Conversion and Revitalization of Buddhist Otera in Japan: A Religiosity-Historicity Study

Tetet Sulastri[1] and Diva Alleynisa[2]

Abstract

This research examines the conversion of function which is also known as the revitalization of Buddhist Otera in Japan through religiosity-historicity studies. It is important to use the religiosity-historicity study to examine two important aspects, namely the religiosity aspect because this is related to the traditional functions of the religious practices of Buddhists in Japan, and the historicity aspect because this event has developed far and even concerns tourism issues in Japan. The aims of this research were formulated 1) to describe the concept of Otera life from the aspect of Buddhism as part of a religious phenomenon in Japanese history, and 2) to find the conceptual reasons for the transition from Otera Buddhism to accommodation with a religious nuance for tourism purposes. The research method applied is qualitative descriptive research, while the source of data is library research and review by utilizing documents related to the research topic using exploratory theory. The research results show that the conversion of Otera Buddha to Hera-Taka accommodation with the Omotenashi concept does not leave the essence of Otera for the community to maintain the religious values they adhere to. The transition from Otera Buddha to accommodation with the Omotenashi concept offers three different service spaces, namely public space, private space and sacred space. Public space omotenashi is a hospitality service in the form of a room that can be used by visiting guests. Omotenashi in private spaces takes the form of room service by looking at the layout, decoration of facilities and infrastructure in the room. Omotenashi in sacred spaces is a service provided when guests visit Otera with various rules that must be followed in order to respect the space because it is related to elements of belief.

Keywords: *Buddhist Temple, Omotenashi, Buddhist Otera, Terahaku, Shinto.*

INTRODUCTION

In general, Japanese people believe in Shinto (the way of the gods), and believe in ancestral spirits and gods. The place to carry out religious rituals is called a jinja (Shinto shrine). Some famous Jinja include Jinja Ise which is located in Mie prefecture, Jinja Fushimi Inari in Kyoto, Toshogu in Tochigi where Tokugawa Ieyasu is buried. Itsukusima Jinja is located on the Miyajima Sea, and so on. Apart from that, Japanese people also believe in Buddhism where the place of worship is called Otera (Buddhist temple). Some famous Otera include the Todaiji Otera in Nara, which contains a very large Buddha statue. Otera Zojo-ji is located near the Tokyo Tower where there is the grave of the Syogun who ruled Japan for 265 years. Then the Tennoji area in Tokyo contains a Buddha statue more than 3 meters high, more than 300 years old (Mulyadi, 2017).

Even though most Japanese people do not follow a religion, they want to be buried in a Buddhist manner because they believe in the existence of a powerful spirit (view) that can guide them to heaven and will gather with their ancestors in that world. Therefore, Otera receives operational financial support from families who have family graves in that place. After all, Otera is a cultural representation (Hall, 1997; Andini et al., 2022).

However, due to the decline in demographic figures, Japanese society is now filled with more elderly people, so the situation has changed, those who are generally elderly are unable to carry out the Ohaka-Mairi tradition (visiting graves) which has been done periodically and pays a fee. a sum of money to the otera for grave maintenance. Of course, this situation is one of the factors that has resulted in a decrease in donations obtained by Otera.

Otera must face the challenge of maintaining a source of income to finance the care and living of its priests. The famous Otera gets financial assistance from tourists who visit it, while the small and unknown Otera have to fight harder to survive because they are not financially independent. Therefore, a new phenomenon emerged,

[1] Universitas Nasional Jakarta, Email: tetet.sulastri@civitas.unas.ac.id

[2] Universitas Nasional Jakarta

several Buddhist Oteras were very forced to change their function to become places for tourists to stay.

