し得る状況が浅草神社及び浅草神社奉賛会として確信できれば、この限りではない。
その際は「通達書」に従って、平成19年度の浅草神社例大祭を斎行するところである。

今回の浅草神社及び浅草神社奉賛会の基本方針に関しては、平成24年に迎える三社祭斎行700年の慶祝に向けて、その三社祭が神事として差なく斎行される為の強い決意であると氏子各位の御賢察と御理解を願うばかりである。

APPENDIX FOUR: SCHEDULE & CARRIER ORDER
SANJA MATSURI

平成 25 年 5 月 19 日(日) ルートマップ
三社祭本社神輿渡御順路

| 一之宮 | 二之宮 | 三之宮 |
|------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 渡御開始時刻 | 渡御開始時刻 | 渡御開始時刻 |
| 宮出し 6:00 | 宮出し 6:00 | 宮出し 6:00 |
| 仲見世 8:00 | 浅草馬車 8:00 | 浅草芝居 8:45 |
| 常門東部 8:40 | 花川戸二 8:50 | 芝居 9:20 |
| 常門中部 9:30 | 天 10:30 | 面(ツラツク) 10:30 |
| 常門西部 10:40 | 若 11:20 | 浅草町二 11:10 |
| 常門田原 11:20 | 浅草馬車 12:10 | 浅草町一 12:10 |
| 春駒 12:00 | 浅草象一 13:00 | 浅草町一 (ツラツク) 13:20 |
| 春駒 13:20 | 浅草象二 13:50 | 浅草中箱 13:35 |
| 春駒 14:00 | 浅草象三 14:40 | 浅草千和 15:05 |
| 西一三堂 15:20 | 浅草象三 15:30 | 浅草千和 16:35 |
| 浅草公園 16:00 | 浅草馬車 16:20 | 浅草千光 17:10 |
| 浅草中央 17:20 | 田聖燈 17:10 | 千三光 18:30 |
| 浅草南門 18:00 | 神社北西角 19:00 | 千三光 19:25 |
| 宮入り 18:40 | 宮入り 20:00 | 宮入り 20:30 |

伝統の伝承・のれんの信頼
浅草のれん会

浅草の味
浅草の味
http://www.asakusanoren.jp

もう一度
浅草の味
http://www.asakusa-umai.jp

おもてなしの心
浅草槐の會
http://www.asakusa.gr.jp

携帯電話からも加盟店の案内がアクセスできます
03(5724)1955

平成 25 年 5 月 19 日(日) ルートマップ
三社祭本社神輿渡御順路

浅草寺の観音様を隅田川から発見し、この地にお祭りして、浅草祭の基をきざられた土師屋仲知命(はしのまつちのみこと)、櫛形兵成命(ひのくまのひさなるのみこと)、楠前竹成命(ひのくまのたけなりのみこと)、の三人の方を祭神とする浅草神社(旧稱 三社)は、浅草の総鎮守として昔から地方の信仰の中心に守られて来ました。

そしてその祭礼は、三社祭として全国的に有名となりましたが、特に平成8年には49年ぶりに、重要文化財である社殿(1649年建立)の修繕を行い、併せて本社神輿の修復も実施致し、大変綺麗になっております。

また、平成24年5月17日・18日には、三社祭新行700年を慶賀した浅草寺本尊示現会「舟渡御」が隅田川において、昭和33年の新行以来、実に約半世紀ぶりに氏子の手により再現されました。

名物大行列・ひんざら舞・手古舞・船おどり、更には約100基に及び各町神輿の連合渡御、本社神輿の宮出し、宮入りなど、多彩な祭事かと行われますのでどうぞご期待下さい。

本社神輿神聖入れの儀 新行

三社祭日程

| | | |
|------------|-------|--|
| 5月16日(木曜日) | 19:00 | 本社神輿神聖入れの儀 新行 |
| 5月17日(金曜日) | 13:00 | 大行列 出発 東廻り ※雨天中止 構成：お囃子屋台・金棒・駕頭木遣り・神社総代・各町役員・ひんざら舞・雲渡御の手古舞・船おどり・白旗の舞・船台 順路：東浅草組台前→船通り→馬車通り→常門通り→常門→仲見世→浅草神社 14:20 神事ひんざら舞奉納(神輿) ※雨天中止 15:00 神事ひんざら舞奉納(神輿) ※雨天中止 15:30 各町神輿神聖入れの儀 新行(神輿・船) |
| 5月18日(土曜日) | 10:00 | 例大祭本興 新行 |
| | 12:00 | 町内神輿連合渡御(観音本堂裏広場) |
| | 16:00 | 春駒渡御(浅草観音堂) 神楽殿 |
| | 17:00 | 巫女舞奉納(神楽殿) |
| 5月19日(日曜日) | 6:00 | 本社神輿「宮出し」 |
| | 8:00 | 本社神輿各町渡御 |
| | 14:00 | 巫女舞奉納(神楽殿) |
| | 15:00 | 春駒渡御 東京浅草組台前(神楽殿) |
| | 16:00 | 大鼓奏演 日本太鼓連隊(境内) |
| | 20:00 | 本社神輿「宮入り」 |

浅草観光連盟 浅草神社 浅草神社奉賛会
www.e-asakusa.jp www.asakusajinja.jp www.sanjinssai.jp

Schedule for Sunday May 19th 2013. Parade of main mikoshi of Asakusa Jinja. Order of carrying groups outlined in red. Daily schedule outlined in green.

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1. English language references – books, journals, chapters
2. Japanese language references – books, journals, chapters
3. English language newspaper articles
4. Japanese language newspaper articles
5. Websites
6. Other

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