This event first appeared in 2016, the non-profit organization Nippon Foundation is the originator of this project. The project is named (寺泊) Tera- Haku itself comes from the words 'Tera' which means temple and 'Haku' means overnight with the target market being middle class tourists on. Prices offered per night start from one hundred and fifty thousand yen with additional facilities in the form of meditation. Following are several types of Jinja as mentioned in the table below;

Table 1 Kinds of *Jinja* in Japan

No	Types of Shinto Shrines	Remarks
1	Jinja Ise	It is situated in Mie prefecture
2	Jinja Fushimi Inari	It is situated in Kyoyo
3	Jinja Toshogu	Located in Tochigi where *Tokugawa Ieyasu* is buried
4	Jinja Itsukusima	It is located on the Miyajima sea

The differences between *Otera* and *Jinja* are clearly visible as mentioned above. There are also Kinds of Otera found in Japan, which can be seen as presented in the following table

Table 2 Kinds of Otera in Japan

No	Kinds of Otera	Remarks
1	Otera Todaiji	There is a Buddha statue in Nara which is very large in size.
2	Otera Zojo-ji	Located near the Tokyo Tower where there is the tomb of the Shogun who ruled Japan for 265 years
3	Otera Tennoji	Located in Tokyo, there is a Buddha statue more than 3 meters high, more than 300 years old

If Jinja is known as a place of worship for Shinto followers, then the case is different with *Otera.* The *Otera* is a place of worship for Buddhist teachings. Japan is a place where there are many temples. The temples in Japan are generally divided into two types, Buddhist temples or usually called *Otera* and Shinto temples or usually called *Jinja*. So how to distinguish which temples are *Otera* and which are *Jinja*? The differences are explained in detail as follows;

In terms of shrine names, Jinja (神社) is the Japanese word for Shinto shrine. So the shrine called *Yasaka-jinja* literally means Yasaka Shinto shrine. Taisha (大社) in the name of the Fushimi Inari shrine Taisha means "big Shinto shrine". The word Jingu (神宮) is also used by Shinto shrines, an example of which is *Meiji-jingu* (Wijayanti & Saifudin, 2021).

Meanwhile, *Otera* (お寺) is vocabulary for referring to Buddhist temples. Sometimes the pronunciation of *tera* at the end of a sentence changes to dera as in the name of the *Kiyomizu-dera* temple. In other temple names, it changes to *ji* like *Kinkaku-ji* temple. Apart from that, the word *in* (院) also indicates a Buddhist temple as in the name *Byodo-in* temple.

In terms of entrance, at Shinto shrines the entrance gate is usually in the form of a tor (鳥居) which is usually colored red at the entrance to the shrine. Meanwhile, in Buddhist temples, one of the entrance gates is called sanmon (三門). The word san can be written with the kanji for mountain (山) or the kanji for the number three (三) depending on each temple.

There is also a statue of *Komainu* (狛犬), a type of dog-lion usually found at the front of Shinto shrines. The job of these mystical guardian animals is to ward off demons. Meanwhile, in Buddhist temples, it is common to find *Nio* (仁王), creatures with scary faces on each side of the gate, to ward off untrustworthy opponents.

Then, with the large number of otera requiring assistance to survive, private parties began to look at the project by making otera into accommodation and marketing it widely. One otera that attracted attention at the start of the transition (because it required financial assistance) was the *Jokyoji Otera.* In this research the author focuses on discussing the Jokyoji Buddhist otera, and according to the facts, it has converted into a hotel and is

collaborating with a private party, namely *Mitsui Fudosan*, a private company which operates in the field of lodging accommodation for the benefit of tourists (Perreault & McCarthy (2006).

Jinja and *Otera* in Japan

Japanese people claim to be followers of the Shinto religion, this claim is reasonable because Shinto is the original belief and religion of the Japanese people. Shinto (神道, literally meaning "way of God") is a religion originating in Japan. Shinto is in fact not controlled by a central authority, its practitioners have a variety of religious beliefs and practices.

Shinto is a polytheistic religion with *kami*, supernatural entities believed to inhabit all things, as an essential part of the faith. We can be in the power of nature and a prominent landscape location. The relationship between kami and nature causes Shinto to be considered animistic (Haviland, 1999). Worship of the kami is performed at household kamidana altars, family shrines, and public shrines called ninja. These public shrines are managed by priests, known as kannushi. Shinto does not have a single creator or specific doctrinal text, the religion exists in various local and regionally specific forms. The term *Kami* or *Kami-sama* (神様), the Japanese word for "god/god". This word is used to denote anything about God

Although the timing of Shinto becoming a separate religion in history is still debated, kami worship can be traced back to the Yayoi Period (300 BC-300 AD) in Japan. Buddhism entered Japan at the end of the *Kofun* Age (300-538 AD) and spread quickly. Religious syncretization makes worship of kami and Buddhist teachings functionally inseparable, a process called *shinbutsu-shugo*. *Kami* began to be seen as part of Buddhist cosmology and were increasingly depicted with anthropomorphism. The earliest written traditions regarding kami worship are recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* from the 8th century (Mulyadi, 2017).

Based on historical evidence, Shinto is mainly found in Japan, a region that houses and has around 100,000 public shrines although in practice it is also found outside Japan. Numerically, it is the largest religion in Japan, followed by Buddhism. Most of the country's population participates in both Shinto and Buddhist activities, especially festivals. Rituals in festivals are full of cultural expressions that must be maintained and need to be preserved (Fairuz, et al., 2022; Akhmar et al., 2022). This phenomenon reflects the general view in Japanese culture that the beliefs and practices of a religion do not have to be carried out only by certain groups. Aspects of Shinto are also incorporated into various new religious movements in Japan.

Shinto has no universally agreed upon definition. However, authors Joseph and John (2013) state that if there is a single, broad definition of Shinto" that can be put forward, Shinto is the belief in kami, supernatural entities at the core of the religion. Japanese culture expert Helen Hardacre (1991) states that "Shinto encompasses doctrines, institutions, rituals, and group life based on *kami* worship." Additionally, religious scholar Inoue Nobutaka observes the term "Shinto" is "frequently used" in "reference to kami worship as well as theology, ritual, and related practices. Shinto was not found as an independent religion.

The Phenomenon of Changing The Function Of Buddhist Otera To Tera-Haku

The conversion of Otera Buddha to Tera-Haku (inn or hotel) is a socio-religious phenomenon. On the one hand, the sacredness of Otera must be maintained as a holy and worship place for the majority of Japanese society, on the other hand, Otera faces obstacles in two ways, firstly the demographic factor where the number of elderly residents is increasing with very limited mobility, and secondly Otera must be maintained with increasingly high funding demands. Starting from this condition, the idea arose to convert Otera into something productive to overcome financial problems. The wise actions that must be taken are local cultural-based (Rahman, 2019; Rahman, et al., 2019).
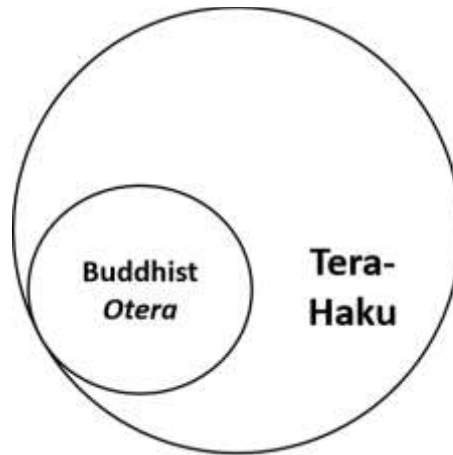
Figure 1. The Existing of Buddhist Otera into *Tera-Haku*

Based on Figure 1 above, the function of Buddhist Otera has changed into Tera-Haku but the functions of Buddhist Otera remain. This is what is called a symbiotic solution without anyone being sacrificed. This division according to solution spatial layout can be seen in Figure 2 in the following section.

Through an exclusive interview with the Asahi Article (2020) with Kimitake Mitsuyama, a priest from the Jokyoji Otera, he came up with an idea for how to keep the Buddhist otera he cares for alive. One of the innovations that has emerged is revitalizing Otera by collaborating with hotels to make accommodation. Kimitake renovated several parts of the Otera to become a place to stay for tourists with a combination of hotel and Otera atmosphere.

This event occurred for the first time at Otera Jokyoji. Otera Jokyoji is located in Kyoto. According to Oktarini (2005) in her journal article, Kyoto was once the center of government and the residence of emperors who ruled for 1,000 years. Therefore, Kyoto is an important city in Japanese culture. The Japanese government protects Kyoto as a city whose cultural beauty must be maintained. Kyoto is a portrait of Japan in the past which tried to minimize modern buildings. Several restrictions also emerged, for example prohibiting the construction of buildings exceeding the height of otera and jinja buildings (Nagao & Umemuro (2012). This is the reason why many tourists come to visit Kyoto to see what Japanese life was like in the past.

The picture above is certainly related to tourism issues, the increase in the number of visitors goes hand in hand with the increase in demand for accommodation. As an opportunity (Prihandoko, et al., 2022), efforts to encourage a significant increase in Japanese tourism are a strong reason for revitalizing Otera into a place of lodging. The step taken at that time was to collaborate with hotels that have experience providing unique lodging accommodations for tourists who came to visit.

Based on this fact, there is a tug of war between interests, Otera must be maintained and at the same time, tourism services must also be fulfilled. With that argument, Kyoto turned into a tourist destination city. It, of course, must turn into a destination that provides uniqueness with its own characteristics to attract tourist interest, so the revitalization of Otera is inevitable. Furthermore, collaborations were carried out with the Mitsui Garden hotel to serve tourists who want to experience the religion of Japanese society.

The combination of Otera and accommodation for tourists is the aim of this revitalization. As explained above, Otera-Hoteru is a combination of the words Otera (お寺) which is a Buddhist temple and Hoteru (ホテル) which is a hotel. The revitalization of several parts of Otera into a hotel is called Otera-Hoteru (お寺ホテル) in Japanese.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

Based on this research problem, the objectives of this research are formulated as follows; 1) to describe the concept of Otera life from the aspect of Buddhism as part of a religious phenomenon in Japanese history, and

2) to find the conceptual reasons for the shift from Buddhist Otera to accommodation with a religious nuance for tourism purposes.

These two goals can be achieved by explaining the function and role of otera in the lives of Japanese society, especially Buddhists. The first goal, for example, can be achieved by means of Otera functions from aspects of Buddhism which are full of dynamics and challenges. The second goal can be achieved by explaining the demographic aspect, where the Japanese population is mostly older people who have low mobility to make pilgrimages to graves as a source of donations to cover Otera's operational costs. New report and interview evidence were also used to strengthen the achievement of the main objectives of this research.

RESEARCH METHOD AND SOURCES OF DATA

This study uses descriptive qualitative research methods. According to Perreault and McCarthy (2006, p. 176) qualitative research is a type of research with the aim of exploring information deeply and openly on various aspects in the form of responses, explanations and descriptions of phenomena and searching for reasons that are scientific and logical argumentative.

The primary data used in this research comes from two YouTube channel videos entitled 1.) *"Kyōto jōkyū-shanara koko! Tera o taiken dekiru i kūkan hoteru. Shijima no dai yokujō ya wa chōshoku mo Ryō! Mitsuigādenhoteru Kyōto Kawaramachi Jōk yōji. Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyoto Kawaramachi Jōkyōji"* by Tabizo Travel (2023) dan 2.) *Kyōto no otera to gattai shita hoteru Mitsui gādenhoteru Kyōto Kawaramachi Jōkyōji otera no otsutome taiku tanoshiku naru chōshoku? Kyōto osusume hoteru kyoto Hotel with high cost performance* by MARCO Travel Note (2021).

Both data sources are qualitative data sources that can explain historically what is needed in this research. There are at least several that are applied in research like this, namely ethnography, case studies, document studies, and phenomenology. The conceptual framework implemented in this research is constructed as follows;
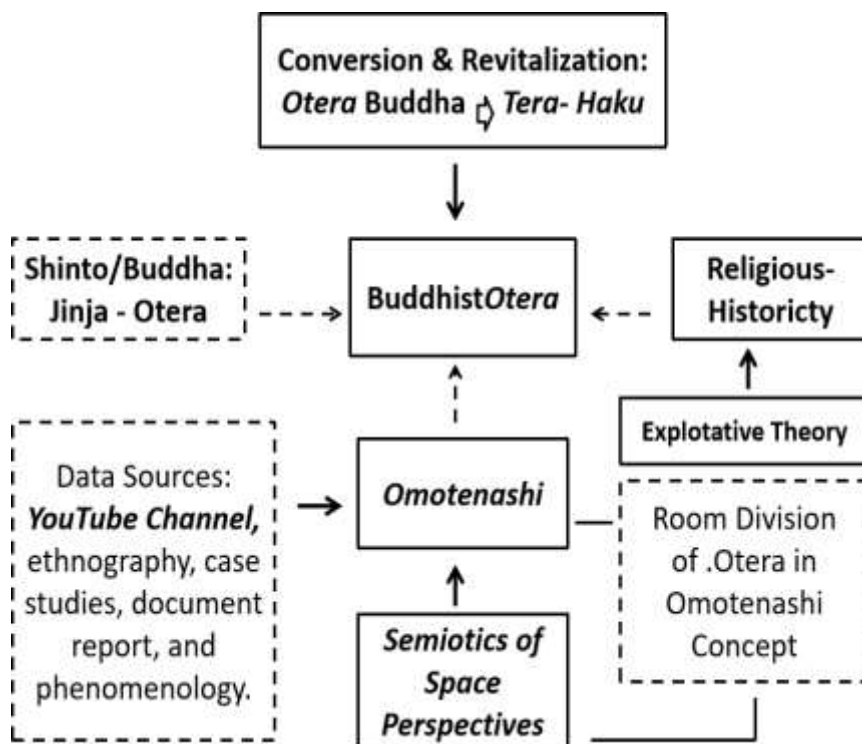

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Study

The activity focuses on Buddhist *Otera* as part of Buddhist religion and beliefs to study conversion and revitalization from Buddhist *Otera* to *Tera-Haku* through a 'Religious-Historicity' approach. According to Rahman, et al., (2022), this approach tracks value issues. To maintain the sacredness of Buddhist *Otera*, the method used is *Omotenashi* which seeks to accommodate the revitalization of Buddhist *Otera* into a hotel/lodging while still providing one space for the benefit of Buddhist *Otera* itself. This is what is called semiotics of space perspectives

in the form of room division of *Otera* in *Omotenashi* concept (Saputro, 2020; Setogawa, 2013). This research is supported by data sources recorded on the *YouTube Channel* accompanied by supporting data in the form of ethnographic studies, case studies, document report, and phenomenological analysis.

There is also a secondary data source in the form of reviews from visitors who have stayed at the Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyoto Kawaramachi Jokyoji as supporting data and strengthening the achievement of research objectives. Meanwhile, in data processing the author uses data grouping techniques based on existing provisions to obtain appropriate results and then record them (Sugiyono, 2016, p. 60). This research groups data according to four supporting elements of the *Omotenashi* concept at the Jokyoji hotel in Kawaramachi, Kyoto using space management considerations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

a. Historical Facts

Japan Impress Watch repoted that many Oteras were forced to close because the buildings were being old, there were a lack of family successors of productive age who contributed to the Otera. Terahaku is a new model for Otera revitalization by using hotels as a theme and attraction so that Otera can survive, by offering a unique experience for tourists who want to experience meditation that is full of spirituality to feel calm and reflection.

This revitalization also applies the concept of 'next generation temple hotel', as reported on the Impress Watch website, that the revitalization of the temple into a hotel with the mission of the monks is so that the wider community can feel the sensation of religious spirituality. This historical fact cannot be refuted by documentary evidence preserved in the history of Otera life in Japan.

b. Saving Buddhist Otera

The worst condition ever experienced by Buddhist *Otera* was when it was unable to survive due to financial support for the needs of the monks who faithfully looked after the Buddhist *Otera*. This condition is increasingly worsened by the demographic situation where visitors to graves are starting to decline, while one source of funding is donations from pilgrims.

Learning from various cases of damage to Otera at that time, the conversion of Buddhist *Otera* became a necessity. It is certain that this choice is the best choice to save one of the religious items for Buddhist followers in Japan

DISCUSSION

In Japan, Islam is a minority religion. Islamic teachings entered Japan along with the arrival of various thoughts and beliefs from western countries in 1877. At that time, it was only known as a culture. In 1890, an Ottoman Turkish ship was docked in Japan to begin diplomatic relations between the two countries and provide lessons to each other, understanding each other's culture, including Islam. In 1928 Japan's first Muslim community appeared in Kobe. In 1935, the Kobe Muslim community first established the mosque that we know today, namely the Kobe Mosque ("History of Islam in Japan," 1995). In 1952 the Japanese Muslim association was formed and the association was recognized by the Japanese government in 1968. Although initially Japan did not welcome Muslims in the past, in recent years, they have become more accepting in terms of understanding religions or cultures different from their own. Muslims in Japan come from various national, ethnic, cultural and lifestyle backgrounds ("History of Islam in Japan," 1995).

a. *Otera* and *Jinja* for Buddhists

There are two words that are important to know related to the problem of Buddhists in Japan, namely the words Otera and Jinja. In short, Otera is a Buddhist place of worship, while jinja is a Shinto place of worship. In terms of appearance, in Otera there are butsuzo and tombs, while in Jinja there are torii. In Japan, Buddhist statues are called butsuzo. The difference between Otera (お寺) and Jinja (神社), the word Jingu (神宮) is also used by Shinto shrines, an example of which is Meiji-jingu. Meanwhile, Otera (お寺) is vocabulary for referring

to temples

As previously explained, one of the Oteras that is worth observing is the Buddhist *Otera Jokyoi*, because it has become an early milestone in the conversion of Otera into a guesthouse. With the help of the private sector, this effort was successful and helped develop Japanese tourism. The differences between Otera and Jinja see Tables 1 and 2.

Regarding the maintenance of Otera which must be revitalized on the one hand, and the seer on the other hand, the best way is to implement terahaku, and this is what is called an adaptive alternative model, see Figure 2 (The Existing Buddhist *Otera* into Tera-Haku) where Otera is still maintained in this conversion.

b. Omotenashi as Adaptive Concept

Space is a part of the culture of a society that has certain meanings and functions that are useful for fulfilling the needs of self-extension. The principles of local architects need to be applied (Maslucha, 2011) therefore the space management system (see Figure 3 in the following) is divided into three, namely:

1). Public Room

This is a room that is interpreted as a place where the wider community can gather, interact and use the room together. The wider community referred to in this research is guests who stay overnight who can use the public spaces available at the hotel.

2) Private Room

This space is a form of interpreting space as a room with a deep connection with its owner because this room is a room where humans can enter themselves and understand what they want, private space cannot be entered carelessly by other humans without the consent of the owner of the space.

3) Sacred Room

This sacred space is a room that has spiritual power and emotional inner strength for people who believe in it. This room is usually marked with objects that are used as symbols and interpreted as sacred by certain spiritual powers, for example in the Islamic religion when entering a mosque (sacred space). there is a prayer mat which is interpreted as a base so that the place of worship that is stepped on becomes holy, and because this space is closely related to the relationship between humans and God, therefore when entering a sacred space you must show respect and be polite and courteous in order to respect a place that is considered holy and for the sake of preserving it for social interaction with fellow humans.
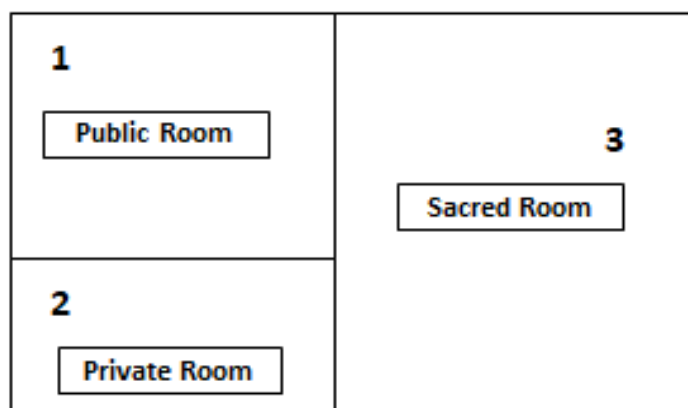

Figure 3. Room Division of .Otera in Omotenashi Concept

Then the Personalization element can be seen in the placement of the Otera no giboshi āto which is usually found in the area of a Buddhist temple or Otera, but remembering that this 'otera hotel' is a hotel that was revitalized along with the Otera, therefore placing the Otera no giboshi āto in the room is a symbol using semiotic theory of space proposed by Danesi & Peron (1999, p. 194-198).

Space semiotics (Benny 2011), see Figure 3, is divided into three dimensions, namely public space, private space and sacred space. Public space regulates how someone interacts in public places. Meanwhile, personal space regulates the way of interaction in private space, and sacred space regulates interaction in places that are said to have metaphysical, mystical or spiritual qualities. While Omotenashi according to Nagao and Umemuro as follows:

「おもてなしを、「相手を喜 ばせ、満足に相手の立場 に立ち、相手の目的 状況・ニーズに合わせて気配りし、それに基づいて行う直接的または間接的な行為」(source: Journal of Japan Industrial Management Association, 6 (3), 129)

"Omotenashi is defined as direct or indirect actions to please others, taking into account goals, situations and needs. Omotenashi is an act of friendliness (Chen & Kato, 2014) based on the perspective of another party which is to please other people based on the standards of the person's goals, situation and needs (Alalsheikh, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Japanese people believe in Shinto (the way of the God), and believe in ancestral spirits and gods. The place to carry out religious rituals is called jinja (Shinto shrine). Even though most Japanese people do not follow a religion, they want to be buried in a Buddhist manner because they believe in the existence of a powerful spirit that can guide them to heaven and will gather with their ancestors in that world. Japanese people claim to be followers of the Shinto religion, this claim is reasonable because Shinto is the original belief and religion of the Japanese people. Shinto (神道, literally meaning "way of God") is a religion originating in Japan. Shinto is in fact not controlled by a central authority, its practitioners have a variety of religious beliefs and practices.

Shinto is a polytheistic religion with kami, supernatural entities believed to inhabit all things, as an essential part of the faith. Kami can be in the power of nature. The relationship between kami (God) and nature causes Shinto to be considered animistic. Worship of the kam is performed at kamidana household altars, family shrines, and public shrines called ninja. These public shrines are managed by priests, known as kannushi. Shinto does not have a single creator or specific holy book, the religion exists in various local and regional forms. The term kami or Kami-sama (神様), the Japanese word is for "god". This word is used to denote anything about God

The aim of this research was formulated to answer two key words: 1) to describe the concept of Otera life from the aspect of Buddhism as part of a religious phenomenon in Japanese history, and 2) to find the conceptual reasons for the transition from Otera Buddhism to accommodation with a religious nuance. It is important to use the Religiosity-Historicity study to examine two important aspects, namely the religiosity aspect because it is related to the traditional functions of Buddhist religious practice, and the historicity aspect because this event has developed far and still persists today.

There is also the matter of this revitalization still implementing the concept of 'temple hotels in the next generation', namely the revitalization of the temple into a hotel that is in line with the mission of the monks so that the wider community can feel the sensation of religious spirituality. This historical fact cannot be refuted by documentary evidence preserved in the history of Otera life in Japan.

Omotenashi is something that is inevitable due to the decline in demographic figures, Japanese society is now filled with more elderly people (Moriyama, 2019). And they are unable to carry out the Ohaka-Mairi tradition (visiting graves), even though they are the ones who have been paying a certain amount of money to the Otera for grave maintenance. This is the critical reason that resulted in the decline in donations obtained by Otera. This event first occurred in 2016, when the non-profit organization Nippon Foundation initiated this project which was named (寺泊) Tera-Haku ('Tera' means temple and 'Haku' means overnight).

In Omotenashi, space has a certain meaning and function which is useful for meeting the needs of cell extension. For this reason, the space management system (see Figure 3) is divided into three, namely: 1). Public space, 2) Private

space, and 3) Sacred space (This sacred space is a room that has spiritual power and inner strength).

The research results show that the conversion of Buddhist *Otera* to accommodation with the *Omotenashi* concept does not leave the essence of Otera for the community to maintain the religious values they adhere to. The transition from Otera Buddha to accommodation with the *Omotenashi* concept offers three different service spaces, namely public space, private space and sacred space.

Omotenashi sacred space is a service provided when guests visit Otera which is known to have various rules that must be followed in order to respect the space because it is related to elements of belief. In this sacred space, guests can perform typical Buddhist ceremonies and can see various otera decorations that have high historical value. From here Otera remains awake. Thus, changing the function of Otera Buddha to Tera-Haku is a mutually beneficial solution.

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